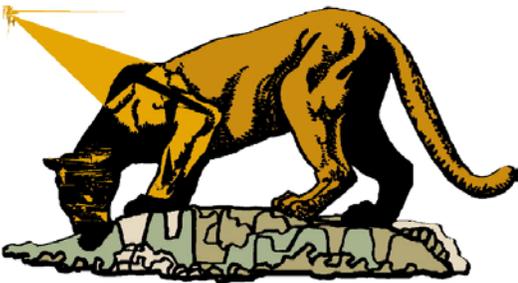




# Classroom Representative Handbook



Classroom Parent's Name:	
Teacher:	Grade:

# THANK YOU!

Thank you very much for volunteering your time to serve as a classroom representative for your child's classroom this year. (Room representatives are also called "room reps", "room mom", "room dad" or "room parent". We'll use "room representative" for consistency throughout this document.) Room representatives are the "unsung heroes" of any school community. So many of the fun things that our children look forward to during the school year would simply not be possible without your help and support! We depend on assistance from dedicated volunteers and parents, and we sincerely appreciate your help. Teacher expectations of the room representative vary by room. Coordination with your teacher and consistent communication between the teacher, PTF, other room representatives, and parents are the key to a successful school year.

While your role is critical to a successful school year, you're not expected to be a one-person show. Rather than doing everything yourself, try to get to know the other parents in your class. You share a common goal—to make sure your children benefit from the overall classroom experience and learn as much as possible. Many times parents will be glad to help; they just need to be asked and reminded. Just because you haven't heard back from a parent doesn't mean they aren't interested. They just may have forgotten! Provide reminders as you can. Try to vary your requests (what is requested as well as who is asked) so you are not always asking the same thing from the same person each time.

Obtain and maintain current contact information of all the parents from your teacher and send them an introductory email or memo at the beginning of the school year to advise them that you will be helping to coordinate the class' events and that you may be calling upon them for help. Ask the parents what communicate mode (telephone calls, emails, notes in children's folders, etc) works best for them.

Participation in the Parent Teacher Fellowship (PTF) is strongly encouraged for ALL room representatives. You are an important liaison between your teacher, other room parents and PTF functions and events. We invite you to attend the quarterly PTF meetings to keep abreast of current activities and provide your input and ideas. For more information about the Grace Christian PTF please contact your PTF President through the school office at 301-262-0158.

# Teacher Information Sheet

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Birthday: \_\_\_\_\_ Favorite Color: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Food: \_\_\_\_\_ Hobbies: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Restaurant: \_\_\_\_\_

Favorite Places to Shop: \_\_\_\_\_

Other Interest / Pets: \_\_\_\_\_

This information is available through the GCS Administrative Assistant in the school office.

## Typical Classroom Representative Duties

Make an appointment to meet with the classroom teacher(s), to become acquainted and to offer assistance, if needed, with classroom projects, field trips, celebrations, etc.

Attempt to contact the parents of all students in the classroom(s) either by telephone, letter or e-mail. Personal contact is vital in helping parents get involved and making them feel welcome.

Ask the teacher (or families) if any children have food allergies or religious restrictions and try to accommodate their needs.

Set up an e-mail tree to advise / remind families of PTF meetings and school activities and events.

Coordinate with the teacher to ensure that all volunteers who will work directly with children fill out a Volunteer Form available from the school office.

Below are some general responsibilities that you may be asked to support during the year. You are encouraged to enlist the help of classroom parents to accomplish these tasks. Every teacher is different so use this list as a guideline to assist you in understanding your role as a classroom representative. However it is suggested that you discuss your role and the expectations for the year directly with the teacher.

- Teacher Support Resource
  - Classroom supplemental support (reading workshops, weekly bible verse testing, etc.)
- Parent -Teacher Liaison
- Parent-PTF Liaison
- Field Trip Chaperone
- Field Trip Chaperone Coordinator
- Recess Duty Support
- Recess Duty Volunteer Organizer
- Classroom Party / Activity Organizer
  - Organize teacher recognitions (birthday, Christmas, etc.)
  - Assist with the collection of class funds and inform parents of funds collected & used for the various classroom activities.
  - Coordinate and maintain the schedule of weekly classroom volunteers (ie recess duty) & activities, send out reminders to parents who have agreed to volunteer their time
  - Assist in planning of classroom parties/activities and coordinate with the parents regarding any in-class celebrations/activities
- Educational support ( testing bible verses, kindergarten reading evaluations, speed page drills etc.)
- Maintain classroom roster with accurate contact information for parents (can be obtained from the teacher)

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## **Key Events and suggestions:**

Below is a list of typical classroom activities for GCS classes:

- Teacher Birthday
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- Harvest Party
- Thanksgiving Feast
- Christmas
- Valentine's Day
- Easter Celebration
- Grandparent's Day
- Student Birthday Celebrations
- End of the Year Celebration
- Classroom and grade-specific activities (ie: Goofy Green Day, Western Day, 100<sup>th</sup> Day of School, etc.)

