



**WATCHUNG PTA
NEW STUDENT HANDBOOK 2016-2017**

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Dear Watchung Families,

Welcome back to all returning families and a big WELCOME to all new families. I am so proud and honored to be the PTA President for the 2016-2017 school year.

The PTA at Watchung has a long and successful history of uniting parents, caregivers, teachers, administrators, and members of the greater Montclair community to enrich the educational experience of our children. The PTA works throughout the year to create memorable moments for students and families and support our administration and teachers as they deliver an education rich in science, technology and the arts.

We can't do any of this without the help and support of the entire Watchung community.

1. Please join the PTA. Membership dues are very reasonable. It's the first (and easiest) way to show your child that Watchung is important to you. If you're able, we'd love to see you at the **PTA welcome coffee in the gym on the first day of school, immediately after drop-off.** You can learn more about and sign-up for PTA activities, as well as catch up with friends and make some new ones!

2. Stay informed. PTA meetings are held every 4-6 weeks, alternating between mornings and evenings so that everyone can be involved. Babysitting will be provided at evening meetings. Please visit our website at www.watchungpta.org, which contains the schedule and emails for all PTA Board and committee chairs, and "like" us on Facebook at <https://www.facebook.com/WatchungPta>.

3. Volunteer. Research shows that students whose parents are involved in their education have better grades and fewer discipline problems. For the PTA to be effective and truly representative of the school, everyone's participation is essential. Some parents feel that they can't participate in the PTA because they can't come to meetings or be physically present at school during the day. We want everyone to feel that they are part of the Watchung community. Whether you have 30 minutes or a couple of hours, your ideas, your time, your talents, and simply your VOICE is truly needed. We can match your time constraints and interests to needed tasks. There are endless possibilities in ways you can help.

4. Support PTA fundraisers. There are many opportunities throughout the year to contribute to the general operating budget of the PTA (which covers all of the PTA-sponsored assemblies and field trips; science fair, science summit, teacher stipends, staff appreciation, and much much more). Please don't feel pressured or obligated to respond to every ask. We truly appreciate every level of participation; no amount is too little and it all helps.

We look forward to seeing you at our kindergarten play dates this summer! **The play dates will be held at the Watchung School playground on August 23, August 25, and August 30 from 4-6 pm.**

There will also be an ice cream social for incoming kindergartners on Wednesday, August 31st from 4:00-6:00pm with Principal Anthony Grosso and the KINDERGARTEN TEACHERS! All students must be accompanied by an adult/caregiver and siblings are welcome.

Thank you in advance for your support. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at ptapres@watchungpta.org I look forward to personally welcoming you to our community and wish you and your child(ren) a happy and successful school year!

Sincerely,
Selma Avdicevic
President, Watchung PTA

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WHAT TO EXPECT ON THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL

The first day of school, for new and returning families alike, can be a day of heightened anxieties and emotions. Here are some guidelines to make it a strong start to a great school year.

Tips for the first day:

- Many parents take their students to the classroom (see the map to locate your classroom ahead of time) to meet the teacher, bring in supplies, and get the student settled. Parents are then asked to leave, as teachers are eager to start building the new classroom community.
- If your student takes the bus, then feel free to meet them at school at the North Fullerton entrance, where the buses drop off.
- **After classroom drop-off, many parents go to the gym to meet other families, sign up to assist with activities and classroom participation, enjoy some coffee and snacks and meet or reunite with other Watchung parents. Please join us at the Welcome Back Breakfast!**
- At the end of the school day, students are brought outside for dismissal. Check with your student's homeroom teacher for the location of their classroom's dismissal. Kindergarten dismissal is in the front of the school, at the main entrance on Garden Street.
- Students who take the bus after school are brought together in the gym and are escorted to their buses as buses arrive. We suggest that you tell your student the color and animal name of their bus (i.e. Red Rooster).

Watchung School

THE WATCHUNG PTA – AN OVERVIEW

At Watchung, our families and teachers share a vested interest in making our school community a strong and vibrant place for our students. The PTA serves many roles at our school. In addition to running many of the beloved events, the PTA also raises money for the school through various activities and outreach. The PTA subsidizes classroom materials, field trips, assemblies, teacher training and much more.

Our PTA executive board is comprised of a president(s), officers, a teacher liaison, as well as members dedicated to overseeing the various committees listed below. YOU CAN FIND OUT WHO'S WORKING ON THESE COMMITTEES NOW BY GOI

Communications

The PTA strives to provide the Watchung community with useful, timely information about upcoming PTA events and announcements. This is done in a variety of ways. Our website highlights upcoming events and activities, and supplies links to useful documents, schedules and forms. Email blasts frequently go out to all Watchung families and staff to quickly and efficiently relay these announcements and reminders. Class parents are managed by the PTA and provide a vital link to the classrooms for the families.

