



MPCS Class Reunion Guidebook

Dear Class Reunion Planners,

Here you will find important and helpful information for your MPCS class reunion. We have provided documents from the hard-copy version (available upon request) of the MPCS Class Reunion Guidebook.

The MPCS Alumni Relations office wants to help make your reunion an event to remember. We have developed this Reunion Guidebook to jump-start your planning and to make coordinating more organized and more manageable. Our goal is to help simplify the task of organizing your reunion by giving you helpful hints and ideas.

To chair a class reunion and request a MPCS Reunion Guidebook, please contact the Development/Alumni Relations Office at 770-578-0182, extension 3537 or e-mail cgibbs@mtparanschool.com

Happy Planning!

Cindy Gibbs
MPCS Alumni Relations Office

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GETTING STARTED

Start Early

If possible, start at least one year ahead; some classes start two years ahead. This applies whether you and some classmates plan your reunion or if you hire a reunion company to pull things together.

Form a Committee

While you can be as inclusive as you want, we recommend a minimum of 5 people to share the duties. Some reunion committees have a single chair. Others have co-chairs to head the event to take the pressure off a sole leader. Diversify your committee membership, choosing people from different backgrounds and interests while at MPCS (clubs, sports, school leaders, academics, music, etc.). It is important to have one or more committee members living in the area where the reunion will be held.

These are some special skills that can make organizing a reunion more successful – Accounting/bookkeeping to record and manage reunion costs; computer skills to help with mail lists, e-mail, nametags, RSVP lists; and classmates who have experience with organizing events or have contacts with event locations.

Key Considerations

What the committee decides about the first three of the following considerations will, to a large extent, determine the fourth: reunion cost. However, there are many other costs to consider, some of which are listed in this document.

1. *Select a Date*
2. *Determine Activities*
3. *Determine Location(s)*
4. *Reunion Cost*

Select a Date

This decision will drive all others, so think about when most of your classmates will be able to attend this event. This will be different for every class. To help you decide on a date, consider these questions:

- What time of year do you want the reunion?
- Do you want your reunion on a three-day weekend?
- How many days are you planning for the reunion?
- What is happening locally that might limit reunion venues? (sporting events, conventions, etc.)
- What other date(s) should you avoid that would preclude attendance? (Holidays, etc.)

As soon as you have a firm date, contact the Development/Alumni Relations office so we can put your date(s) on our school's alumni website, on our Facebook group, and in the next alumni newsletter. As your plans evolve, updates can also be posted on these sites.

Determine Activities

Many classes like to make the reunion more than a one-evening party. Some plan over an entire weekend. Here are some ideas:

- Friday night casual get-together
- Saturday at MPCCS: tour of the “new” campus (provided by MPCCS Alumni Relations office) (Note: If you want to include a campus tour, be sure to check with our office for scheduling – this is particularly true for the summer time).
- Catered continental breakfast or brunch at MPCCS (suggested locations: high school commons area, or dining hall)
- Attend a football game or a musical event
- Dinner and dancing at a hotel or country club
- Sunday picnic (this could be a family event and might be included in the total package, charged separately, or offered ad hoc through voluntary contributions)

Determine Location(s)

Once you have ideas about dates and how many events you want to hold, you need to decide where to hold them. Often an event such as dinner and dancing is held at a local hotel or country club. Some events may be appropriate to host at MPCCS itself or a local park (no alcoholic beverages allowed at these sites).

Determining factors seem to be the age of your classmates, convenience, “family” events, festivities at the event, food, and cost.

Some common issues to discuss with the host include:

- Size of the room: Will it hold the group you expect and/or can you dance there too?
- Food: Is food available in-house or should it be catered?
- Hours: Opening and closing hours? When can food be served?
- Inflation clause in the contract: How much will costs increase if you contract a year or more in advance of the reunion date?
- Parking facilities
- Decorations: Can we? What is available through the event location?
- Music: Band or “DJ”? What type of music? How much will it cost?
- Is there a separate place for dancing from dining?

Reunion Cost

Reunions can be pricey, especially if spouses and children are part of the festivities. You will need to determine a ballpark high-end cost that you believe your classmates would be willing to spend. You want to cover your costs.

Some cost considerations:

- Event location(s), room rental(s)
- Food (menu, refreshments, buffet or plated dinner, etc.)
- Decorations
- Entertainment (music)
- Publicity (mailing, newspaper ads)
- Honored guests (subsidy for former teachers? Honoraria for special speakers?)
- Photographer
- Reunion memory book
- Nametags
- Class gift

Once all costs are determined, along with a reasonable guess of the number of attendees, a price can be fixed. We recommend your committee open a checking account for expenses, deposits, and raising “seed money” if necessary. Opening an account that will allow payment by credit cards can be beneficial.