### **Teacher Celebrations / Gifts**

If desired, room representatives/parents may collect money from other parents in the classroom for a collective gift from the class for special occasions such as the teacher's birthday, the holidays, or the end of the school year. However, individual parents do have the option of giving the teacher their own individual gifts from their child. As there are "special subject" teachers (i.e., music, art, computer, etc) who do not have homerooms and therefore no room representatives, the PTF normally assigns each of these teachers to a classroom/room representative so that they could also be recognized during Christmas and Teacher Appreciation Week. The PTF Vice-President will ensure that the assignments are rotated fairly and will notify the classroom representatives ahead of time so that they have adequate time to plan for the special subject teacher (if they are assigned one) as well as their own teacher.

### **Student Birthday Celebrations**

If a child's birthday falls within the school year, the child's parent is responsible for providing any special food items that will be used to celebrate their child's birthday during a particular school day. Most often this planning should be lead by the parents and coordinated directly with the teacher. .

### **Student Summer Birthday Celebration**

This is a celebration of all the students in the class with summer birthdays and usually occurs near the end of the school year. It is often done in conjunction with the "end of school year" celebration. Some teachers opt to have this celebration at a nearby park (ie: Allen Pond). The room rep may be asked to assist in reserving a pavilion at the park for the festivities. A deposit is required to reserve the pavilion and can be obtained from a GCS Administrative Assistant. The deposit must then be submitted to the Bowie City Hall's Parks & Planning office. It is recommended that the reservation be made at least one month in advance to secure the desired pavilion. The most popular pavilion at Allen Pond is located near the main playground area - so plan ahead and reserve early. Discuss the necessary reservation requirements with the teacher to determine if your assistance is required.

## Teacher Appreciation Week

This week takes place in late spring to honor and recognize our teachers and their tremendous efforts to educate our children. It's preferred that you don't collect money for gifts, but encourage the children's creativity in making special gifts for their teacher (ie: cards, drawings, baked treat etc.) or themed items that are relatively inexpensive (ie: a flower, a snack item, or a scented candle etc.) In addition, the PTF will be using a portion of the PTF budget to recognize the teachers for this week. You could send home a letter requesting that each student bring in small tokens of appreciation for the teacher (and the "special subject" teacher, if assigned one by the PTF). Usually there is a designated theme for each day of the week which may reflect a teacher's hobbies/interests. To keep things consistent for everyone, here's an example of a schedule that could be followed for the week:

**Sunshine Monday** - Have each student bring in a flower for the teacher. You may want to discuss with your teacher what types of flowers they prefer, as some may have allergies. You should provide a vase for the flowers.

**Take-Out Tuesday** – Find out your teacher's favorite restaurant and deliver their lunch that day during their lunch period. They do not get to leave school for lunch, so what a great way to treat your teacher - to a favorite take-out meal!

**Wednesday – Appreciation Card Day** – Each student should bring in a homemade card to express their appreciation for the teacher. You may wish to provide construction paper in the teacher's favorite color. An alternative is to help the students make one big card, poster, or booklet for the teacher.

**Thursday – Snack Day** – Have each student bring in the teacher's favorite pretzels, popcorn, crackers, etc. You may want to discuss with your teacher what types of snacks they prefer, as some may have dietary restrictions, etc. You should provide a basket or bag in which to collect the snacks.

**Fun-Fun Friday** – The "pies de resistance" - give the teacher a gift card, favorite book, or other special item that the teacher can relax and enjoy over their weekend.

You could also designate a group of children/parents for each day of the week and have a lead parent for each day. That parent could then designate what their group will do, and could even, if they would like, ask for a small monetary contribution (\$1-\$3) from each child to purchase a group gift (like the lunch). Hopefully these guidelines will make things consistent and enjoyable for all the GCS teachers. The key to making this work is communication with the parents by sending home a note or an e-mail the week prior, and reminders the day before items are to be brought in.

## Harvest Party/Thanksgiving Feast/Christmas/Valentine's Day/Easter Celebration

These are usually celebrated in some way by most of the classes. Talk to the teacher about the preferred day to hold the various parties. Most teachers have a specific date in mind. The Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrations usually include lunch (meal provided for the

students, in addition to a few games and a craft activity). The other parties (Harvest, Valentine's and Easter) are usually snacks/desserts and games and a craft, but may also include lunch. Discuss menu plans with the teacher. Also plan the menu to account for any children who have food allergies. Seek parent assistance with contributing food items and supplies needed for the party. Also request parent volunteers to assist with set-up, execution, clean-up, and to lead games, crafts or activities that may be planned. You can't do all the planning and preparation by yourself nor should you even try. Parent involvement is critical to a successful classroom party/celebration!

### **Additional Party Information**

Party ideas can be found at the link below. This has proven to be a helpful resource for various school-themed games and activities:

<http://www.reasonparty.com/schoolevents.htm>

Crafts for parties are usually purchased through the Oriental Trading Co.(Grace Christian School has an account with them). Each teacher is allotted a budget for the crafts for the school year. Please discuss available craft budget funds with the teacher and if she needs any assistance in planning/ordering the crafts for the year.

