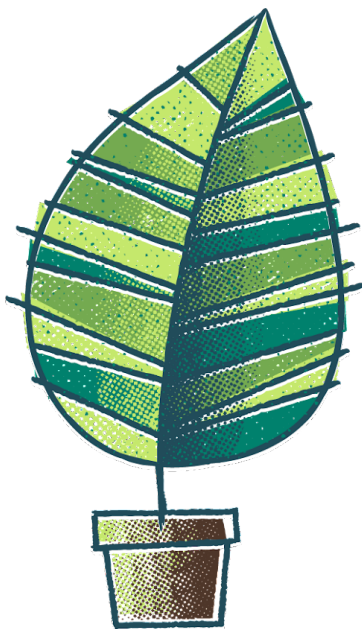


CLASS COLLABORATOR HANDBOOK

2023-2024



The
**DISCOVERY
SCHOOL**
EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Discovery School
4225 Middle Road
Allison Park, PA 15101
(412) 712-7307
info@discoveryschoolpgh.com

ROLE OF CLASS COLLABORATOR

Mission: The Discovery School engages families, honors children as unique beings, and inspires them to explore and construct meaning of the world around them. We value families as essential members of our school community. By truly listening to our families, we strive to create the conditions that foster engagement. The Class Collaborators play an integral role in connecting and fostering a deeper sense of community for Discovery School children, families, and educators.

What is a Class Collaborator? You are an important part of The Discovery School community, and can help to establish a link between our families and our school. A Class Collaborator...

- **collaborates** with educators and families to plan and communicate about upcoming events
- **coordinates** volunteer efforts for celebrations, special events, and fundraising
- **connects** with other families by organizing class gifts, play-dates, and community building efforts

Time Expectation: The class collaborators group holds virtual meetings once a month, typically lasting an hour or less. Time expectations vary month to month depending upon the month's events, however, parents can expect to volunteer about 1-2 hours of their time per month on average.

NONDISCRIMINATORY POLICY

All programs, policies, and services of Discovery School Pittsburgh Inc. are administered without discrimination in regard to race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, gender identity, sexual orientation, family structure, neurodiverse learning styles, age, physical or mental ability, national origin, immigration status, veteran status, physical appearance, religion, and language and any other basis protected by state or federal law.

ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE

- Chair
 - Send out agenda once/month on the second Tuesday of the month
 - Facilitate meetings once/month with class collaborators
 - Regularly communicate with school to coordinate upcoming events and fundraisers
 - Communicate and implement accountability systems for upcoming events
 - Communicate with future chair about a succession plan
- Vice Chair
 - Support chair in facilitating monthly meetings and events
 - Keep organized record of the monthly meeting within shared Class Collaborators Notes document and shares out via email with group members after each meeting.
 - Step in to facilitate meetings when chair is unavailable
- Treasurer
 - Manage the Class Collaborator Budget
 - Communicate with committees about fundraising and financial matters
 - Work with Katie Spencer to coordinate material orders
- Class Collaborators (up to 2 per class)
 - Attend monthly virtual meetings (if you are unable to attend the meeting, review the agenda and communicate with your committee).
 - Email any monthly updates to class teacher by third Friday of the month
 - Set up a classwide communication system (text, email, etc.).
 - Communicate with classroom families about upcoming events
 - Work with educators to plan for upcoming events/projects
 - Coordinate classroom volunteer efforts when needed
 - Join and actively participate within a class collaborator committee

MEETING STRUCTURE

Meetings will be held virtually on the third Tuesday of each month from 1:00-1:45pm, unless otherwise indicated on the Discovery School calendar. The agenda will be available on the second Tuesday of the month and meeting notes will be updated by the Friday following the meeting. Monthly meetings will be facilitated by the Chair, the chair will briefly review important information from the last meeting, the treasurer will share current budget/and or financial considerations, the chair will then invite each committee to share ideas and updates, and the chair will conclude with next steps. The vice- chair will keep record of the meeting and share out with the group by the Friday following the monthly meeting.