In addition to this new student handbook, aimed at the needs of new students and families, the PTA also creates a comprehensive Watchung School directory, which contains school guidelines, the calendar, class lists, and a student directory for all families. Lastly, the PTA maintains a Facebook page, which is filled with reminders, photos from activities and other helpful information. We encourage you to “like” us at <https://www.facebook.com/WatchungPta>.

Community and Outreach

Watchung volunteers organize a number of efforts to benefit the school and surrounding community. Our gardening and landscaping help monitor and improve school grounds. Our PTA organizes and conducts tours for incoming families. For kindergarten families there are summer play dates and an ice cream social and an adult social as well. Hospitality volunteers coordinate refreshments for meetings and events. Our community corner program conducts an annual coat drive and a holiday effort for an elementary school in Haiti. We also have a great group of Watchung Dads who assist with events throughout the year.

Education

The education branch of the PTA is comprised of committees whose collective goal is to enhance your child's educational experience at Watchung School beyond the classroom. Education highlights include after school enrichment (ASE), assemblies, science fair and science summit and our writer's workshop. In recent years the PTA has added a school musical to further enrich our arts offerings.

Family Activities

The goal of family activities is to provide each student with an array of fun, safe, school-based activities that encourage students and their families to interact with other members of the Watchung community. The family activities change from year to year, but highlights include family bingo night, a Halloween carnival, a school dance, movie night and our talent show. All families are invited and encouraged to attend our family events.

Fundraising

Successful fundraising is vital to the PTA. Funds allow us to provide community-building family activities throughout the year, as well as support the school assemblies, curriculum enhancement, class trips and the science fair, to name a few. From collecting Box Tops, to selling spirit wear and giftwrap, to holding a book fair and bake sale, the PTA is continually and resourcefully raising money. In years past, major fundraising events have been responsible for raising funds to renovate the library, build and create the technology lab and renovate the auditorium.

Health and Wellness

The health and wellness committee provides students with activities that encourage the development of healthy habits. We conduct walk to school days (weather permitting), a fun run in the spring and an annual favorite, field day. We also have a health and wellness liaison who attends district-wide meetings with committee members from the other Montclair elementary schools.

Watchung School

PARENT VOLUNTEER OPPORTUNITIES

There are **many** opportunities for parents and caregivers to get involved at the Watchung School. This participation strengthens the school, our community, and helps provide our children with the best elementary school experience possible. Getting involved is also a great way to meet other parents and get to know the Watchung School's terrific teachers and staff.

Many of us have time constraints due to work, family, home, and other volunteer organizations. The Watchung School and the PTA have many opportunities for even the busiest of schedules.

To learn more about the PTA and its opportunities, please join the PTA for the welcome back coffee on the first day of school and visit the PTA website at www.watchungpta.org often.

That website contains the names and email addresses of everyone who has taken on a PTA role. Feel free to email anyone with questions or to get involved! You can also email the PTA at ptapres@watchungpta.org to let the PTA know what interests you or if you have any other comments you would like to share.

For parent volunteer opportunities in the classroom, please ask your child's teacher or sign up to be a class parent.

Watchung School Rules and Routines 2016-2017

Arrival & Dismissal

All students are expected to **arrive** between **8:40 and 8:50**.

DO NOT drop your child off at school prior to 8:40—there is no supervision.

If you need to meet with your child's teacher, please make an appointment and enter through the Garden Street entrance. Busers will be greeted and escorted into the building.

If your child forgets a lunch or other item, please enter Garden Street and leave the item in the office or at the morning desk—the office will get these items to your child.

Garden Street is the only door open to walkers. North Fullerton is open only to busers and will be closed and locked once all busers have arrived.

Dismissal will begin at **3:05**. All parents and caregivers are to remain outside and wait for dismissal—please do not ring the bell for a quick pick-up to avoid traffic. Walkers will meet caregivers outside in the teacher-designated areas.

Early dismissals require a note to the teacher (doctor, dentist, etc.)—ring the bell, report to office, and wait in the office to sign out student. Please try to alert the office 24 hours prior when any change to the usual dismissal plan takes place. Please do not take your child out of school within the last 30 minutes of the day, as it is very disruptive.

No student will be allowed to go home with another adult without a signed note from his/her parent or legal guardian.

Students are not permitted to ride a bus home unless they are assigned to that bus.

Students can only be dismissed to those adults who are listed on the official paper work that is on file in the office—no exceptions.

Students may not call home for play dates. Please make these arrangements before school and/or after school via families—**only phone the office to make emergency pick-up arrangements (973-509-4259)**.

A student may ride a bike to school with adult supervision. Bicycle racks are located

behind the greenhouse. Please do not ride on the grass and make sure bikers have their own locks. The school is not responsible for missing bicycles. Skateboards and scooters are not permitted.

