

# *Class Parent Handbook*

**Bank Street School For Children Parents Association**



*2016-17*

# *Class Parent Handbook*

## **Bank Street School For Children Parents Association**

### *2016-17*

## *Introduction*

Thank you so much for volunteering your time to be a Class Parent! Class Parents play a vital role in the efforts of the Parents Association (PA) to facilitate communication with the Administration of the School for Children (SFC) and encourage a strong sense of community within the SFC. The PA Executive Board looks forward to working with you, and we hope that your Class Parent experience will be rewarding and enjoyable.

This handbook is intended to provide you with a general explanation of your responsibilities as a Class Parent. The following Class Parent tasks are covered in more detail below:

- Attending monthly divisional parent meetings
- Managing classroom communications
- Organizing fall and spring potluck breakfasts
- Overseeing at least one potluck dinner for parents
- Acting as liaisons with the divisional Co-Vice Presidents
- Supporting the Fall Fair and Auction & Benefit committees
- Assisting in classroom community service projects

Over the course of the year, the PA Executive Board will provide you with additional guidance to assist you in your duties. If you have any questions or concerns about specific tasks or situations, please feel free to address them to your divisional Co-Vice Presidents or to the PA's [email address](#).

## *Divisional Parent Meetings*

Once a month, each of the three SFC divisions — Lower School, Middle School, and Upper School — holds a parent meeting attended by the relevant division Coordinator and conducted by the representing Co-Vice Presidents. While all parents are welcome to join these meetings, participation by at least one Class Parent from each class is expected. These meetings are a forum to promote communication among parents and SFC representatives, and they provide a venue in which to share information and address issues and challenges that may arise throughout the course of the school year.

## *Managing Communications*

### **Parent Contact Lists and Email Groups**

In September, Class Parents should take steps to create an accurate parent contact list that includes a class email group. Because the information in the online School Directory may not be up-to-date, Class Parents should confer with their classroom teachers and send initial test messages to ensure that all parents are receiving emails. Once a definitive email group has been compiled, Class Parents should share this information with their Co-Vice Presidents.

## Keeping Parents Informed

The PA Co-Presidents will take responsibility for disseminating most PA communications to the parent body. On occasion, however, the Co-Vice Presidents may ask Class Parents to forward urgent or time-sensitive emails to those on their class lists. While Class Parents should use email judiciously, they are encouraged to keep parents informed about potlucks, community service projects, and other events and topics relevant to their particular classrooms.

Furthermore, the PA asks that Class Parents advise parents of the SFC's expectations for parent involvement. There is a significant need for parent volunteers among the SFC committees, as well as for parent participation in SFC events. By articulating volunteer expectation explicitly and early, Class Parents can help assure that families will make the effort to volunteer. And by notifying parents of opportunities to lend a hand or show support, Class Parents can spread the word that there are many ways — large and small — that parents can meet their obligation to help.

## *Classroom Potluck Breakfasts*

The spring and fall potluck breakfasts allow parents, children, and teachers an opportunity to meet and socialize in a relaxed atmosphere. The fall potluck — as the first family event of the school year—plays an important role in establishing a strong class community. The spring potluck provides the setting for presenting class gifts to teachers.

Lower School and Middle School potlucks are pre-scheduled and are held on the deck. Upper School potlucks are organized in collaboration with the teachers and take place in the classrooms. All potlucks run from 8:00 - 9:00 am.