COMMITTEES

School Event Committee: The purpose of this committee is to organize and facilitate the various school celebrations and events throughout the school year. The School Event Committee will take on a leadership role in planning these events, but will have the support and involvement of the class collaborators and parent volunteers. This committee will stay up-to-date with the school year calendar to help keep class collaborators accountable and on track (ex. check in to ensure that class collaborators are coordinating volunteers for snacks/costumes for fall celebration). School events include the following:

- Seasonal Family Celebrations
 - Fall Family Celebration
 - Winter Family Celebration
 - Spring Family Celebration
- Monthly Parent Coffees
- Family Volunteer Day(s)

Community Events Committee (Autumn Fest: October 2024): The purpose of this committee is to plan, organize and facilitate the Autumn Fest community event, featuring fall-themed activities, live music, silent auction, etc.

Sunshine Committee: The purpose of this committee is to uplift the school community through acts of service, kindness and support. Examples that would fall under the scope of the Sunshine committee are assembling resource library basket (1 per year), decorating foyer for seasons, teacher appreciation, arranging teacher gifts, supporting Discovery School families in times of need, community outreach events such as end of the year gear swap, food drive, mitten tree, etc.

Fundraising & Projects Committee: The purpose of this committee is to plan, organize and implement fundraising and special project efforts throughout the school year. Examples that might fall under the scope of the Fundraising and Projects Committee would be the twice yearly fundraisers, the annual sprout project, campus beautification, meadow restoration, year-to-year projects and goals. This committee will be led by the treasurer who is responsible for helping to allocate funds appropriately and keeping track of incoming/outgoing funds.

VOLUNTEER POLICY

We recognize that early childhood is a special time for families, and we celebrate family involvement at The Discovery School. There are many diverse opportunities to get involved in your child's school experience. Educators regularly include parents in special celebrations, request volunteers for projects and/or excursions, as well as welcome parents who want to share a special tradition, interest or talent with the class. Some opportunities require clearances, while others do not.

- **Clearances Required:** field trips, off campus excursions, in-class support for celebration/project
- **No Clearances Needed:** event set up/takedown, family share, birthday celebrations, snack donation, costume prep, creating table activities for celebrations, on-campus excursion volunteer, etc.

Volunteer Clearances:

Volunteers who will be in direct contact with children in the school building are required to obtain all clearances (Child Abuse History Clearance, PA State Police Criminal History, FBI Fingerprint Criminal History). If you are interested in volunteering in the classroom, please submit clearances to info@discoveryschoolpgh.com.

1. Child Abuse History Clearance (www.compass.state.pa.us/cwis/public/home)
Submit copy of "PA Child Abuse History Certification"
2. PA State Police Request for Criminal History (<https://epatch.pa.gov/home>)
Submit copy of "Response for Criminal Record Check"
3. FBI Fingerprint Criminal History (<https://uenroll.identogo.com/>), enter service code: 1KG6V5
Submit copy of "Proof of Fingerprint Submission"

CELEBRATIONS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

At The Discovery School our celebrations honor our shared human values within a diverse school community. Together we celebrate the values of inclusion, gratitude, imagination, loving kindness, and the joy of nature. Through thoughtful, anti-biased planning and communication we ensure that ALL children and families feel included in each celebration regardless of culture or belief system. We recognize and appreciate the importance of celebrating traditions as an integral part of a child's self and cultural identity. Families are welcomed and encouraged to share their special traditions and celebrations of their culture and belief system with the class during a scheduled Family Share at any time during the school year.

