

# Murphy Ranch

## Room Parent Guidelines

### Parent Program

We strive to give as many parents as possible an opportunity to be Room Parents during their time at Murphy Ranch.

### Number of Room Parents

- We are able to accommodate one room parent per classroom or two if they are willing to work as a team of co-room parents.

### The Process

All parents interested in volunteering to be a Room Parent should complete the Room Parent Interest Form by noon on **Friday, August 22nd, 2025**.

After potential volunteers have been identified, Mr. Mayernik, along with a team of staff, will determine the Room Parents based on the following selection criteria:

- Priority will be given to parents who have not been Room Parents in the recent past.
- If a parent is a Room Parent for one child, they may not be selected as the Room Parent for another child (*unless no one else is interested*).
- If a parent is a Room Parent for one child, they may not be selected as the Room Parent for the same child the following year (*unless no one else is interested*).

Mr. Mayernik will notify all newly selected Room Parents via email. Once the Room Parents have been confirmed, Mr. Mayernik will notify the teachers of their Room Parent(s) via email.

Regrets to parents who were not selected as Room Parents will be sent via email shortly after the new Room Parents have confirmed their appointment.

The newly selected Room Parents will introduce themselves to their teacher(s) in person or via email as soon as possible once selected. Room Parents will also be required to complete the necessary volunteer paperwork to be able to be on campus on a regular basis.

A Room Parent Kick-off Meeting will be held once all Room Parents have been assigned and confirmed. All Room Parents are encouraged to attend, as important information will be shared. If this is not possible, at least one of the Room Parents per classroom must attend this meeting. The meeting will take place in-person here on campus.

## WHAT IS A “ROOM PARENT”?

Room Parents are the official liaisons between teachers and families. As a Room Parent, you may be asked to help plan class events, assist teachers in preparing assignments and general classroom assistance, or coordinate teacher gifts. Some teachers may want a lot of help (or very little); asking your teachers or talking to previous Room Parents are good ways to learn what’s expected of you as a Room Parent.

**WHAT WOULD MY RESPONSIBILITIES BE?** Different teachers have different needs — and your responsibilities may vary from grade to grade. But all Room Parents share some things in common: a desire to pitch in, great organizational and communication skills, and the time, energy, and enthusiasm for helping out in a hands-on way. Here are some things you may be asked to do:

- **Help the teachers communicate with parents**  
Regularly sharing information about classroom events will help families feel connected and involved.
- **Plan & organize class events**  
In addition to school wide celebrations, individual classes host their own events. As a Room Parent, you’ll sign up volunteers to donate time or supplies, send out reminders about upcoming events, meetings, class parties, field trips, and needs.
- **Recruit other parent volunteers**  
You don’t have to go it alone! Delegating specific tasks to other class parents can make things easier and allows more people to get involved. One parent can be in charge of organizing events, another in charge of class communication. Want to set-up a website for posting class photos? Another parent in your class may have specific skills they’re willing to share.
- **Meet with teachers and other Room Parents on a regular basis**  
Regularly scheduled meetups are a good way to keep everyone in the loop, and find out how you can best support your teachers throughout the year as their needs change.
- **Solicit & collect supply donations**  
Classrooms always need donations of supplies: tissue boxes, hand sanitizer, snacks for field trips, and the like. Letting parents know when donations are needed will ensure your class has all the disinfecting wipes it needs.
- **Organize appreciations & gifts**  
We love our teachers and staff — and want them to feel appreciated. Room Parents are responsible for soliciting donations to purchase gifts for teachers for special occasions (which may include holidays, birthdays, or Teacher Appreciation weeks). Keeping equity top of mind, all class donations should always embrace a “give what you can,” sliding-scale philosophy, so families can contribute meaningfully (whether through volunteering, baking something healthy to share, or the like), even if they can’t contribute financially. Additionally, for any gifts, you must include all of the children’s

names on the card or just sign it "From Your Class". You should not single out only those students/families that chose to participate.

- **Act as a resource for new families**

When new students start at The Ranch, Room Parents should reach out to them to answer any questions and make them feel welcome in our community.

- **Attend monthly PTA meetings & schoolwide activities**

This is the best way to stay up-to-date on bigger picture issues that class parents may ask you about — and help the school as a whole!

- **Share your experience & knowledge with incoming Room Parents**

To help build a strong community and smarter classrooms!

**IMPORTANT NOTE:** As a Room Parent, you don't have to do it all! Know that many classes have two Room Parents. And there are so many resources online to help you (i.e., there are a variety of online platforms that can help facilitate communication, donations, and volunteer sign ups.) Other parents in the class are also eager to help.

