

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

HOP Festival Coordinator – Rory Richards (roryrichards@gmail.com)

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. Send an e-mail to your grade's teachers to 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.
- It is also a good idea to contact our music teacher Suzanne Friedman (suzanne_friedman@sudbury.k12.ma.us) as she 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.

2. Check out materials from previous years' festivals.

- On the cloud: HOP has set up a google cloud to share files. The HOP Festival Coordinator (Rory Richards, roryrichards@gmail.com) will grant you access to these files. You will receive an e-mail with an invitation to collaborate that will give you access to all the available files for your festival.
 - You may download, edit and otherwise use the files as needed.
 - At the conclusion of the festival, please upload any new documents or updated documents you created.
- **Haynes Cafeteria storage closet:** Each grade level has a storage closet along the back wall of the cafeteria to keep smaller props, decorations, costumes, craft materials, etc. for the festivals. Each closet has a combination lock. Marcy Sawin at the front desk can give you the combination.
- **HOP offsite storage:** HOP maintains a larger storage unit for large props and larger bins related to station crafts etc. This is located at Ironclad storage in Maynard. The Festival Coordinator will send you instructions for accessing this location. It is a good idea to go visit the storage unit to see what items are there (there are often many supplies left from past years, so your station volunteers may not need to purchase as much as you might think).

3. Decide what your stations and activities will be.

Festivals are generally organized by “stations”—crafts, games, snack (brought from home), 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.

- Teachers will often have an opinion on how big each “tour group” should be, and how long each station should last (usually between 10-15 minutes). Look at schedules from previous years and see how many stations they had. Because each year there is a different number of kids, you may need to add or subtract stations depending on the number of students.
- Station volunteers should be made aware that they need to purchase/prepare everything for their station. You can provide them with any left over supplies and they can do an inventory and figure out what they need to purchase or prepare ahead of time to make the station run smoothly.

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). Send an e-mail to the HOP webteam (webmaster@haynespto.org) and tell them that you would like to post sign-ups for your festival. They can send you the template for what they had last year, and you can then let them know of any changes (added/removed stations for example) that you need. This should give you an idea of the kinds of volunteers you need, but feel free to make changes to suit your needs for the current year.
- Once the sign-ups are live, you can also ask the web team to send an e-mail to your grade, letting them know they are up. You should also submit a newsletter item announcing the sign-up in the HOP newsletter. You do this by emailing the webteam. You can also post on the HOP facebook page (**please only post once you have announced the sign-ups via e-mail or newsletter**). If your grade has a facebook page it is also a good idea to post the link to sign-ups there.

5. Form the festival committee.

This is not required, but can be helpful - Once people have signed up, it sometimes helps to designate/ask one or two people in each area and ask if they’ll “chair” that part of the festival. For example, you might have 3 volunteers for a particular craft station – you might see if one of those people could be your “go-to” person for communicating about that station to make

things more stream-lined. Alternatively, you could also find people who are responsible for a whole section like “crafts” or “games” Those folks will be responsible for organizing that portion of the festival, and then your job becomes organizing and supporting the chairs. How you want to organize this is really up to you.

6. Set and distribute your budget to the various stations.

HOP funds are used to cover festival expenses. Neither you, nor your volunteers should spend personal money for the festival. Contact Rory to get your budget. In the past, there has sometimes been a volunteer position of “festival treasurer”, although it is not strictly necessary. The treasurer and/or co-chairs review the overall budget for the festival, and consult last year’s notes as to how the money was divided up and spent. One advantage of having someone designated treasurer is that he/she can check in on each station, to see how they are managing with their budgets, and communicate directly with HOP/co-chairs if there are overages etc... Each volunteer can submit for reimbursement directly through the HOP website, but a festival treasurer is helpful at reminding parent to submit for reimbursement and keeping a general idea of if the festival is on-budget. *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 Rory Richards or the HOP Co-Chairs if a large, unexpected expense arises and this becomes difficult.*

7. Meet/Touch base with your festival volunteers/station leaders.

You can have a general festival meeting, either at school, or at someone’s house in the evening. However, more and more, communication is happening over e-mail, and materials are being handed off one-on-one. If you want to hold a meeting in the school cafeteria—check with Marcy Sawin or Nancy Carbutt to schedule a time.

- This is a good time to meet with any of the station volunteers that can meet, and give them/show them what supplies are available, and/or share pictures of their station from previous years (available on the google drive).
- Make sure station volunteers know that they are responsible for setting up their station the evening before the festival (more on this below). The timeframe is after dismissal the day before the festival.
- Once you’ve met/communicated 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. Access to the cloud is only for 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. Set-Up and Big Picture items

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 (glen_hines@sudbury.k12.ma.us). He will need to know what tables you need and when you plan to set up.
- To schedule set-up, contact Marcy Sawin (marcy_sawin@sudbury.k12.ma.us) at the front desk. There are time restrictions due to SED on when we are allowed to set-up in the cafeteria. There may be stations that cannot be set up until the morning of the festival. The majority of set-up can usually happen in the stage half of the cafeteria starting after dismissal the day before the festival, but Marcy can help you figure out the timeline, and help with contacting SED if necessary. **Please be respectful of SED and their space.** They pay to use the Haynes cafeteria after school, and they are being generous in letting us set up during their time.
- There are often crafts that occur in the classroom or art class prior to the festival that are then used as decorations during the festival. Touch base with the grade-level craft center volunteers (contact HOP if you don't know who this is for your grade) and contact previous festival chairs to find out how they used these decorations. Make sure you know what these items are, and when they will be completed. Some examples include chicken hats (Chicken Festival) the paper fish and paper lanterns (Japan festival – these items need to be attached to string by volunteers ahead of time), Pinatas and papel banners (Mexico Festival) and student silhouettes (Colonial Festival). Make sure they will be ready for festival set-up!

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, 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—
roryrichards@gmail.com or text/call at 978-303-7891