Dogs are not permitted on school property at any time.

ALL VISITORS MUST REPORT TO THE OFFICE.

Car-Line & Frederick Street Entrance

Car-line is available on Garden Street only. Garden Street is to be driven **one way** only during school hours.

Drive slowly and do not block the intersection of Garden & North Fullerton Streets.

Yield to buses exiting the school from North Fullerton.

Do not merge into the car-line from the municipal parking lot.

Car line students must stay in the car until an adult staff member opens the car door--students are to exit curbside only.

Please remain in your car and do not pull out of the line—wait until it moves. Frederick Street is not a car-line.

Parking & Driving

In an effort to provide as safe a procedure for arrival and dismissal, please adhere to the following parking requirements as the police will be vigilant in their enforcement;

- Yield to pedestrians at all times.
- Garden Street is to be driven one way during arrival and dismissal.
- Do not pull into the Garden Street school parking lot during school hours, especially at dismissal.
- Do not drive through North Fullerton when the Do Not Enter Signs are posted.
- No parking at yellow curbs.
- No other illegal parking – blocking cross walks, intersections, or school or resident driveways - is permitted at any time.

Birthday Celebrations

Many children wish to share the excitement of their birthdays with their classmates.

Please consult with the teacher in selecting an appropriate means to celebrate. **All food items that are brought into school for sharing must be NUT FREE. All parents are expected to adhere to our school's nutrition policy concerning classroom snacks.**

Snacks

The Watchung School requests each child bring a healthy snack to school each day.

The school is responsible for teaching and modeling healthy habits, which include healthy nutritional habits along with academics. While students are engaged in learning activities throughout the day, the Watchung School believes a snack will provide students with more consistent energy levels. A healthy snack is more likely to keep blood sugar levels even as opposed to sugary snacks that can be a drain on student energy.

Nut/Food Allergy Policy

No nut products are allowed in the classrooms. Nuts are allowed in the lunchroom, but there is a “nut-free” table at each lunch period. Please make sure your child’s homeroom teacher and the school nurse are aware of any food allergies.

Absences and Illness

It is the parent or caregiver’s responsibility to **notify the office by 9:30 in the event of a child’s absence**. By 9:30 a.m. the office will begin calling parents/caregivers who have not called their child in as absent. A note to the teacher upon the child’s return to school is requested. Also, communicable diseases from an illness such as measles, chicken pox, head lice, etc. should be immediately reported to the **school nurse, Mrs. McShane—973- 509-4261**. Children with communicable diseases should remain out of school until they are no longer contagious.

Emergency Cards

Emergency cards are given out to students on the first day of school. These cards contain necessary student/parent information that is used in emergency situations. They should be filled out and promptly returned to the office so that they may be kept on file. A duplicate emergency card is requested for the nurse’s office. It is imperative that each child has an emergency card and that the information on these cards be kept current. The school office should be notified of any change of address or phone number in a timely manner. Please list ALL available phone numbers on your child’s card (home, work, cell, etc.).

Homework

The Montclair School District has a homework policy, which recommends the following guidelines for assignments:

Kindergarten -One assigned activity per night: Monday – Thursday.

1st and 2nd -Maximum 30 minutes work per night: Monday – Thursday.

3rd, 4th & 5th -Maximum One hour per night: Monday - Thursday and long-range assignments for the weekend.

Homework should be independent practice of skills learned in school. It should not be laborious for the child or the parent. If this is the case, please have your child stop working on it and contact the classroom teacher to let them know.

Work will not be assigned to students who will be absent from school due to a family vacation that is not part of the district calendar. All work will be given to the student to complete upon returning to school.

Lost & Found

All articles found by the children should be turned in to the main office or the custodian. It is the student's responsibility to check in the cafeteria area for lost articles. At the end of the school year all articles remaining in the lost and found will be donated to a charitable organization.

Lunch Times

The students' lunch hour is divided between the lunchroom and the playground, weather permitting. Children should be dressed appropriately for outside play. It should be assumed that the children would play outside unless it is raining, the temperature dips below 30 degrees, or the field is too wet for play. During inclement weather, the students will play in their classrooms and in the gymnasium (space permitting). Students DO NOT watch videos as part of their recess time regardless of the weather conditions.

Medication

Students are not allowed to bring medication to school. If a child needs medication during school hours, the parent or caregiver must bring the medication to the school office to be left in the care of the school nurse.

Railroad Tracks

At no time are Watchung students permitted to cross or walk on the railroad tracks directly behind the playground.

Attire

Sneakers should be worn on gym class days. Shoes should be sent in on days when rain or snow boots are worn to school. Please dress students in layers for comfort in warm classrooms and cool outdoor climates. Encourage your student not to share jackets, hats, scarves, hair accessories and the like.