



Parent Co-Op for Early Learning

PARENT HANDBOOK 2009-2010

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HISTORY OF PARENT CO-OP

October 1972

The Parent Cooperative for Early Learning, Inc. was formed by a group of parents and staff from a day care center connected with a business school at DePaul University, in protest of a reduction of staff due to financial difficulties. The Parent Co-op School was held together by staff doing field trips for 2-3 weeks until a location was found: the gym room of the Long Grove Day Care at 20th and Michigan. The Parent Co-op operated as a school within another school: philosophically and legally we were independent, but financially and physically we merged with Long Grove and operated under their license. The student population was about 30 (from both the near north and south sides of Chicago) with a staff of six. Educationally the program was very structured with an emphasis on the Distar method of instruction.

January 1973

Parent Co-op was incorporated as a not-for-profit day care center.

April 1974

Parent Co-op was locked out of Long Grove Day Care after several months of strained coexisting. The school moved into Carol Heller's apartment for 3 weeks until arrangements were made with the YMCA at 53rd and Dorchester to temporarily use a first floor space while we continued to search for a licensable location downtown. The student population (one group of 24 children) was still equally from the north and south sides with a staff of five teachers. Philosophically the program was in transition from the rigid Distar method to a more unstructured, eclectic operation.

May 1975

Negotiations were started with Sherry Apartments to rent the space on the hotel's main floor, a burned-out ballroom and kitchen. Meanwhile the school existed illegally in the YMCA, repeatedly going to court with both city and state for operating without a license. The school was now predominantly Hyde Park-based with a growing enrollment of 40 and a staff of eight teachers. The program was eclectic but increasingly influenced by Piaget's theory. Financially the school was deeply in debt and functioned on a daily survival basis.

August 1975

Parent Co-op signed a 5-year lease (with an option to renew for another 5 years) with the Sherry Apartments, with the agreement that they would renovate according to the designs provided by Parent Co-op.

May 1976

Parent Co-op received city and state day care licenses. The school operated in two classrooms with an enrollment of about 45 children and nine teachers. The style and philosophy of the school were established. The main concern was the psychological well-being of the child with a strong interest in intellectual development.

September 1976

The 4-5-year-old classroom opened.

October 1978

the Sherry Apartments were sold and converted to the Hampton House Condominiums. Hampton House recognized Parent Co-op's 5 year lease.

February 1981

Parent Co-op exercised its option to renew the lease with the Hampton House for another 5 years.

January 1986

Parent Co-op signed another 5-year lease with the House.

January 1991

The lease agreement was extended another 5 years.

January 1996

The lease agreement takes us into the new millennium!

September 1997

1997-98 marked the 25th anniversary year of the Parent Cooperative for Early Learning, and a number of special events made it memorable. A multicultural cookbook, Rainbow Stew, was produced; "Brunch With Winnie the Pooh" and a craft fair highlighted November; and "An Evening of Jazz" with Don Moye at the South Shore Cultural Center offered a sophisticated event shared with family, friends, and community. A picnic at Harold Washington Park brought alumni and current families together over sandwiches and barbecue. Fundraising efforts, the first in several years, raised enough money to pay for the renovation of the Parent Co-op kitchen. Hall bulletin boards displayed historical Q & A and photos of classes past and present. The 24 children and the staff of the 1973 year were featured in an article in the Hyde Park Herald on July 15, 1998, as the anniversary year came to a close.

September 2002

The 2002-03 school year was Parent Cooperative's 30th anniversary year. A new playhouse in the playground, designed by architect-parent Thomas Genty and built by Thomas and three members of the

standing committee on Building and Grounds: Roy Foster, Jim Taylor and Calvin Hill celebrated the efforts and achievements of Parent Coop.

A building improvement that was a long time in coming was the installation in March of 2002 by the Hampton House of new windows in all classrooms and the office. As long ago as 1991, meeting minutes record the Hampton House's refusal to put in new windows. Children's classes were held at the Neighborhood Club through the kindness of its executive director and Co-op alum, Alison Alexander, and in rented space at the United Church of Hyde Park. The terrible mess left by the window installation was leaned up in the short term by parents and teachers, and repaired in the long term by contractor-parent Paul Christofersen.

In a process that dragged out over a year, a 3-year lease with the Hampton House was signed by both parties.

In addition to the four standing committees (Fundraising, Parent Involvement, Personnel and Building & Grounds), a Finance committee began meeting in the fall of 2001 when several broken contracts caused the Co-op to borrow from its reserves.

The school was accredited through National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) in April 2000 and went through the reaccreditation process in its 30th anniversary year.

Jazz @ the Point, the most successful fundraiser in recent years, was held on June 8, 2003, at Promontory Point.

