



Casa Esperanza Montessori
Room Parent Guide
2019-2020

Contact us at
pfa@cemcs.org
if you have any questions.

Room Parent Orientation Agenda

August 21, 2019

1. Welcome
2. Background Checks
3. Room Parent Roles
 - a. Teacher Support
 - b. Organizing Classroom Celebrations
 - c. Creating Sign-Ups for Volunteers, Duties, and Donations
 - d. Friday Folders
4. Ways to Celebrate Your Teachers
5. Approved Classroom Celebrations
 - a. Fall Feast
 - b. Winter Cultural Presentation
 - c. Friendship Breakfast
6. Room Parent - Getting Started & Guidelines
7. Appendix
 - a. Sample Room Parent Introduction Email
 - b. Sample Holiday Gift Email
8. Questions & Answers

What is the Role of a Room Parent?

As a Room Parent you will play a key role in organizing classroom activities, sharing important information and reminders with parents, and supporting your child's teachers so that they can focus on providing our children with the best possible educational experience. You will be a party-planning, donation-coordinating, volunteer-soliciting rock star!

This guide is intended to serve as an overview of your roles and responsibilities as a Room Parent. We'll cover the basics but you must proactively partner with your classroom teachers to ensure that their needs are being met. If you have any questions, please reach out to Ghenet Mogos or Kristen King at ghmogos@gmail.com, kristeneliz2002@yahoo.com, or pfa@cemcs.org.

Background Check Information

In order to keep our school as safe as possible, criminal background checks are required for **all** volunteers and those who serve as drivers and/or chaperones on field trips. **The deadline for completing your background check at no cost is Friday, August 23, 2019. After that date you will have to pay \$20 to process your background check.** The background check can be done from home and is free of cost for the first two members of your family.

Casa's Human Resources Coordinator, Anna Foley, supervises background checks for the school. All information is handled in a confidential manner. Casa has contracted with Castle Branch to conduct our background checks. Please visit castlebranch.com in order to complete your background check. Instructions on how to complete the background check are provided below. In order to volunteer with our school, you will need to complete the background check **at least 10 business days before your first volunteer day and/or field trip.**

If you believe you will be volunteering at **any** time during this school year, we encourage you to have your background check done before you need it. Casa will not be able to make exceptions to this policy. Each family will be given two PIN numbers at no cost; if you need additional PIN numbers there will be a charge of \$20 each. Please contact Anna Foley at afoley@cemcs.org to obtain your second (or more) PIN numbers.

Please continue to check the school website, cemcs.org, for additional information about the description, role, and guidelines for volunteers.

Background Checks for Volunteers

Castle Branch is a secure platform that allows you to order your background check online from home. **There is no cost to you until after Friday, August 23, 2019.** In order to complete this process you must:

1. Go to castlebranch.com, click on Place Order, and for Package Code enter "CU85basic."
2. You will be directed to set up your Castle Branch account, or to sign in if you already have an account.
3. When asked for your PIN, enter your carpool tag number.
4. In addition to entering your full name and date of birth, you will be asked for your social security number, current address, phone number, and email address.

Your results will be posted directly to your Castle Branch account. You will be notified if there is any missing information needed to process your order. Your order will be shown as "In Process" until it has been completed in its entirety.

Casa's Human Resources Coordinator, Anna Foley, will be able to securely view background results online with her username and password. If you have any problems with the background check system, or to receive more than one PIN number, please contact her at afoley@cemcs.org.

Background Checks for Field Trips - Drivers

In addition to the above volunteer background check, the school must receive the following information **10 days before the field trip for which you plan to drive:**

1. A copy of your valid driver's license
2. Proof of valid car insurance (insurance must be valid at the time of the trip)
3. A non-certified copy of your driving record from the NC Department of Motor Vehicles. This is obtained by visiting your local DMV office or using the website ncdot.gov/dmv and selecting "Order Driving Record" from the "More Options" drop-down menu.

Room Parent Roles

Teacher Support

Your primary role as room parent is to support your classroom teachers so that they can place their time and attention on instructing our students. It's vital that you check in with them to find out what specific needs they have. Make sure to reach out as soon as possible at the beginning of the year to get a sense of how your teachers can use your help. Check to see if the classroom is running low on supplies, or if there are any special projects that you can help with. Keep in mind that being a room parent doesn't mean you have to purchase or do everything yourself. A big part of your role is to facilitate and coordinate teacher requests for parent help so that everyone has the opportunity to volunteer and contribute to a successful school year.