DESCRIPTIONS & VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

School & Community Events

Description	Class Collaborators	Volunteer Opportunities
<p>Fall Family Gathering: Families and classes gather together to celebrate the fall season in the morning after drop off. Typically 2-3 classes and their families celebrate together with coffee, a parade, singing, snacks, and table activities in the courtyard or by the nature playground.</p>	<p>Work with the teacher to determine costume idea that children can create/embellish.</p> <p>Prep/Create templates for nature-themed costumes (ex. Frogs, squirrels, pumpkins, leaves, etc.)</p> <p>Coordinate volunteers to bring snacks, create table activities/crafts, set up/takedown event.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: none</p> <p>No Clearances: Bring in snacks Prep costumes Create table activities Set up/takedown event</p>
<p>Winter Family Gathering: Families and classes gather together to celebrate the winter season. Typically 2-3 classes and their families celebrate together with coffee, interactive storytelling, singing, snacks, and table activities in the gymnasium.</p>	<p>Work with teachers to determine costumes and/or props.</p> <p>Coordinate volunteers to bring snacks, create table activities/crafts, decorate, and set up/takedown the event</p>	<p>Clearances Required: none</p> <p>No Clearances: Bring in snacks Prep costumes/props Decorate gym before event Create table activities Set up/takedown event</p>
<p>Spring Family Gathering: Individual classes gather with their families to celebrate the spring season and end of the year through picnic, singing, and celebration. Educators typically host this event for families and no class collaborator support is needed.</p>	<p>none</p>	<p>Clearances Required: none</p> <p>No Clearances: none</p>
<p>Family Volunteer Day(s): Each spring families are invited to come to the nature campus and work on campus projects (ex. planting trees).</p>	<p>Communicate event details to classroom families.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: none</p> <p>No Clearances: Attend the event</p>
<p>Parent Coffees: The last Thursday and Friday of each month, the class collaborators host a parent coffee social in the community room. The purpose of this event is to get to know one another and build community.</p>	<p>Communicate event details to classroom families.</p> <p>Help set up coffee station</p> <p>Attend the event (when possible)</p>	<p>Clearances Required: none</p> <p>No Clearances: Attend the event</p>
<p>Autumn Festival (coming in Oct. 2024): Current TDS families will work together to host a community-wide event on campus featuring fall-themed activities, live music, silent auction, etc.</p>	<p>Communicate event details and encourage participation in the event planning committee.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: none</p> <p>No Clearances: Attend event Create fall-themed activity Organize auction basket(s) Coordinate entertainment Set up/takedown event</p>

Classroom Events:

Description	Class Collaborators	Volunteer Opportunities
<p>Celebration of Gratitude (Nov): Classes will celebrate the value of gratitude during circle time as well as through special projects and community service.</p>	<p>Work with teachers to determine possible community service project.</p> <p>Communicate with classroom families about project.</p> <p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: In-class support for project</p> <p>No Clearances: Out-of-class support for project</p>
<p>Celebration of Diversity (Jan): Classes will “celebrate differences” through stories, activities and projects that explore identity and inclusion.</p>	<p>Coordinate any volunteers needed</p>	<p>Clearances Required: In-class support for event</p> <p>No Clearances: Out-of-class support for event</p>
<p>Celebration of Love (Feb): Classes will celebrate loving kindness through story, shared messages/treats to peers, and craft.</p>	<p>Communicate with classroom families about sending in class notes/treats (include class list of names).</p> <p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: In-class support for event</p> <p>No Clearances: Out-of-class support for event</p>
<p>Celebration of Imagination (Mar): Classes will celebrate imagination and the joy of nature in Spring (fairies, unicorns, etc.) through music, play, story, and adventure.</p>	<p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: In-class support for event</p> <p>No Clearances: Out-of-class support for event</p>
<p>Celebration of our Earth (Apr): Classes will celebrate Mother Earth through special sustainability-themed projects.</p>	<p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: In-class support for event</p> <p>No Clearances: Out-of-class support for event</p>
<p>Special Class Projects & Excursions: Classes may schedule special projects or campus excursions throughout the school year.</p>	<p>Communicate to families.</p> <p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: In-class support for event</p> <p>No Clearances: Out-of-class support for event</p>
<p>Sprout Project (Kindergarten Only): Each year the kindergarten families will collaborate on a special “legacy” project to benefit the future children of The Discovery School.</p>	<p>Act as liaison with kindergarten families to collaborate on project idea.</p> <p>Communicate details of project to classroom families.</p> <p>Coordinate any needed volunteers.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: In-class support for project</p> <p>No Clearances: Out-of-class support for project</p>

Fundraisers:

Description	Class Collaborators	Volunteer Opportunities
TDS Merchandise Sale: Each fall we will order/sell TDS specific items (ex. T-shirts, tote bags, etc.).	<p>Communicate details of the sale to classroom families.</p> <p>Encourage participation in the fundraising committee.</p>	<p>Clearances Required:</p> <p>No Clearances: Marketing efforts Organize sale items to pass out to families.</p>
Spark Book Fair: Each spring, TDS partners with Spark Books on a book fair. We set up a book browsing area in the community room, and families can order books online. Spark Books also hosts an "in store" evening for TDS families.	<p>Communicate details of the sale to classroom families.</p> <p>Encourage participation in the fundraising committee.</p> <p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required:</p> <p>No Clearances: Attend event Set up/takedown book browsing area</p>

Field Trips & Excursions:

Description	Class Collaborators	Volunteer Opportunities
PRE-K: Our PreK classes may participate in a nature excursion at Hartwood Acres in the fall and/or spring. Our TDS educators will lead the excursion, focusing on using our senses to explore nature in the season.	<p>Communicate details of the excursion to classroom families.</p> <p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: Excursion volunteer</p> <p>No Clearances:</p>
KINDERGARTEN: Our kindergarten class will participate in a field trip to Goat Rodeo Farm in the fall and spring to learn more about a working farm in various seasons, visit with goats, explore the cheese making process and participate in seasonal activities.	<p>Communicate details of the excursion to classroom families.</p> <p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: Field trip volunteer</p> <p>No Clearances:</p>
ALL CLASSES: Our preschool, PreK, and kindergarten classes will have opportunities to host "in-school" visits from a local expert/naturalist to dig deeper into a seasonal topic of interest.	<p>Communicate details of the event to classroom families.</p> <p>Coordinate any volunteers needed.</p>	<p>Clearances Required: Event volunteer</p> <p>No Clearances: none</p>

MEETING SCHEDULE: YEAR AT A GLANCE

Month	Meeting	Focus Area	Celebrations/Event
September	12th @9:00 In person	Parent Coffee & Informal Information Meeting	
September	19th @9:00 In person	Welcome, committee sign-up, fall celebration planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome Days • Parent Coffee
October	17th @1:00	Fall Celebration Upcoming fundraiser planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Coffee • Fall Celebrations (26th-31st)
November	21st @1:00	Winter Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Coffee • DS Merch Fundraiser
December	12th @1:00	Winter Celebration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Coffee • Winter Celebrations
January	16th @1:00	Harvest Planning (Fall of 2024) Night hike/movie night	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Coffee
February	20th @1:00	Harvest Planning Spark Book Fair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Coffee • Night hike/movie night
March	19th @1:00	Harvest Planning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parent Coffee • Spark Book Fair (in person event)
April	16th @1:00	Sprout Project- Kindergarten Family Volunteer Day	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fundraiser • Parent Coffee
May	21st @1:00	Fun get together and yearly reflections Message to next year's group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Teacher Appreciation Week (6th-10th) • Sprout Project • Family Volunteer Day

COMMUNICATION

Collaborator Group Communication:

- The Class Collaborator Chair will send out a monthly agenda before the meeting (2nd Tuesday of the month) and the Vice Chair will send out meeting notes afterwards via email.
- The group can communicate via email intermittently as needed.

Collaborator & Class Communication:

- Class Collaborator will set up a class email group, and will communicate periodically to inform families about upcoming events, volunteer opportunities and projects.
- Class Collaborator can email the classroom educator any monthly updates that they would like included in the classroom newsletter by the 3rd Friday of each month.
- Class Collaborator and educators can communicate in person, via Brightwheel message or email intermittently as needed.
- See below - "Sample Communication Templates" for ideas on what to share with the class.

Collaborator & School Communication:

- Collaborator Chair or Vice Chair may share messages with Katie Spencer (business manager) that they would like to be shared with the school community. Katie will share messages via Brightwheel.
- Collaborator Chair or Vice Chair may manage and post on The Discovery School Families facebook page.

Sample Communication Templates:

Beginning of Year: Hello ____ Families! I wanted to reach out to introduce myself. My name is ____, and I will be the Class Collaborator for the ____ class this school year. I will be working together with our teachers to help plan celebrations, class events and coordinate volunteer opportunities.