## **GETTING STARTED**

So you've volunteered to be a Room Parent. Now what?

**SCHEDULE A TEACHER MEETING** to learn about your teachers' needs, preferences, and expectations. These are a few important questions to ask:

**Contact information:** How do the teachers prefer to be contacted by you and other class parents? What are school policies for gathering and releasing parent contact information?

**How can you best support the class?** With communication, organizing events, getting chaperones for field trips, making copies, prepping materials for class activities, donating supplies, etc.

**What ongoing volunteer support needs are there?** Weekly readers, art prep, making copies, snacks, supplies, etc.

**What events should you plan for?** Field trips, holiday events, open-house, etc. Is there a calendar already, or should you help set dates for that?

**Teachers' favorites?** Find out what they like as a gift-guide for parents and thinking ahead to Teacher Appreciation Week in May: meals, beverages, restaurant, stores, treats, charities, teams, hobbies, etc.

**Classroom party dates & plans** How many? Who plans (teacher or parents)? Food requirements (healthy or sweets)? Food allergy considerations? Please consider both student AND teacher allergies. Timing and activities/games/crafts?

## REACH OUT & GET ORGANIZED

**Send a welcome letter to families introducing yourself** (example below), your role, and what parents can expect from you, including your contact information. Ask parents if they have special interests or talents they would like to share with the class (i.e. gardening, music, photography, cultural experiences, etc.). You may find many templates online through Pinterest and Google for this letter. Mr. Mayernik will work with you on adding language for attaining parent contact information. Please share your email with teachers before sending it to Mr. Mayernik for distribution, to see if there's anything they'd like you to adjust or include.

**Work with Mr. Mayernik to Set up a ParentSquare Class List** (an easy, reliable and effective way to communicate with families).

**Build a calendar of class events** along with volunteer needs for each.

**Make sure all families receive all communications** — and that families not connected to the Internet or on email get a text or hardcopy. Teachers can assist with printing — and you're always free to use the school copier. And include your teachers in communication to parents (unless you're asking for donations for birthday gifts for them!). Some teachers may want pre-approval for parent communications. Please check with them on that.

## TIPS FOR BEING A GOOD ROOM PARENT

### PLANNING ADVICE

**Get support early** Ask parents to sign up to help at the beginning of the school year for activities throughout the year. Offer options so working parents or those with young children can pitch in from home (sending snacks or treats, preparing and purchasing supplies).

**Budget** If there's a teacher's birthday, holiday gift, or party supplies needed, create a budget and alert parents at the beginning of the year what's coming down the road, so they can budget and plan for those, too. Be clear about the fact that donations are optional (teacher gift money).

**Delegate** Don't try to do it all yourself. Be specific about what jobs need doing and when, and invite other parents to participate in organizing parties and activities. Identify your most active volunteers and call on them when you're short — and show your appreciation! They'll keep coming.

### IN THE CLASSROOM

**Let the teachers lead** Find out what the teachers want, not what you think they need. Feel free to share your own ideas for great books, craft projects, etc. — but don't take it personally if the teachers choose not to incorporate them. They have complex lesson plans

and know the kids' needs best, so it's important to remember the teachers are in charge of the classroom, and we should follow their lead. If you're uncertain about something, ask.

**Good communication is key** Before you or other parents come into the classroom, work out with the teachers exactly when you need to be there and what you'll be doing. If you're bringing snacks, are there things you should avoid? Any sensitivities you should be aware of? Avoid making these arrangements during drop-off or pick-up, so your teachers aren't caught up in the chaos of starting or ending their day.

**Take your cues from the teachers** Once you enter the classroom, let the teachers take the lead by introducing you to the children. It might be tempting to start talking or playing with your little one, but many of the kids might not understand who you are or what you're doing there. Wait until a teacher gives you some cues and then you can start doing what you came to do.

**Remember you're there for ALL the children** It's very easy when visiting the classroom to engage only with your own child, but remember the focus of your visit. Whether you're there to read, help with a craft or a party, be sure to give all the children equal attention.

**Don't drop in unexpectedly** Unexpected visits can cause a disruption and put teachers in a difficult position. Teachers have a very tight schedule, and even the slightest distraction can make the entire day veer off-kilter.

**Know when to leave** Although it may be hard to leave the classroom, the best guests know when it's time to leave. Read the story, do the craft, and then say goodbye.