### **A few pointers:**

- Pre-scheduled Lower and Middle School potluck dates are printed in the [SFC calendar](#). Forms have been submitted for table requests and coffee/tea service on those dates. Upper School Class Parents need to arrange coffee/tea service with Janice in the 2nd floor kitchen.
- Notify parents of the potluck date by email and post a sign-up sheet for parents to list the items they plan to bring to the potluck — ask your Co-Vice Presidents for a [template](#) or consider using a website such as [Sign Up Genius](#). A reminder email in the days preceding the potluck is also helpful.
- Make arrangements for at least one parent to arrive early on the day of the potluck to ensure a smooth set-up process.
- Name tags are available from Kelvin in the 3rd floor office, and their use is encouraged. If there are new families in your class, please be sure to take time to introduce them to the group.
- Enlist other parents to help in cleaning up after the potluck. Return play materials to their proper places, break down the tables, and return any items belonging to the 2nd floor kitchen. Clean away all trash after a thorough check of the space — *this is critical due to the range food-related allergies and health issues among SFC children*.
- In the event of inclement weather, potlucks scheduled for the deck will take place in either the CDR or the classroom.
- Potluck breakfasts provide teachers a time to socialize, too. Please remind parents that they are responsible for supervising their own children during these events.

## *Potluck Dinners for Parents*

Potluck dinners are informal, “parents only” social gatherings outside of the SFC that provide an occasion for parents to better get to know one another. While classes are encouraged to have a potluck in the fall, busy schedules may mean that a winter date is more convenient. A class potluck may be held in the home of class family that volunteers to host, or at a restaurant. The CDR and other rooms at Bank Street are also available but must be reserved ahead of schedule with Kelvin Ward.

While there is no single recommended approach to organizing a potluck dinner, Class Parents are asked to be mindful of the diversity of cultures and resources among SFC families. Please be sensitive to the needs of individual families and try your best to ensure that everyone feels welcome, comfortable, and able to contribute in some way. Use your best judgment based on your sense of the class and the needs of your host.

### **Some guidance:**

- Early in the school year, send out a class-wide email asking if anyone is interested in hosting the potluck. The Class Parents should work with the host to decide the nature of the event and choose a date that is convenient for the host and most families.
- Please try to give as much advance notice as possible so that families can make arrangements for child-care. Post a sign-up sheet for items, and assist the host in coordinating the details of the event.
- Please do not invite teachers — while the gesture would certainly be appreciated, it can be a burden for them.

## *Class Parents as Liaisons*

It is the role of the Class Parents to communicate to the Co-Vice Presidents issues of importance expressed by parents. Class Parents should report any concerns — whether large or small — to the relevant divisional Co-Vice Presidents. Clear communication of such concerns allows the Co-Vice Presidents to take constructive measures to properly address them and plan the agendas for monthly divisional meetings.

When possible, use drop-off and pick-up time to take stock of the group and identify any concerns that arise. Be sure to touch base with new families, in particular, and see how they are acclimating. It is also helpful to reach out to parents prior to the monthly divisional meetings — encourage them to attend, and invite them to share any issues or questions that they would like to have raised at the meeting.

## *Support for Fundraising & Community Service*

The Fall Fair and the Annual Auction & Benefit are extremely important fundraising and community-building events at the SFC. They are planned, for the most part, by parent volunteers, and the SFC urges all parents to contribute to each event in some way. Class Parents are asked to promote parent involvement in both the Fall Fair and the Auction.

## **The Fall Fair**

Sponsored by the PA, the Fall Fair is the SFC's second-largest fundraiser and a beloved SFC tradition. Its successful execution depends upon the participation of all parents, and a parent from every SFC family is expected to work at least a one-hour shift at the Fall Fair. Class Parents work with the Fall Fair Committee by passing on information to parents and making sure that parents sign up to work shifts at the event.

## **The Annual Auction & Benefit**

Held in the early spring, the Auction is the SFC's primary fundraising event. Not only a critical source of revenue for the Annual Fund, the Auction is an evening of fun and excitement for parents, teachers, administrators, and friends of the SFC. The Auction Committee requests that Class Parents encourage parents to contribute to the Auction and advise them of the many ways that they can help: by donating or soliciting goods or services for the auction; by underwriting costs associated with the event; and by donating extra tickets for teachers. Furthermore, Class Parents should urge parents to attend the party.

## **Support for the Community Service**

Where community service projects are tied to the curriculum, Class Parents serve as "community service ambassadors." Class Parents may be asked to work with teachers to organize community service projects and work together with other parents to help children carry out those projects.