



**PARENTS ASSOCIATION HANDBOOK  
2023-2024**

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## SECTION I – INTRODUCTION

### 1. Welcome

This handbook is designed to support all members of the Parents Association. It includes descriptions of the structure of the PA and lists all PA roles and positions; instructions about planning PA events, submitting information for the periodic PA newsletter and other PA communications; and general community guidelines. If you have any questions, please contact the PA Presidents at [parent.association@gbwl.org](mailto:parent.association@gbwl.org). Have a great year and again thank you for lending your time and talent to the BWL PA.

### 2. Membership

Parents Association membership includes all parents or legal guardians of each student currently enrolled at The Birch Wathen Lenox School. In connection with tuition payments each year, fees are paid for specific line items. PA Dues are included in this list of fees. Approximately half of each student's PA Dues are allocated to PA activities that benefit the entire school, and the remainder is allocated to grade-specific events including class parties; prom; and lower, middle and high school celebrations.

### 3. Goals of the BWL Parents Association

The BWL Parents Association strives to represent and advance the views, interests, and perspectives of the parents and guardians in the Birch Wathen Lenox community. In collaboration with the administration, faculty, and Board of Trustees of Birch Wathen Lenox, the PA will support activities and programs for students, their families, and faculty. The PA will support the morale and well-being of the community, and work to make Birch Wathen Lenox a welcoming space for everyone. Its representatives will ensure straightforward and timely communication to other BWL community members, including PA volunteers, parents, and school faculty & staff. Representatives will also aid the integration and orientation of new parents in PA activities and procedures at the School.

### 4. Community Code of Conduct

- The Birch Wathen Lenox School aims to create a mutually supportive partnership among families with a goal to raise healthy, resilient children who are comfortable voicing their thoughts and opinions in an accepting environment. All participants in activities and events hosted by Birch Wathen Lenox or the Parents' Association are expected to conduct themselves responsibly and respectfully in line with the community standards. If any member of the parent community acts contrary to the values of the Birch Wathen Lenox community, the offender should be reported to the PA Presidents, the Head of School, or appropriate Division Head, who will oversee the conflict. Inherently, BWL

parents represent the BWL School, and they are expected to adhere to the BWL motto of Integrity, Loyalty and Civility. Moreover, at all times, PA members are expected to remain professional and cordial, and work to make all members of the BWL community feel welcome and included. This includes responding to all emails and other communications in a timely manner, and working to help build a feeling of pride in the BWL Community.

- Any personal and contact information provided by BWL or distributed by the Parents Association may not be used as a resource for business, commercial, or for any non-school purposes.
- BWL Gift Policy (this policy is set by BWL Administration, and not by the BWL PA)
  - The BWL PA distributes a Holiday Gift to all Faculty & Staff at BWL. It is BWL's policy that no individual gift-giving to Faculty & Staff is permitted, at any time. Classrooms or individual families may give handmade gifts and cards in lieu of monetary gifts.

## SECTION II – GUIDELINES FOR PA EVENTS

### 1. Planning PA Events

\*\*\*IMPORTANT\*\*\* Parents are NOT obligated to assume any financial responsibility for PA events. Additionally, parents are not expected to make their homes available for PA events.

#### General Planning Guidelines

- Any grade-wide or division-wide events should be accessible to all families, both in cost and location.
- Use electronic resources such as Paperless Post and Sign Up Genius to organize PA events.
- *For PA Committee Meetings, contact PA Presidents to schedule the meeting.*
- *For Grade-Wide or Division-Wide meetings and events, contact Divisional EVP to schedule the meeting.*
- Executive Board members will work with Associate Head of School, Janine Karbon, to finalize events, and with EVP Communications to broadcast the event, when necessary.
- Submitted the scheduling email to the appropriate Executive Board Members at least one calendar month in advance, when possible, and should contain the following information:
  1. your name, your PA position, your contact information;
  2. description of the meeting or event;
  3. proposed dates (include several dates in case of conflict);
  4. proposed location(s)

- 5. time and duration of the event;
- 6. proposed budget, if applicable
- PA Presidents or Divisional EVP will help to facilitate the event with the appropriate personnel at BWL.
- The EVP Communications will ensure that the meeting or event is posted to the calendar, as applicable, and in the monthly newsletter.