Concluding Thoughts

We all lead busy lives and may not have the time collectively to pull a reunion together. There are companies that can help you plan your reunion. They will do the following:

- Plan your event(s)
- Send out your mailings
- Research to find classmates
- Make nametags with high school pictures copied from your class yearbook
- Advance deposits for dinner
- Compile a reunion booklet

Some companies will do more. You will have to contact them and make your own arrangements. Their cost, which is based on the number of people they get to come to the reunion, is included in the reservation price.

PLANNING CALENDAR

Timing is everything! To complete all reunion plans on time and permit you the opportunity of enjoying your reunion, begin EARLY. Here are some ballpark times to consider.

1 to 2 Years Ahead

Pull together your committee and pick a chair or co-chairs. Hold your first meeting to assign committee tasks and begin tracking down your classmates. This is very important! See the correspondence “MPCS Resources” for what the Development/Alumni Relations office can provide, and update the addresses so each new mailing/e-mail has the most accurate information.

1 Year Ahead

Determine your principal venues and ascertain availability, cost and when the final decision needs to be made.

- Send out your first mailing/notification alerting your classmates of your plans to have a reunion (a “Save the Date” notice). This should include as much definite information as possible along with contact information. The mailing will help you gauge class enthusiasm and will also help you clean up your mailing list before you send an official invitation.
- Use first-class postage so you know if a classmate is no longer at this address. Ask for e-mail addresses, as this will be invaluable for future communications.
- Notify the media about the reunion. Post the reunion (even if the date is TBA) on the MPCS website, MPCS Alumni Group on Facebook, and even Classmates.com. The Development/Alumni Relations office will create an event for you through the Alumni Group on Facebook to help track RSVPs.
- Event follow-up: Provide a brief write-up and pictures to the Development/Alumni Relations office to post on school website and Facebook after the event has concluded.

9 Months Ahead

Begin to finalize your plans. You may want to contact hotels in the area to negotiate special room rates and block out rooms in advance...a Big Plus for out-of-towners and first-time attendees.

6 Months Ahead

Mail out the invitations - This may seem early but you will want to give classmates time to schedule vacation and flights, in addition to getting RSVPs back in plenty of time. Include a registration form, which includes the following information:

- Date(s) of the reunion
- Planned activities with times and locations (include information about what meals will be served, appropriate dress for each event, and whether children are invited to any events)

- Cost per person or couple
- Information on lodging and any negotiated rates. Include toll-free numbers if available.
- “Make check payable to...” information
- If you use credit cards, make sure there is no possibility that the personal information could be compromised. Remember e-mail is not secure and should not be used with any credit card data.
- Deadline date for returning the reservation

You might include a “lost sheep” list, a questionnaire to elicit interesting facts about each person, and a request for pictures and other memorabilia. You should establish a policy for dealing with late returns, cancellations, and at-the-door payments. It is important to urge your classmates to get their money and reservations in EARLY. Your committee needs operating funds, and you need to know the number of people who are attending so you can finalize food and catering plans.

2 Months Ahead

Send a final reminder (letter, postcard, email) to those classmates who HAVE NOT made reservations. You might call the alumni who ARE coming and remind them to send in their reservation.

1 Month to 2 Weeks Ahead

Give the caterer(s) a ballpark number of people coming to the reunion. Often activities take place at locations that can be difficult to find. Therefore, detailed maps and directions need to be available.

The Week of the Reunion

Give the caterer a final count (may be required earlier depending on the venue). If you have not already begun to make the nametags and information packets, begin this now. These are time-consuming jobs. Tie up loose ends such as making a schedule for committee members who will serve at the reservations check-in table. (Remember, all committee members want to enjoy the reunion also, so housekeeping duties such as check-in should be shared among committee members.)

Day of the Big Event

Put out the memorabilia displays and centerpieces, if any. Have fun! A key ingredient to a successful reunion is “inclusion”. All alumni who feel part of the group will return to reunions for years to come.

The Party's Over

If you had a class website, include reunion photos so those who weren't able to attend can enjoy seeing all their friends. We will also post any shared pictures on our Facebook alumni group.

When it is all over, have a reunion committee "event" to:

- Celebrate a successful event
- Review what worked and what didn't
- Plan a follow-up communication to all classmates. Emphasize the importance of keeping their contact information up to date for future events.
- Post photos to website(s)
- **Remember to provide MPC Development/Alumni Relations office with your most recent address list to keep our data as current as possible for any future events.**
- Begin discussions for the next reunion.
- **Complete a reunion survey and return to MPC so future committees can benefit from your experience.**

GETTING CLASSMATES THERE

Finding Everyone

Maintaining a class list and finding lost classmates is a job in itself. MPCS can help initially in this regard. Our alumni database of names and addresses is continuously being updated as new information becomes available. Often missing classmates in one class have brothers or sisters in other classes and these listings are an excellent tracking source. The Development /Alumni Relations office will provide your reunion committee with a record (hard copy or Excel spreadsheet) for reference in creating mailing lists or locating classmates from your class.*