**Don't use your role as a Room Parent to provide special favors, to "spy" on your child or your teacher, or to hold an unplanned parent/teacher conferences.**

**Be inclusive to all families, especially those whose first language isn't English or those who are new to the school.** Work with your teachers for advice on how to make sure everyone's needs are being met.

**Be professional and cautious to NEVER release contact information without permission or share sensitive information you may be privy to as a room parent.**

## **QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF BEFORE SIGNING ON**

**Do I have the time to do this job well?** Before making any volunteer commitment, make honest assessments as to whether you have the time and personality to be a good Room Parent. Consider not only how much time you have but when you're available. Think about your work schedule. Will it change or become busier during a certain season? Also factor in time commitments for other children's school activities. If your teachers are looking for hands-on assistance in the classroom (or primarily after-hours help) and your job doesn't allow that kind of flexibility, there may be other ways you can help.

**Is there another way I can help?** Not ready to take on the responsibility of Room Parent, but still want to help? You're in luck! Offer to be an organizer for one big class event, weekly help in the classroom, making photocopies, assisting with an art project, etc. And remember there are plenty of volunteer opportunities too: PTA, valet worker, and more. The more help, the merrier!

**Is this a one-year commitment?** Yes! But keep in mind that your experience may make the job easier for you in subsequent years, and we always welcome good Room Parents to stay involved!

## **SOME NOTES ABOUT CLASS PARTIES**

The goal of our class parties is to provide fun, inclusive, and safe celebrations for all students. To ensure these events run smoothly and effectively, please adhere to the following guidelines:

### **1. Collaborative Planning with the Teacher:**

- **Prioritize Teacher Input:** Please work closely and communicate regularly with the classroom teacher throughout the entire party planning process.
- **Seek Approval: Do not proceed with any aspect of a class party (including themes, activities, food, decorations, and volunteer sign-ups) without the explicit approval of the teacher.** The teacher is responsible for the overall classroom environment and curriculum and their input is essential.
- **Respect Teacher Preferences:** Be mindful of the teacher's schedule, classroom routines, and any specific requests or limitations they may have.
- **Nutrition Services:** Please see Mr. Mayernik if you are planning on utilizing any food provided by our Nutrition Services Department.

### **2. Fostering Inclusivity and Participation:**

- **Engage All Families:** Work collaboratively with other room parents and families in the class to ensure broad participation in the planning and execution of parties.
- **Inclusive Activities:** Plan activities that are accessible and enjoyable for all students, regardless of their individual needs or interests. Consider activities that allow for different levels of participation and engagement. Create celebrations that respect the various beliefs of the students in class.
- **Encourage Involvement:** Actively encourage more families to contribute their time, talents, or resources to the parties. This can be done through clear communication, diverse volunteer opportunities, and a welcoming approach.
- **Be Mindful of Dietary Needs and Allergies:** When planning food, be sure to communicate with the teacher about any known student allergies or dietary restrictions. Strive to offer options that are safe and inclusive for everyone.



### 3. Food Safety Guidelines:

- **Pre-Packaged Foods Only: Any food provided for class parties must be commercially pre-packaged from a store.** Homemade food items are not permitted due to safety and allergy concerns. Please ensure all food items are clearly labeled with ingredients.
- **Handwashing Reminder: Please advise students to wash their hands thoroughly with soap and water prior to eating any snacks or food provided at the party.** While direct supervision of handwashing for every student may be unmanageable, a clear and consistent reminder is important for promoting good hygiene.

By following these guidelines, we can work together to create positive and memorable class party experiences for all our students. Thank you for your dedication and support!

### SAMPLE WELCOME LETTER

Hello Room \_\_\_ Families,

I would like to take this opportunity to introduce myself to you. My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and I will be your child's Room Parent for the 2024-25 school year. I am working very closely with Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_ and we have an exciting year ahead of us. I look forward to meeting and working with you to create an amazing year for our children this year.

Along with the school-wide events, I would ask that you please add the following class events and celebrations to your calendar.

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As each celebration approaches, additional information will be sent to you outlining necessary items and/or requesting volunteers to help. We welcome all of you to join us in each and every celebration.

My first task is to compile an electronic directory for the class that provides each family with the contact information for the other families in the class. Inclusion in the directory is completely voluntary and will only be disseminated to the families in our class. To be included in the directory please email me the following information at this email address \_\_\_\_\_@\_\_\_\_.\_\_\_\_:

- Parent(s) Name
- Child's Name
- Home/Cell Phone Number

- Email Address

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me. I am excited to make this a memorable year for our children.

Sincerely,