**Frequently Asked Questions about Kindergarten Aides**

**Why not use parent volunteers instead of aides in the classroom?**

Volunteers, by nature, help when they have availability. Our youngest students, however, benefit tremendously from consistency and routine. Through years of experience, including some trial and error, our Kindergarten teaching team has found paid aides to be the most effective, consistent, and helpful extra pairs of hands.

**What if there are less than 28 students in each class?**

We asked the Kindergarten teachers and past Kindergarten parents this very question. The unanimous response was that 5-year-old Kindergarteners can benefit greatly from aides regardless of the class size.

**How many Kindergarten classes will there be for the 2016/17 school year?**

Based on recent data, we predict 3 classrooms. Neighborhood CPS schools are required to take all students who live within the district boundaries. However, the school can only confirm the number of incoming students when they register. Please register your student(s) soon, and encourage your friends and neighbors to register now.

**How did you calculate $1,000 per family?**

The calculation is based on the hourly cost of the aides and assumptions on the number of students, timing, and historic participation rates. An estimated $45K in total is needed. We are asking for $500 now so that we can start the hiring process and have the aides ready early in the school year. The second payment in late September should be less than $500 if participation among families is high. For example, if every incoming kinder family contributes, the second payment would likely be $0.

**When will you cash the check?**

The first check will be cashed on July 15th, assuming that at least $15,000 has been collected by that date. WatersToday will hold the checks in a lockbox until July 15th. WatersToday will send you an email in the week prior to July 15th confirming that the checks will be cashed. Please make sure your email address is written on the check.

**What if $15K hasn't been collected by July 15th?**

If $15K has not been raised by July 15th, the school will email registered Kindergarten families to provide an update. If $15K has still not been raised by August 1st, the WatersToday Treasurer will shred all kinder aide checks received, the hiring process will not proceed, and the kindergarten classrooms will not have aides. You will be notified that your check has been shredded via email on August 1st. Please ensure your email address is written on the check.

**What if I want a refund?**

If your child switches schools prior to July 15th, please contact treasurer@waterstoday.org and the Treasurer will shred your check. Once the funds have been cashed, however, the program will initiate and refunds will not be provided. If special circumstances occur, contact the WatersToday treasurer.

**Can I pay by credit card?**

The first payment can only be made by check. A credit card option will be supplied for the second payment at the end of September.

**Have funds been raised for kinder aides in previous years?**

Kindergarten parents have raised funds for the last two years. We’ve learned from these experiences that the whole process takes time. In previous years, by waiting until the start of the school year to raise funds, aides have not started until after winter break. We need your help to raise the funds in advance so your student can have the benefit of the aides at the beginning of the school year.

**What if we don’t raise enough funds?**

The Kindergarten aide program can only function to the extent that it is funded. We will be in regular communication by email from August through September to provide updates on the process.

**What other fundraising asks will we encounter?**

The Annual Give drive in the fall and the “Big Night” spring auction event are the two key fundraisers that help fund the school’s Ecology and Music programs as well as other strategic initiatives. Smaller fundraising activities are also held throughout the year.

**Why can’t the school’s budget pay for aides?**

As we are all aware, Chicago Public Schools is in the midst of budget problems. It is highly unlikely that the 2016-17 Waters Elementary school budget will have excess funding that could be applied to classroom aides.

**I have questions. Who should I contact?**

Please contact the school office at 773.534.5090 or email WatersToday at info@waterstoday.og

**What if I cannot afford or prefer not to participate?**

Waters Elementary is a wonderful community that will not only allow your student to evolve academically but also help them grow as a good citizen. Our dedication to the Arts is evident throughout the school and our award winning Ecology program provides an incredibly unique experience that helps students build a sense of connection, community and social responsibility. These programs can only continue if we all participate to the extent we can. We respect everyone’s funding decision and understand the need for families to budget money carefully.