

# PARENTS TOGETHER

## CLASSROOM TOOLKIT

A GUIDE TO ENGAGING PARENTS VIA FACEBOOK GROUPS

**ParentsTogether Classroom** makes it easy for the teacher and parents in a classroom to share resources and support. Our tools help parents strengthen connections with each other, and at the same time, we make it easy for teachers to work collaboratively with the families in their classrooms.

To begin to build these connections, ParentsTogether works with teachers and classroom parents to create and maintain closed classroom groups on Facebook.

In these groups parents can share:

- Ideas on how to help with homework
- Information about school events
- Resources like carpooling and uniform trades
- Volunteer recruitment opportunities
- Updates on issues affecting local schools
- And much more!

**ParentsTogether Classroom** allows for more intimate connections than a typical school listserv. Plus, it has some great features. Using closed Facebook groups, parents and teachers can:

- See pictures of the parents in your class and connect faces with names and children
- Post on the group's wall and send a message to every parent in the classroom
- Send important school and classroom information to the parents' Facebook feed
- Send private messages to individual parents
- Ask questions and poll the entire classroom
- Create and manage events
- Upload files to the group

This toolkit has everything you need to get a **ParentsTogether Classroom** group started. Jumpstart your parent community today!

## Getting Your Classroom Group Up and Running

### ParentsTogether Roles

#### Getting Started

##### ParentsTogether sets up your group

ParentsTogether creates a closed Facebook group for each classroom, including:

1. A description of community purpose & standards
2. Privacy & moderator settings
3. A classroom cover photo for the group

We provide you with tools (such as a sample email invite) to begin inviting parents.

Should the classroom leader prefer, we can also manage the invite process.

### Teacher and Parent Leader Roles

##### You invite parents to join the group

Group leaders have three roles in helping to launch the group:

1. Identify a parent facilitator to join the teacher (often this is a classroom parent); send this person's e-mail to ParentsTogether so we can add the parent as a group administrator
2. Invite parents to join the group – the easiest way is to send e-mail invites through Facebook
3. Approve any parents who request to join

#### Sparking an Ongoing Conversation

##### We provide content ideas you may wish to share

ParentsTogether provides weekly content suggestions to classroom leaders to help you spark group conversations. We provide a mix of:

1. Conversation prompts
2. Age-specific resources for parents
3. Updates on local school and policy issues

We share this info with you via email; you select content to share. We can also help post as ParentsTogether.

##### You are encouraged to post at least once a week

We suggest that each moderator (teacher and parent leader) post to the group once a week.

Weekly posts – which you may choose to draw from the ParentsTogether resources – will help spark the conversation and encourage parents to connect.

#### Monitoring and Support

##### We help moderate and trouble shoot

In our ongoing role, ParentsTogether:

1. Supports moderators in navigating any issues that occur in the community, especially in terms of ensuring that community standards are followed
2. Is available for technical support on Facebook issues

Let us know how we can best support you!

##### You help keep the conversation positive and supportive

Teachers and parent facilitators agree to monitor the ongoing conversation in their group to ensure that community standards are being met.

The primary goal is to create an open and supportive conversation among classroom parents.

## Invite Parents to Join via Facebook

As a group administrator, it's easy to add new group members if you have email addresses for your parents.

1. Log into your Facebook account and find the group name on the left-hand side of the page.

2. In the "About" section on the right-hand side, select "Invite by Email" and input the email addresses of all the parents in your classroom.

3. Parents will receive an email from you indicating that you've invited them to join the **ParentsTogether Classroom** group. All they have to do is click "Join Group" from within the email to become a part of the group.

Once parents have joined, posts from your classroom group will show up in their Facebook feed. Depending on the parent's personal settings, he or she may also receive updates via e-mail as well.

## Or, Send Parents a Link to Your Group

Your can also send your group's name and/or link to parents via a paper handout or email notice.

Parents can then request to join, and you will be able to review and approve all requests.

### Administrator view, within your group

The screenshot shows the Facebook group page for "Eastside School Parents of 4th Graders". The administrator, Allen J. Arreaza, is viewing the group. The "About" section on the right is highlighted, showing the "Invite by Email" button circled in orange. The group has 8 members and is an open group. A post by Stephanie Robinson is visible in the feed.

### Notification parents receive when administrators send an invite

The screenshot shows a notification email from Allen J. Arreaza inviting the recipient to join the Facebook group "Evergreen Elementary School". The email includes the sender's name, the date and time (April 23, 2014, 10:15 AM), and a "Join Group" button circled in orange. The notification also lists group features like "Post questions and comments" and "Create shared docs".

### Administrator view, when a parent asks to join

The screenshot shows the "Member Requests" section of the Facebook group administrator interface. A request from Bethany Robertson is visible, with the "Add" button circled in orange. The request shows that Bethany has joined Facebook more than a year ago, is a member of 7 groups, and has 2 friends in the group and 2 mutual friends.

## Sample Parent Email

**ParentsTogether recommends that you send parents an additional email invitation to let them know about the group and its possible uses. Here's a sample note:**

Dear Parents:

To improve communication between parents in our classroom, I've set up a ParentsTogether Classroom group for us on Facebook. You should have received an invitation email from me to join the group. In order to participate, you must have a Facebook account. You can also find our group here:

[www.facebook.com/groups/\[YOUR GROUP NAME\]](http://www.facebook.com/groups/[YOUR GROUP NAME])

We can use this group to discuss classroom issues, plan activities outside of school, help each other out with things like carpooling and uniform trades — really anything we want. When you join the group, you can post to the wall and send a message to all the parents in the classroom or send messages to individuals. We can also create events, take polls and share files.

