

You've Volunteered to Chair a Festival—Now What?

How to Organize a Festival in Ten Steps

Thank you so much for volunteering your time to chair a festival at Haynes! Kids tell us the festivals are part of some of their fondest Haynes memories. Below are some guidelines as to how festivals work and how to get started. These are suggestions, but you are free to do what works for you. *The important thing to remember is that your goal is to provide a morning of authentic experiences related to the curriculum and appropriate for the grade level.*

This is meant to be fun—for you and the kids!

1. Contact the grade level teacher liaison.

The grade level teachers are a great place to get started. Some grade levels designate one teacher to be the festival contact, and in others all of the teachers like to meet with you as a group. Set up a meeting to discuss what the teachers' expectations are for the festival. Ask them to share what they thought worked well last year, and what they might like to do differently.

2. Check out materials from previous years' festivals.

☐ On the cloud: HOP has set up a cloud for people to share files. To access the cloud go to www.amazon.com/cloudrive and sign in (top right). Please contact the HOP co-chairs or Jodi Sparks for login and password.

☐ In the storage closet: Each grade level has a storage closet along the back wall of the cafeteria to keep props, decorations, costumes, craft materials, etc. for the festivals. See Jodi Sparks or Marcy Sawin for the combination for the lock.

3. Decide what your stations and activities will be.

Festivals are generally organized by “stations”—crafts, games, snacks, experiences in which the students will participate in groups. Classes are broken into groups and rotate through the stations, guided by parent volunteers. You may choose to keep the same stations as last year, or you may decide to add or change things based on feedback you get from teachers and/or last year's festival chairs. Looking at what was done last year is a good place to start.

4. Request parent volunteer help (or, rally the troops!).

It's a good idea to start this part sooner rather than later so that parents can get the festival date on their calendars and sign up to help out. Festivals are definitely a group effort— people are excited and willing to help! Start by posting volunteer positions on the HOP website (www.haynespto.org). Post an announcement in the on-line HOP newsletter, with an embedded on-line volunteer sign-up. Email Melissa Mahoney (melismahoney@comcast.net) and Natalie Massarotti (nmassarotti@comcast.net) to help you set this up. You'll need to know what the festival stations will be, how many volunteers you'd like at each station, and any other volunteers you might need for the festival (treasurer, tour guides, decorations/set-up, clean-up, time keeper, etc.). Again, using last year's notes as a guideline can be helpful here.

5. Form the festival committee.

Once people have signed up, choose one or two people in each area and ask if they'll “chair” that part of the festival. Those folks will be responsible for organizing that portion of the festival, and then your job becomes organizing and supporting the chairs

6. Set a budget.

HOP funds are used to cover festival expenses. Having one parent volunteer serve as a festival treasurer is a good idea, so that someone is responsible for tracking expenses and submitting reimbursements (or helping committee chairs do so on-line). Review the overall budget for the festival, and consult last year's notes as to how the money was divided up and spent. Outline a budget for each station, leaving a cushion if possible for unexpected expenses. *Parent volunteers should NOT spend personal funds for festival expenses, because this makes it difficult for HOP to track how much festivals cost and how much of the HOP budget is designated for festivals each year. Please stick to the budget, and check in with Jodi Sparks or the HOP Co-Chairs if a large, unexpected expense arises and this becomes difficult.*

7. Meet with the festival committee.

Get together with your committee chairs to kick things off. This can happen in the school cafeteria—check with Marcy Sawin or Nancy Carbutt to schedule a time. Give everyone a general overview of the festival: what the activities will be, what each station's budget will be, and what your plans are for the day and the time leading up to it. Share with everyone the combination to the festival closet and also directions on accessing the HOP storage unit. It may be a good idea to choose a date for your next meeting, if you think you'll need one, while you have everyone in one room. Once you've met with everyone, each committee can get to work. Make sure that committee chairs have your contact info, and check in with those you don't hear from to make sure they have what they need and no issues have come up. Cloud login is just for festival co-chairs, but you can download files from the cloud and email them to volunteers who may find them helpful for their station. Closer to the festival date, ask committee chairs to let you know what they'll need in terms of tables and chairs so you can include that in your floor plan (see below).

