

Party Planning 101

Acting on feedback from parents, staff and administration, the PSO has put together the following information to make party planning at PCCS more eco-friendly and manageable. It is not our intention to eliminate the fun these parties provide for our children, just some of the waste. So, in the spirit of our school's environmentally-focused curriculum and our Wellness Policy, please read the following guidelines, along with tips and ideas, for throwing a fabulous green, health conscious, all-around-fun classroom party!!!

Guidelines

We ask that you please adhere to these.

- Classroom Dishes:** At the request of administration, the PSO has purchased a set of reusable plates, cups, spoons and forks for each classroom. The dishes and utensils are a plant-based, sustainable material and they meet all USDA and FDA food-safety standards. They are microwavable and dishwasher safe. To reduce trash, as well as party cost, please use these in lieu of paper products. Students only need a napkin from home. Just make sure to coordinate a parent to wash the dishes after the party, returning them clean the next school day.
- Food:** We recommend having a variety of healthy options and one sweet treat per student. Keep candy to a minimum, especially at Halloween.
- Activities:** There is only a little over an hour to celebrate. Keep it a party and not a rat race. Plan activities that will not overwhelm the students or the parent volunteers.
- Crafts:** Please keep in mind our environmental focus and try to use sustainable materials. Refrain from using Styrofoam, and try to avoid plastics and foams.
- Party Favors:** Again, keep it green and make sure party favors are useful in some way. Try to steer away from cheap, mass-produced, plastic toys and tchotchkes that quickly end up broken in the trash.

Tips and Ideas

We hope these will encourage all parents to embrace PCCS's unique focus and spark even more ways to make classroom parties at both fun and ecologically-friendly.

Food: Sharing a common meal is a wonderful way to celebrate holidays and special occasions. When planning the classroom party, menu moderation is the key to success!

- It is fine to have cookies or brownies or cupcakes (or even an ice-cream station), just refrain from having ALL of these treats at once.
- Keep portion-sizes in mind too; especially in the younger grades, smaller cupcakes and cookies are much more practical and less wasteful than mammoth-sized ones.
- A variety of healthy snack options include pretzels, cheese and whole grain crackers, fruit, veggies and dip. Pizza or a popcorn station with different toppings is another alternative.
- An adult should supervise food distribution. Please use plastic gloves or a serving utensil.
- Please be sensitive that some students have allergies and refrain from sending in anything that contains nuts or nut by-products.

Activities: Keep in mind the interest and age of the students when planning party activities and the parent help needed, and your classroom party will be a hit.

- Party activities can range from games and crafts to turning on music and dancing.
- If the weather cooperates, check with the classroom teacher to see if an extra recess can be part of your party plans. Revive some games from your youth like freeze tag, wax museum, operator or Simon says the kids will think they've discovered something new!

- Consider keeping it simple with some party snacks and a short movie or cartoon.
- Reach out to other classrooms in the grade band to see if combining efforts would be beneficial and throw one big party! CHECK WITH THE TEACHERS FIRST!
- Have only one craft project and a couple of games so kids have time to enjoy each activity.

Crafts: Remember that time is limited so try to keep the craft simple. If the project is something that will need some time to dry, it is best to do it at the beginning of the party. Keeping our environmental focus in mind need not discourage creativity!

- Decorate cloth napkins with fabric paint.
- Have students write their favorite thing about the season or holiday. Have them decorate the page with stickers or art materials that match the colors of the season.
- Create seasonal keepsake decorations using handprints and/or the children's drawings.
- Make picture frames made from card stock and have the students decorate them.
- Roll the craft project and party sweet treats into one and have the students decorate a cookie, cupcake or Rice Krispie Treat.
- Create collages using pictures cut from magazines and catalogs. Choose a fun season-related theme and watch the creativity blossom.
- Make pine cone bird feeders.
- Make cards for a nursing home, hospital or shelter.
- Make gingerbread houses out of graham crackers and decorate.

Party Favors: Simple, simple, simple.

- Often parents wish to send in take-home party favors. A great way to do this while still respecting our environmental focus is to make sure these party favors are useful in some way. Pencils, pens, erasers and stickers are all items that kids love to receive (and use.)
- Use the craft as the party favor.
- If several parents ask to send in party favors, suggest they go in on a small class gift such as a new soccer ball, football, classroom board game or jump rope. Ask the teacher for suggestions.

We so appreciate all the dedicated parents who step forward to provide awesome experiences and memories for our students! Thank you!