## **2. Financial Matters**

### For Grade-wide or Division-wide Events:

- Grade Reps should contact Associate Head of School, Janine Karbon, to keep track of their Grade's PA funds, at [jkarbon@gbwl.org](mailto:jkarbon@gbwl.org).
- Grade Reps should not request additional money from the class, spend class funds, or hold any class specific fund-raising events without the prior written approval of the Associate Head of School.
- 5th, 8th and 12th grade graduation years require more funds because of divisional-graduation events; therefore, Grade Reps should be mindful of these milestone years when spending or fundraising.
- Any funds not used in a given year will carry over to the following year. Any amounts left over in the 12th grade class fund at the end of the school year will be donated to the school.
- Costs for Grade-wide or Division-wide events are to be incurred directly and then reimbursed from the applicable class fund.
- Grade Reps should submit all receipts, with details, to Janine Karbon, Associate Head of School and EVP Treasurer, no later than 30 days after the event.

### For School-wide PA-sponsored Events:

- For any PA event that is expected to incur costs or produce revenue, the Committee Chairs for such event shall prepare a Budget Proposal to submit to Janine Karbon, Associate Head of School, for approval.
- The budget shall include all anticipated costs, in detail; and the budget should be submitted as soon as possible prior to the scheduled event. Committee Chairs are expected to keep costs limited to what was submitted in the approved budget.
- Receipts with specific details for costs incurred in connection with any PA Event shall be submitted to Associate Head of School, and EVP Treasurer, for reimbursement, no later than 30 days after the event. Check requests may also be submitted to the Associate Head of School in advance of an event for payments directly to vendors, if required.
- Any cash or checks received as payment at any PA Event shall be kept in BWL-supplied lock boxes. At the immediate conclusion of each event, lock boxes shall be delivered to the Associate Head of School for reconciliation by the PA Treasurer.

#### Additional Fundraising Guidelines (set by BWL Administration):

- Teams and clubs (and the PA committees that support them) may occasionally fundraise through activities like bake sales, dress-down days, and Amazon wish lists. We encourage parents of students on those teams or clubs to participate in any fundraising endeavors. If parents purchase items from a wish list and donate them to the team or club, they will receive a gift-in-kind letter from the school for tax purposes.

### **3. Supplying Food and Drink for Onsite Meetings and Events**

- Onsite PA functions should be catered by Cater To You. Contact Associate Head of School, Janine Karbon, as soon as possible after the date for the meeting or event is set, to arrange for catering.
- All food & drink costs should be included in the initial budget request.

### **4. Requesting Audio/Visual Services**

If an approved PA event or meeting requires microphones, laptops, screens, or other commonly-used technology, send an email request for equipment to Richard Pan in the Technology Department, at [rpan@gbwl.org](mailto:rpan@gbwl.org) at least one week in advance.

### **5. Room Setup and Cleanup**

To request any special seating, tables, or additional furniture for a PA meeting or event, or to request help with cleaning afterward, contact either the PA Presidents or Divisional EVP, at least one week in advance.

### **6. School Resources Policy**

Any request for assistance from School employees for any PA project or event must be submitted to the PA President. PA members may not ask teachers or other administrators to work on, contribute to, or otherwise participate in a PA-sponsored event or projects without the consent of the Associate Director of School via the PA President.

### **7. Decorating School Spaces**

\*\*\*\*The guidelines apply to ANY decorating at BWL.\*\*\*\*

- Any material must be reviewed by EVP Communications before it is posted.
- Posting informational signs and meeting announcements in the lobby is allowed.
- DO NOT post anything anywhere on the front doors of the school.
- Remove signs and posters as soon as possible following the event.

- Only use painters tape to attach items to walls. Do not use any self-stick decorations or any other adhesives.
- Mylar and vinyl balloons are permitted, as are streamers, paper lanterns and lights. DO NOT use latex balloons, due to allergens contained within.
- DO NOT post any decorations that have images or materials that are inappropriate for the school community.

## **8. Gratuities**

Tipping any employees at the School is prohibited, regardless of work.

## **9. Cancellations**

If your event is canceled for any reason, promptly notify the appropriate EVP by email so that the event can be removed from the School calendar. Please be sure to notify any additional departments of the cancellation as soon as possible (A/V equipment, catering, etc.).

## **Section III – GUIDELINES FOR COMMUNICATIONS**

### **1. Electronic Communication**

Be mindful that as a member of the PA, any communication sent out to the community is representing the entire BWL PA. Please strive for accuracy, brevity, and clarity in all communication, especially group emails.

Please submit to the appropriate Executive Board Members any communication for approval:

- For grade-wide or division-wide matters, contact the Divisional EVP.
- For PA committee matters, contact the PA Presidents.
- For all financial matters, include the EVP Treasurer.

### **2. Monthly PA Newsletter**

The PA's primary source of information-sharing with the BWL community is the PA's newsletter. The EVP Communications is responsible for collecting information and editing the content. Content will include general PA news, meeting announcements, committee announcements, calls for volunteers, current and future calendar updates, athletics updates, and other relevant PA info.