Organizing Classroom Celebrations

Most celebrations require you to create an online Sign-Up Genius form for food items, paper goods, and set-up and clean-up. A list of approved celebrations is included in this guide.

Creating Sign-ups for Volunteers, Duties, and Donations

Typical sign-ups that teachers request include:

- Friday Folders: Every Friday, stuff a folder for each student in the classroom to send work and other announcements home. Having a regular, reliable volunteer or two for this task is a great help to teachers.
- Laundry Fairy: Take weekly laundry home to be washed and dried for use the next school week.
- Library Parent: Check out books from the public library to enhance the lessons being taught in the classroom. Teachers will provide book topics.
- Lunch or Recess Volunteer: Assist in the classroom during lunch or recess to allow the teacher and paraprofessional to have lunch and prep time.
- Quarterly Room Cleaning: Deep cleaning of the classroom before the end of each quarter.
- Reading Parents: In CH or CHLE classrooms, parents are needed to read with students one-on-one. In LE classrooms, parents can help with reading groups.
- Weekly Flowers: Parents can donate a few flower arrangements each week to help brighten the classroom.
- Wish List Items: Throughout the year, teachers have requests for materials needed to aid with lessons or projects in the classroom.

- Bake Sales: UE classrooms host monthly bake sales throughout the year to help pay for their field trips. A flyer will go home listing the dates for which each classroom is responsible to provide the baked goods. Most parents need a gentle reminder that it is their turn to send in baked goods for the sale. One week out and then 2-3 days before is a good timeline.

Tips for Using Sign-Up Genius

- Once you have created a Sign-Up Genius form, please forward the link to your teacher so that he/she can forward the link to parents and/or post the link on the classroom webpage.
- If you have created a Sign-Up Genius form before, you can use it again by changing the details before forwarding it to the teacher.

NOTES:

Friday Folders

Friday folders are an invaluable communication tool between home and school. A lot of information passes through them and stuffing them takes time. Please ensure that your classroom has dedicated people to take on this task. Parents usually sign up on Meet the Teacher Day but may later discover that they cannot commit to be in the classroom on Friday morning or early afternoon, whichever is preferred by the teacher. You can reach out to your classroom parents to secure another volunteer to share the responsibility. As a Room Parent you may also want to utilize Friday Folders to reach all parents, since not all families use email. If at all possible, please try to get any notices you wish to send home translated into Spanish.

Ways to Celebrate Your Teachers

Birthdays

Please make parents and students aware of their teachers' birthdays. You may provide a treat along with a small gift and card, or you can organize a class gift. If a teacher's birthday is during the summer, suggestions to celebrate it might be either a "half-birthday" during the school year or recognizing the birthday at the end-of-the-year party.

Holiday Gifts

Traditionally, Casa families give individual gifts at holiday time. However, some classrooms do prefer to give a group teacher gift. Please remind families that their participation in group or individual gifts is optional.

Teacher Appreciation Week

The first week of May is National Teacher Appreciation Week. The PFA will send out the themes for classrooms to follow if they would like to participate.

End of Year Gift

There are numerous ways to show appreciation for our teachers after a successful school year. Don't feel limited by using gift cards or monetary donations. There are several websites and Pinterest boards with ideas for how to celebrate our wonderful teachers in creative and meaningful ways.

Approved Classroom Celebrations

Fall Feast

This is generally held just prior to Thanksgiving Break. Not all classrooms participate or will have their feast on the same day.

Winter Cultural Presentation

During the cultural presentations, the unit of study may be incorporated into the theme of the food requested. Typically, parents are invited to the cultural presentation; however, the class may have a separate party in which students bring in dishes to share but parents don't attend.

Friendship Breakfast

Held annually in February, families are invited to come and join their children for a potluck breakfast.

Getting Started as a Room Parent

Set up a meeting with your teachers. Here are some questions to ask to get started as an effective Room Parent:

1. What can I do to help in your classroom?
2. What assistance do you need with activities, art projects, etc, for the class?
3. Do you have a class pet that needs supplies? How often? Does the pet need a place to stay during vacations?
4. Are there any children with food allergies or food restrictions?
5. What type of copy and non-copy help do you need (laminating, cutting, hole punching, stapling, tearing of pages from workbooks)? How often this help is needed (weekly, every other week)? On what day of the week do you prefer to have help?
6. Does the classroom need any donations (school supplies, books, puzzles, cleaning supplies, playground balls, etc)?
7. Do you need help organizing class materials, displaying class work in the hallway, etc?