## Helpful Hints & Tips from Past Room Representatives:

- Meet the Parents! Arrange a class get together at the playground or a meet and greet after a PTF meeting. This gives faces to the names of parents in the classroom and instills a spirit of cooperation right from the start.
- Call or send a letter/e-mail to your parents just to introduce yourself. By doing so, you will be surprised how much more cooperation you receive when you call for help. Give them your phone number and let them know they can call you also. When you take the time to personally call a parent, you get a sense of whom you can depend on later. Included in this handbook is a sample letter you may complete and copy to send home to parents. Also included is a sheet to record phone numbers and email addresses..
- Contact your teacher at the beginning of the year to obtain a calendar of events with dates for parties. Then confirm with the teacher at least two weeks prior to the party to find out what is needed. As soon as the date is confirmed, begin contacting parents for assistance.
- When asking for help, be specific! Let your parents know exactly what you need from them. "Can you be at the school from 1:00 to 2:00?"
- Keep in contact with your teacher to determine what assistance he/she may require (ie: recess duty coverage, donation of snacks during testing etc.) Check with the teacher before you contact parents or begin planning an activity/party...
- Use your parent volunteers to assist you planning the activities or making phone calls to other parents for food contributions or to solicit volunteers for party set-up. . You may be asked to help identify volunteers for school-wide events, so please keep a record of your reliable volunteers.
- Consider collecting a class fund donation from each family to cover class events, parties, celebrations, etc. Work with the teacher to estimate the appropriate amount to collect. If a class fund is collected, regular accounting of the funds to each family will allow transparency into the use of the funds. This is very important so parents know exactly where and how their donated money is being spent. Provide families with an alternative to a monetary donation for class parties/activities (Please see attached Parent Volunteer Form). This form can be disseminated to your parents to determine how they would like to volunteer for the classroom activities/parties throughout the school year.
- Encourage collaborations with other classes. This will leverage the resources of twice as many families and also provide a wider pool of volunteers. Several of the larger celebrations (i.e. Thanksgiving, Christmas) are often done with both classes in a particular grade. Discuss with the teacher which parties should be planned as joint-class events.

- Do not feel like you must do or provide everything yourself. It can be overwhelming without parent involvement and assistance. It is very important that you give other parents an opportunity to be involved. It is vital that no parent feels left out of an opportunity to benefit the classroom.

**Any letters, e-mails or other correspondence you wish to send to the parents must be given to the teacher for review prior to sending out. However, the teacher would likely understand your sending some emails out without prior approval (i.e. if you're planning a surprise for him/her). Just be sure to discuss this subject/approval process with the teacher at the beginning of the school year.**

- Make a list of each parent promised donation (i.e. food, supplies etc.). Ask the parents to label items they send to the classroom. Follow up on what has not been sent in.
- Try to remember that your classroom is part of the larger network of classrooms. When the opportunity arises, encourage the parents you meet to participate in PTF meetings, fundraisers and school-wide events. Please lead by example. Parents will more likely continue their involvement if they see others they know at PTF events. You are a crucial conduit of information from individual parents to the PTF.
- Be determined but patient. If a parent can't help, call them the next time. If a particular parent says he/she can't come in to help with a party/activity, ask for something easy like paper goods, drinks or even a monetary contribution for the class party expenses.
- Team up with the other classroom representatives to help with the planning. They can offer insights and ideas that you may not have thought of in planning your activities.

If you have not noticed the recurring theme - - please remember that the classroom representative is not expected to do everything themselves. It is a collaborative effort with the teacher, parents, other classroom representative/s as well as the PTF officers - so remember to use your available resources.

## Parent Involvement Form

During the school year, the students in this class will be participating in a variety of activities and parties. As Room Rep, I would like to know how your family can assist and support the teacher with these activities and parties for your children.

■ I realize that your schedules are very busy and you may prefer to make a monetary contribution to assist with the expenses involved in the parties:

\_\_\_\_\_ My name is \_\_\_\_\_ and  
I prefer to make a cash contribution of \$ \_\_\_\_\_. If this is your preference, please return this form with the cash contribution in an envelope marked “class party fund”. A receipt will be sent home with your child.

■ Others may prefer to be involved by sending in needed items (ie: food, drinks, paper ware etc). While others may prefer volunteering their time to assist with party activities and games or set-up and clean-up:

\_\_\_\_\_ My name is \_\_\_\_\_  
and I prefer to send in needed items or volunteer my time helping out with the parties/activities. The best way to reach me is:

By phone: \_\_\_\_\_ between the hours of \_\_\_\_\_

By email: \_\_\_\_\_

*Thank you for your participation. Please return this form to your child’s teacher as soon as possible and no later than \_\_\_\_\_. Thanks for your support and assistance in making this a great year for your children!*