Additionally, I am looking forward to planning some get-togethers for children and parents on non-school days. I plan to reach out periodically via email to keep everyone updated on what is happening throughout the year. Please feel free to reach out with any questions! I'm excited for a fun-filled school year ahead.

Fall Family Celebration: Our Fall Family Celebration is around the corner, and we are beginning to plan ahead to make it a successful event. This event is open to the whole family, and typically takes place in the morning from ____ to _____. The event includes a short outdoor costume parade, songs, as well as time for snacks and socializing. The children will create their costumes at school out of reused materials.

After meeting with our teachers, the ____ class has decided to create ____ themed costumes. They could use some help preparing some parts of the costume, creating a fun table activity for the kids, as well as volunteering to bring in snacks/drinks. Please click the sign-up genius link below to sign up to volunteer. Thank you so much for your help. We are looking forward to a memorable event for children and families! (*create a sign-up genius that lists out details of each volunteer opportunity - mark which opps require clearances*).

Winter Family Celebration: Our Winter Family Celebration is around the corner, and we are beginning to plan ahead to make it a successful event. This event is open to the whole family, and typically takes place in the morning from ____ to _____. The event is located in the gymnasium, and includes a short child-centered performance as well as time for snacks and socializing.

After meeting with our teachers, the ____ class could use some help preparing a fun table activity for the kids, as well as volunteering to bring in snacks/drinks. Please click the sign-up genius link below to sign up to volunteer. Thank you so much for your help. We are looking forward to a memorable event for children and families! *(create a sign-up genius that lists out details of each volunteer opportunity - mark which opps require clearances).*

Spring Family Celebration: Our Spring Family Celebration is around the corner, and we are beginning to plan ahead to make it a successful event. This event is open to the whole family, and typically takes place in the afternoon from ____ to ____ . The event is located outdoors on the nature campus, and includes a picnic lunch, songs, and time for playing and socializing on the nature playground .

Just a friendly reminder to pack your family a picnic lunch from home and bring along a blanket to sit on. We hope you can all join us for the event!

Parent Coffee: We hope you can join other parents for coffee after drop off in the community room. It's a great opportunity to meet families from other classes and build community! The Class Collaborators will be hosting parent coffee events on the last Thursday/Friday of each month.

Family Volunteer Day: We hope you can join us to beautify our nature campus and reimagine our playspaces on ____! We have planned several volunteer projects ranging from ____ to ____ . Most of the projects are for adults, but children are always welcome. Bring along shovels, water bottles, work gloves and comfy clothes. If you are interested, please sign up here! *(attach the link to the school sign up genius).*

Field Trip/Excursion/Special Project: The ____ class has planned a field trip/excursion/special project on ____ from ____ to ____ . The class will be ____ *(insert short description of what the class will be doing)*. After talking with the teachers, they could use several volunteers to help out! If you are interested, please sign up here! *(create a sign-up genius that lists out details of each volunteer opportunity - mark which opps require clearances).*

Book Fair Fundraiser: Spark Books is hosting a Book Fair from ____ to ____ . Parents - come have a coffee and check out the curated books on display after drop off in the community room! Orders can be placed online by going to *(insert link to website)*. For more information, check out the attached flyer *(attach the marketing flyer)*. Want to add to our classroom library? Check out our ____ class wishlist *(insert link to the wishlist website)*.

Additionally, we could use some volunteer help to set up and take down our curated book area in the community room on ____ and ____ . If you're interested in helping out, please sign up here! *(insert sign up genius link here)*.

Out-of-School Playdate/Get Together (at school): Hello ____ families! I wanted to reach out to let you all know that we are planning an out-of-school playdate on ____ at ____ . We plan to meet after school by the swings. Be sure to bring along a picnic lunch for you and your child. We will find an area to picnic and then spend about an hour playing at the nature playground. We hope you can join us!

Out-of-School Playdate/Get Together (local park/location): Hello ____ families! I wanted to reach out to let you all know that we are planning an out-of-school playdate on ____ at ____ . We plan to meet at ____ at ____ for a short hike and playtime. We hope to see you and your children there!