Send an introduction email to your teacher for distribution to classroom parents. You should include the following information:

1. Introduce yourself as the Room Parent (you may also wish to introduce your child and provide some details about yourself such as your child's grade level, any other children you have, how long you have been at Casa, etc)
2. Provide contact information for yourself and any co-room parents
3. Include links to the Sign-Up Genius form for classroom and recess helpers, Friday Folders, and/or donations

General Guidelines for Room Parents

Please do not drop in on your child's class during school hours.

Set up a time with the teacher if you need to see him/her. A note or email is usually best, so you do not interrupt the teacher's busy schedule. The teacher will contact you if she/he has any questions or suggestions.

Remember that your time in the classroom is a time for helping the teachers.

This time should not be a conference time about your child. The teachers are also working during planning time, so please be considerate and respect their time.

All parent contributions are made on a voluntary basis for a voluntary amount.

You can ask each family to contribute money to cover the cost of a gift for a teacher as a class, but this must be done on a voluntary basis. *You cannot ask for a predetermined amount.*

Teacher Giving Guidelines

- If possible, consider creative, low-cost gifts that are directly from ALL the students, such as homemade cards, photos, projects, etc.
- Sign class gifts from ALL students in the class regardless of whether they contributed. Remember, it is the thought that counts, not the dollars spent. Some classes are fortunate to have parents who donate generously, while others may not.
- Use the ***Teacher Favorites List*** you will be receiving to learn exactly what your teachers' favorite things and places to go are!

Miscellaneous Duties

Silent Auction Creation

The PFA will be having a Silent Auction this spring. We would like Room Parents to assist with the class creation projects. There will be more details to follow.

Class Photographer

The Yearbook Club needs our help taking class photos throughout the year. If one or more room parents could take several digital photos at class parties, events, etc, the Yearbook Club will gladly accept them for potential publication.

Scholastic Helper

If your class does not have a parent assigned to this role, please consider assisting with this job. When parents order books, teachers are able to receive books for free to add to their class library.

Room Parent Responsibilities Timeline Suggestions

AUGUST

- Attend Volunteer Training
- Check in with teachers for specific needs
- Confirm Friday Folders volunteer schedule

SEPTEMBER

- Send introductory email to parents
- Create sign-up forms for recurring needs (lunch and recess help, class cleanings, laundry, weekly flowers, class pet needs, etc)

NOVEMBER

- Plan Fall Feast for classroom (create sign-up form)

DECEMBER

- Plan Winter Cultural Meal (create sign-up form)
- Coordinate holiday gifts for teachers

FEBRUARY

- Plan Family Friendship Breakfast (create sign-up form)

APRIL

- Communicate with parents about daily themes for Teacher Appreciation Week

MAY

- Follow PFA guidelines for Teacher Appreciation Week

JUNE

- Coordinate End-of-Year Gift for teachers

Sample Holiday Class Gift Letter

Dear Parents of (insert class name),

The holidays are upon us and the gift giving season is fast approaching. Several families have indicated that they would like to contribute to a class gift for (insert teachers' names). I'm happy to organize our efforts and welcome any suggestions for what we could purchase. Your ideas and input are greatly appreciated! Please email me your ideas at (insert your email address).

If you would like to participate, you can send an envelope to school marked "(Insert your name—room parent)". Alternatively, you can drop off your contribution with Celeste at the front desk; just let her know which class it's for.

Donations are requested by (insert date at least a week before winter intersession) so I am able to purchase the gift before the winter break.

Thank you,

(Your name and contact information here)

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents of (insert classroom name),

My name is (insert your name), and I am the room parent for (insert teachers' names) class this year. (You may wish to introduce your child, mention his/her grade level, whether you have other children, and how long you have been at Casa, etc). I will be planning class celebrations, organizing gifts for (insert teachers' names) and helping our class with other items as needed.

I will be sending home more information regarding specific events as we get closer to those times.

Occasionally, we organize a class gift to the teacher, and I will ask for optional donations. Please understand that no one is obligated to contribute.

Thanks in advance for your help! I look forward to meeting each of you as we work together to help our children have a great year. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions. Call me at (insert your phone number) or email me at (insert your email address).

Thank you,

(Your name and contact information here)

Questions & Answers