8. Organize big picture pieces.

Using last year's files as a guideline, set up a schedule for the day. Create a floor plan of the festival to share with Glenn Hines (our custodian—he'll help you set things up) and other volunteers who will find it helpful to know which activities will be where. Make sure that Marcy Sawin and Nancy Carbutt know the date and time of the festival and the set-up afternoon (usually after school, the day before). They will help you coordinate with anyone who usually uses the parts of the building you'd like to use (SED, basketball, etc.).

9. Enjoy the festival day!

Many times, the festival coordinators find themselves with not much to do at the actual festival. Of course, you'll be the point person for any issues that arise. But generally you'll be able to float around and watch the children enjoy the festival.

10. Collect any notes, tips, documents, suggestions, etc. for next year's crew.

After the dust settles, ask committee chairs to write up any information that they think would be helpful for next year's committee. Materials, budget, recipes, suggestions, things that worked well and things that didn't—anything that might help people putting together next year's event.

Enjoy! Please feel free to contact me at any point with questions—
jksparks@gmail.com or 978-443-3113.

You've Volunteered to Chair a Festival—Now What?

The Nitty Gritty (or Things to Keep in Mind)

- ⊠ Please follow the school policy on email communication. In your first email to volunteers, please “bcc” all email addresses. Put a line in asking anyone who would not like their email to be shared with the group to let you know. After that, group emails can be sent with addresses viewable.
- ⊠ Confirm with Marcy Sawin and Nancy Carbutt any space in the building you'll be using for festival meetings, during the festival, and for the set-up. (Cafeteria, classrooms, outdoor space - it's a good idea to have a rainy day plan if you're thinking of using any outdoor space.)
- ⊠ All volunteers must have a current CORI check on file in the front office. Committee chairs can communicate this to their volunteers, and volunteers are responsible for ensuring that their CORI is up to date. Marcy Sawin has a list of CORI checks that are currently valid.
- ⊠ Parent volunteers should NOT spend personal funds for festival expenses, because this makes it difficult for HOP to track how much festivals cost and how much of the HOP budget is designated for festivals each year. Check in with Jodi Sparks or the HOP Co-Chairs if a large, unexpected expense arises and this becomes difficult.
- ⊠ Decorations come from several places: grade level crafts (coordinated with either the Colette Sahely, the art teacher, or the grade level “Craft Center” volunteers—they'll organize and do a craft with the kids before the festival that can then be used to decorate the walls on the day of the festival), festival closets, HOP storage unit, and grade level classrooms. Large decorations items may still be in people's homes, but the idea is to keep these in the storage unit moving forward.
- ⊠ Suzanne Friedman, the music teacher, may have a plan to work on a dance or song with the children that is a fun way to kick off or wrap up the festival.
- ⊠ All ingredients for food stations need to be cleared by our school nurse, Lisa Nigrelli, to ensure the safety of children with food allergies. Lisa has a list of allergies by grade level available for the committee chairs of any stations involving food to use in their planning.
- ⊠ Marcy Sawin maintains a “do not photograph” list of children whose parents have not granted permission for their child to be photographed. Please have anyone taking photos at the festival consult this list, and make sure these children are not photographed.
- ⊠ Glen Hines, our custodian, is a great resource to help with set-up. Please give him ample advance notice as to what you'll need and where you need it.
- ⊠ The school administration often enjoys participating in the festivals. The principal, in some cases, has a “scripted” roll in the beginning to welcome people and kick things off. Check with Sharon MacDonald to see if she'd like to do this. In addition to Mrs. MacDonald, please extend an invitation (via email) to our Assistant Principal (Scott Mulcahy), our specialists (Suzanne Friedman, Kelly Harrington, Jeff Ilg, Dorothy Kramer, Catherine Pallotta, and Colette Sahely), our superintendent (Anne Wilson), our assistant superintendent (Kim Swain), as well as Marcy Sawin and Nancy Carbutt.