ParentsTogether is a new, national nonprofit that connects parents with each other to share resources and support. ParentsTogether provides ongoing support to the group and will occasionally post important information about issues affecting education and our schools.

To make sure that you receive all notifications from this group, I suggest that you click the "Notifications" button just below our group's cover photo and change the setting to "All Posts." I encourage you to join and introduce yourself on the wall -- don't forget to tell us your child's name.

Looking forward to a great year together!

[YOUR NAME]

## Tips for Fostering a Lively Group Conversation

### 1. Post at least once a week

Once parents have joined the group, you can spark the conversation by posting questions and topics of interest. Helpful questions give parents a chance to share their experience or ideas.

How is your kindergartner adjusting to the classroom?

How is your student managing the homework load?

What is your family doing for childcare during the school break?

Does anyone want to contribute to a holiday gift for the teacher?

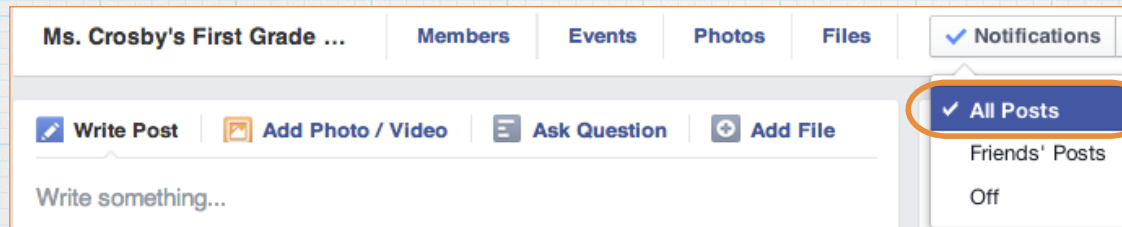
Is anyone available to volunteer this weekend in the school garden?

Group facilitators play an important role in fostering a friendly, authentic tone with their groups.

### 2. Encourage parents to select the setting to receive "All Posts"

When parents join your group, encourage them to select under "Notifications" that they would like to receive all posts. You may also want to suggest that under Facebook account notification settings, they confirm that they have selected the option: "All notifications, except the ones you have unsubscribed from."

By ensuring that parents receive group posts, you can keep them more engaged in the conversation.



### 3. Support the creation of a safe space

ParentsTogether has created community guidelines with the goal of 1) helping all students to thrive, and 2) helping parents have an honest and supportive exchange of ideas and experiences.

Facilitators can support this goal by making sure that parents know their opinions will be treated with respect and that other members will not use the group for personal purposes. The ParentsTogether team can be a resource should any problems arise.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **How does this work with our existing school listserv?**

A school-wide listserv is great; ParentsTogether Classroom gives parents and teachers a conversation tool at the classroom level. Group administrators can remind parents to post school-wide issues to the general listserv.

### **What role does the teacher play the group?**

Teachers play an important role in launching the group and keeping parents informed about classroom issues. We believe that communities are most effective when parents take the lead in supporting each other and sharing resources. It's up to the teacher to decide how active he or she wants to be.

### **What about the privacy of our families?**

Everyone gets to choose whether to join the classroom group. Parents will be invited to join via email, so participation is "opt in." Members of the same group can see each other's public profiles but are unable to access private information unless they are "friends." ParentsTogether Classroom groups are "Closed." This means that only members can see what's being posted to the group, including photos.

### **Who can join the group?**

Parents can only join the group if they are invited or approved by the group's administrator.

### **What if parents aren't on Facebook?**

We know that parents have different levels of Facebook usage. Some prefer not to use it, and some don't have access to the technology to be a regular visitor. While Facebook may not be the right tool for all parents, it gives room parents, teachers, and parent leaders another tool in their toolkit for reaching and engaging families.



## About ParentsTogether

**ParentsTogether** connects parents with other parents to share resources and support. We know that by joining together, parents not only make each other's lives easier, but they can be a powerful force for policy change that impacts all families— taking on issues like parental leave, childcare, and public education. We are building the first national parent membership organization, uniting tens of millions of families to build a stronger future for everyone.

At **ParentsTogether**, three core beliefs drive our work:

Parents are each other's best resources. There is always another parent who's been there before and might be able to help—no parent should have to go it alone.

Connecting parents lightens the load for everyone. Our central role as a national membership association is to make it easier for parents to find each other, build trusted relationships, and support one another.

Parents have a lot of economic power. And we need to use all of that spending power! Joining together nationally gives us the opportunity to negotiate deals and discounts that benefit everyone's bottom line.

Together, parents are an unstoppable force for change. Joining together, we have the power to create big shifts in the systems that make it so hard to raise a family in the US—starting with unpaid maternity leave all the way up to the high costs of college.

**ParentsTogether Classroom** is our first pilot program in North Carolina. Our goal is to connect thousands of elementary school parents to start laying the foundation for a groundswell of parent connections nationwide. Join us!

**Contact:**

Ailen Arreaza, North Carolina Program Director  
[Ailen@parents-together.org](mailto:Ailen@parents-together.org)  
[www.parents-together.org](http://www.parents-together.org)