(*Please refer to the school's *No Solicitation policy* as noted under the "Mailings" section of "MPCS Resources")

Ideally, you want all of your classmates to attend the reunion. Here are some tips to increase the number of attendees:

- Make sure the MPCS Alumni Relations office (770-578-0182, ext. 3537) knows the details about your reunion and who to contact with information, should any of your classmates call the school to ask if their class is holding a reunion.
- Add a "lost sheep" list to each of your mailings to ask if anyone knows where they are.
- Write news briefs about your reunion for placement in local and metro newspapers. Ask classmates in other large metropolitan areas around the country to do the same. Make sure your committee's contact information is included in any write-ups.
- Place news announcements about your reunion on local public access cable television stations.
- Whenever possible use email with its obvious benefits of no cost and frequency of communications.
- Take advantage of the MPCS website to promote your event – it's FREE!
- Facebook: Contact the Alumni Relations office to request that reunion details be posted to the Mount Paran Christian School Alumni Group on Facebook and encourage other classmates to request to join– it's FREE!
- Consider using the "Classmates" website to post the reunion dates and periodically compare its listing of classmates for your reunion with your own list.

Mailings

An individual or small group should be in charge of mailing to your classmates, receipt of return correspondence, and updating your class mailing list (**and getting corrections to MPCS to update its database**). Much help is needed to compose correspondence, stuff envelopes, label and stamp. Mailings can be "events" in themselves and a good time to discuss progress on the reunion with other volunteering classmates.

Note: For security reason, e-mail is not an appropriate way to receive reunion payments; you may consider using "PayPal" to avoid this problem.

MPCS RESOURCES

Mount Paran Christian School wants to help make your class reunion the best ever for you and your classmates. Along with providing this “tips” guidebook, MPCS can offer your committee assistance in a number of other ways. These services are available through the MPCS Development /Alumni Relations office by contacting Cindy Gibbs at 770-578-0182 extension 3537, or cgibbs@mtparanschool.com.

Communication

MPCS Development/Alumni Relations office serves as a clearinghouse for information about class reunions. Let us know the dates, times, event locations, and contact names for your reunion so we can pass on the word to your classmates who call asking for details. Also, this office will help publicize your reunion information in a variety of ways: MPCS website, Facebook Alumni Group, and the Alumni Newsletter.

Mailings

The MPCS Database Manager can provide an Excel spreadsheet with the names, addresses, and contact information that we have on file for your class. By having this data in electronic form, the reunion committee will be able to directly connect and communicate with your peers. However, before electronic data can be released, the reunion chair must sign and return to the Alumni Relations office the release document (available upon request) that the electronic data will only be used for the reunion and will not be distributed for anyone beyond the committee members. Please note the school’s policy that is published in the MPCS Handbook. Alumni reunion committees must comply with our school policy.

**Solicitation (MPCS Handbook)*

The Board of Directors has established the policy that no person or group of persons will be permitted to solicit for personal profit from the staff or families who attend MPCS. Under no circumstances should the student directory class lists or the staff mailboxes be used by individuals for personal or business mailings or recruitment.

It is also important that once the reunion is finished that the MPCS Database Manager be given the most current class listing so its records can be updated.

Tours of MPCS

Many classes want to come back to see their alma mater. While much has changed over the years, the heart and mission of our school remains the same. The Development /Alumni Relations office staff will be happy to conduct a campus tour for reunion classes upon request. Tours may not be scheduled during Thanksgiving, Christmas, winter or spring breaks. Since schedules change, it is important to schedule any tours through the Development office to ensure a staff member will be available.

Rooms for Events

Reunions may want to hold some events at MPCS. The Mulkey Dining Hall and outdoor patio area, Dozier High School Commons, and Murray Cabin, may be used for gatherings and meals rent free (barring school-related conflicts). There may be a per-hour charge for custodial and security personnel during your reunion-related event. Gyms and several athletic fields are also available free of charge (subject to previously scheduled school activities for this space). Reunions may not hold events at MPCS

during Thanksgiving, Christmas, winter and spring breaks or the full month of August. The Murray Arts Center is also available, by reservation, with certain fees that may apply, depending on the event.

Two important considerations for your event planning:

1. MPCS is a smoke-free environment. Smoking is NOT permitted anywhere on campus – inside or outside any of the school grounds. (By state law and school board policy)
2. No alcoholic beverages may be served or consumed at MPCS.

MPCS Memorabilia

MPCS has yearbooks from 1988 to the present, along with photo albums and archived school publications. This material is available upon request to reunion committees to research and photocopy. It is the responsibility of the committee members to return these materials to the Development/Alumni Relations office and take care to preserve their condition for future events.