Committee Chairs and Grade Representatives are responsible for submitting meeting dates, calls for volunteers, event dates, special events and good news to the EVP Communications for publication in the newsletter. Please submit your information as

early as possible, but no later than 5 days before the newsletter is scheduled to be delivered (for example: submit info for review by Thursday for a newsletter scheduled to be delivered on Tuesday). Generally, information will be included in the newsletter no earlier than a month before the event. The newsletter will be delivered to the BWL Community electronically on a monthly basis.

## **SECTION IV – DESCRIPTION OF ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **1. Outline of PA Roles**

Parents and guardians of students at The Birch Lenox School are encouraged to become actively engaged with the Parents Association. Parents can participate in a variety of roles:

*PA Executive Board*

*PA Committee Chair or Co-Chair*

*Grade Representative*

*General Volunteer*

### **2. Protocol and Limitations**

- PA membership is limited to parents and guardians of current BWL students.
- PA members may not hold two PA Executive Board positions concurrently, nor be a committee Chairperson and be a member of the PA Executive Board, unless there is no other volunteer available for the positions.
- Members serving as Grade Representative may not do so for more than two consecutive years, for the same grade, if other parents want to participate in that role.
- PA members may not be a Grade Representative and be a member of the PA Executive Board.
- PA President and Executive Board members will be chosen by the BWL Administration, in conjunction with the outgoing PA President. Other volunteer positions will be selected by the incoming PA President, Executive Board and BWL Administration.

### **3. Executive Board Roles**

The Executive Board is the governing body of the Parents Association, and consists of supervising officers. These officers include PA Presidents, Executive Vice President (EVP) Lower School, EVP Middle School, EVP Upper School, EVP Communications, and EVP Treasurer.

***President*** Responsible for presiding over all aspects of the PA. Responsibilities include:



- Representing the parents/guardians of The Birch Wathen Lenox School to the administration.
- Serving as the communications liaison between families and the School.
- Overseeing PA officers, representatives, and volunteers. Acting as a liaison between the committees and BWL Administration.
- Monitoring all PA activities.
- Overseeing the committees' budgets, coordinating communication for committee events, and helping coordinate PA calendar and deadlines.
- Working in conjunction with the PA President to attend essential committee meetings.
- Overseeing Volunteer Coordinator, and helping to identify volunteers to chair committees and fill other roles.
- Previous experience on BWL PA Executive Board preferred.

***Divisional Executive Vice President (EVP)*** The Lower, Middle and Upper School Divisions each have an EVP on the Executive Board. Responsibilities include:

- Coordinating PA activities within the Division, including facilitating planning for grade-wide and division-wide events.
- Maintaining individual grade budgets and approving all grade and divisional event proposals; coordinating on fiduciary matters with EVP Treasurer.
- Supervise Grade Representatives with the Division, including welcoming and training Grade Reps at the start of the school year, and maintaining two-way communication with all Grade Reps regarding PA events, division-wide events, and grade-wide events.
- Coordinating among the PA Grade Representatives and Division Head, periodically meeting with both Division Head and Grade Reps to keep abreast of current school events.
- Assisting the PA Presidents in organizing and running divisional meetings.
- Coordinate Parents in Actions meetings for Divisions.

***Executive Vice President (EVP) - Communications*** The EVP Communication will work in consultation with the PA Presidents and BWL Administration to oversee all communication on behalf of PA. Responsibilities include:

- Giving notice of all meetings.
- Facilitating communication among Executive Board Members, Committee Chairs, and general PA members.
- Updating PA news on BWL website.

- Maintaining meeting attendance, minutes, and other necessary records of the PA.
- Writing and editing a monthly newsletter on behalf of PA, including information from PA Chair, Committee Chairs, and Grade Reps. This newsletter will be distributed by the Grade Representatives.
- Managing BWL school-wide Celebrations calendar.

***Executive Vice President (EVP) - Treasurer*** The EVP Treasurer will work in consultation with the PA President and BWL Administration to handle all fiduciary matters on behalf of PA. Responsibilities include:

- Overseeing all PA funds, including maintaining the PA budget.
- Accounting for funds before and after PA events.
- In conjunction with Associate Head of School, collecting and distributing funds to and from all Grades Representative and Committees Chairs of the PA.
- Coordinating with PA President and BWL Administration on all PA fiduciary needs.

#### **4. Other Leadership Roles**

***Grade Representatives*** will encourage involvement in school events and serve as communications liaisons between the PA, school administration, and the grade families. Responsibilities include:

- Disseminating PA communications to parents, grade-wide.
- Corresponding with parents to answer questions, facilitating a grade-wide group text chat and email address list, and broadcasting calendar reminders for PA events, classroom happenings and outside school gatherings.
- Compiling agenda items for PA and divisional director meetings.
- Reporting any grade-relevant information to the EVP Communications for the PA's periodic newsletter.
- Managing grade-wide PA budget.
- Working with teachers to help organize in-school classroom activities and field trips.
- Organizing and planning grade-wide activities, including but not limited to a parent-only evening party and periodic grade-wide activities outside of school.
- Regularly attending PA meetings and school-sponsored events, and encouraging others to do the same.
- Periodically meeting with the designated Divisional EVP.
- Coordinating with New Families Liaison to welcome new students and their families.

- *NOTE: There is no expectation that the Grade Representative will assume any personal financial responsibility in this role.*

## 5. Committee Descriptions and Chairperson Responsibilities

### [2023-2024 PA Contact List](#)

**Affinity Groups** BWL parents are encouraged to come together in honor and support of shared interest, purpose, ethnicity, cultural heritage and religion. Leaders of BWL Affinity Groups work with the Multicultural Committee Chairperson and BWL Faculty & Administration to schedule events and make connections within the BWL Community.

**Athletics** Organizes special activities to celebrate BWL athletics, manages school-wide Homecoming event, and facilitates athletic teams' end-of-season celebrations. The Athletics Chair(s) also organize(s) works to create an organized network of BWL families to support the Athletic Director and Team Coaches, and promote school spirit.

**Book Fair** Responsible for planning and coordinating the BWL Book Fair, occurring every spring. This is a school-wide community building event. Chairs are responsible for securing vendors, guest authors, and working with the Faculty to create an enriched offering of books for purchase.

**Community Service** Works in coordination with BWL's Community Service Coordinator to organize and lead school-sponsored community service projects. These service opportunities may include the Grassroots Grocery, Project Cicero as well as the Halloween Candy Drive, service opportunity-sponsored bake sales, and periodic "fun runs" throughout the year.

**DEI** assists BWL in supporting multicultural educational activities, such as providing opportunities for BWL families to share cultures and traditions at school. Co-Chairs support the Affinity Groups at BWL and assists them in planning activities. Promotes full participation school-wide, and works with BWL's DEI coordinator and BWL Parent Affinity groups.

**Faculty and Staff Appreciation** Assists BWL Administration in organizing faculty and staff appreciation activities on Faculty & Staff Appreciation Day, and throughout the school year. Responsibilities include organizing volunteers, requesting and distributing food, and arranging décor.

**New Family Liaison** Serves as PA contact for families new to BWL, and provides relevant information about BWL events and traditions throughout the school year. This committee will work with the Admissions office throughout the year to identify and connect with new families. Will work to ensure BWL buddy families and new student families connect. Will let appropriate Grade Representatives know when new students join BWL mid-year.

**PIA (Parents In Action) Liaison** works with Divisional EVPs to coordinate and facilitate Division-wide meetings with Parents in Action organization.

**Performing Arts** Responsible for coordinating the Middle and Upper School's performing arts efforts by promoting ticket sales to performances, organizing fundraising events to support the Performing Arts at BWL, and publicizing events. Additionally, this Committee will assist with costumes, sets, refreshments, and cast parties, at the discretion of the BWL Performing Arts Chairperson.

**Robotics** Responsible for coordinating with the BWL Robotics and science/technology teacher(s) to disseminate information about competitions, support team fundraising opportunities, and promote interest and attendance to Robotics competitions and showcases.

**Spirit Wear** Designs, orders, and manages merchandise and inventory bearing the BWL logo, as well as sets up, sells, and packs up inventory at various opportunities during the year. Works with PA Treasurer to account for income and expenses. Additionally, coordinates volunteers to sell Spirit Wear. BWL events include (not limited to) back to school, first PA meeting, WinterFest, conference days, curriculum nights, and online pre-ordering.

**Spring Fair** Works to plan and coordinate the annual community-building carnival held on East 77<sup>th</sup> Street every year in June.

**Spring Gala** Works with the Director of Institutional Advancement and BWL Administration to plan and organize BWL's annual, premiere fundraising event.

**Volunteer Coordinator** Works with PA Presidents to fill PA roles, including Chairpersons and General Volunteers, using general knowledge of the parent body at BWL.

**WinterFest** Works to plan and coordinate school-wide, community building holiday season event. Chairpersons will source and manage vendors, manage finances, plan and manage decor, coordinate with BWL administration & facilities team, plan and manage parent evenings, and manage event volunteers during the duration of the sale.