In 2003, PCEL was reaccredited by NAEYC, and this was Director Karen Maurer's last major effort at PCEL before she retired to part-time teaching. We had a complicated transition year before we hired Monica Foster to be our new director in 2004. During Ms. Foster's first year, PCEL successfully applied for its outside grants. We received a couple of grants from Action for Children, including a Quality Counts grant for \$8,000 worth of materials (some for special needs children) and some professional development grants (\$1,500 for staff in-services). We also received a \$5,000 grant from the University of Chicago to hire a curricular consultant, Gale Reinitz, who has helped us make sure that PCEL is conforming to NAEYC standards. In 2004, PCEL also renewed its lease with Hampton House for three additional years. Fundraisers during this time have included a bowling event, a garage sale, and the yearly walkathons.

PHILOSOPHY AND CURRICULUM

The aim of Parent Co-op is to nurture the development of the whole child: emotionally, socially, intellectually and physically. The program is grounded in the theories of Erik Erikson, Lev Vygotsky and Jean Piaget. We are guided in planning by the handbook, Developmentally Appropriate Practice published by the National Association for the Education of the Young Children.

Erikson explained human development in terms of eight stages, which he envisioned as conflicts that, if positively resolved, enable the growing person to move to the next stage. The infant experiences both trust and mistrust, ideally has many more trust experiences, allowing her/him to resolve this developmental crisis by finding his/her world mostly trustworthy and enabling him/her to be hopeful.

Toddlers experience the conflict of autonomy vs. shame and doubt, emerging positively with initiative vs. guilt; when initiative wins out, the child is able to be purposeful in his approach to life experiences.

Piaget learned from his observations of children that they construct their knowledge of the world, rather than receiving knowledge passively from others. The child has experiences, forms an idea, holds that idea until new experience challenges the notion, then either incorporates the new data or revises his/her idea to fit the data. “Young children do not yet have constructed knowledge from lived experience.” Piaget talked about the egocentrism of young children, their inability to see things from a perspective other than their own. It is our observation that even our youngest children may display empathy, kindness, generosity, and other prosocial behaviors that suggest they’re not as egocentric as Piaget thought.

Vygotsky’s work adds a social dimension to our understanding of how young children learn. Adults – or older children – may scaffold a task for a younger learner, enabling the child to work or play at a higher level than if he/she were playing alone or with same-age or younger playmates. Vygotsky also talks about a “zone of proximal development.” If parents and teachers are observant and aware of where the next learning zone is, they can help the child to move into it.

Recent brain research is helping us to better understand the interaction of nature and nurture, the importance of experience in making and keeping connections in the brain; and the reality of timing in particular kinds of learning such as language.

Erikson informs our understanding of psychosocial development; Piaget helps us to understand the importance of preparing the learning environment and hands-on, experiential learning, and Vygotsky clarifies the interactive role of children with parents and teachers as we nurture the thinking and learning of the whole child.

OUR CURRICULUM: THE DEVELOPMENTAL APPROACH

When curriculum is developmentally appropriate, planning takes into consideration both the stage characteristics of the group and the learning needs of individual children. Teachers meet in teams to plan units, themes, experiences, activities, and projects, guided by the Creative Curriculum and their understanding of child development and their knowledge of the children in the group. The intent is to meet each child’s physical, social, emotional, and intellectual needs for growth. When the child is neither hurried nor slowed, when what he/she produces is accepted as her accomplishment, then self-esteem is enhanced and self-respect grows. From such feelings arise the child’s courage to explore, imagine, discover for himself/herself, to take chances and risk making mistakes. With mastery of the various aspects of the child’s day comes confidence, so essential to enjoying new experiences, making friends, cooperating with peers, accepting discipline from caring adults, and taking appropriate care of himself/herself. With the aim of providing for the healthy development of each child during his/her stay at Parent Co-op, each of the three rooms has organized its structure, activities, and emphases so that, while they are stage appropriate, there is enough flexibility to meet the needs of each child.

THE EXPLORERS ROOM for 2-3-year-olds is the entry point for many Parent Co-op families. Parents’ needs are considered almost as important as children’s in this room, and a great deal of conversation

takes place between teachers and parents, who form an alliance, a partnership in which the child is the beneficiary. A daily sheet is posted on the parent board, so parents can read about their child's adventures and misadventures.

Twos are toddlers, not preschoolers. They have great need of adults who support their struggle for autonomy, who set limits for safety and security, who are generous with laps and hugs and backrubs for relaxing into sleep at naptime, who provide a balance of novelty and familiarity. Explorers' days include free play (self selection), whole group with a teacher (art materials, puzzles, games, construction, dramatic play), and individual time (toileting, diapering, rocking, conversation, books). Explorers' field trips tend to be local: a walk around the block, Chestnut Park, occasionally Harold Washington Park. They love the idea of riding on the school bus and do go on three or four appropriate trips (such as Lincoln Park Zoo), but for Explorers, getting there is most of the fun. Sensory learning is paramount: touching is critical. Prosocial behavior is encouraged as children learn to recognize and name their feeling, and accept that others have feelings too. Explorers are taught to tell an aggressive friend "I don't like that" and encouraged to reconcile with a hug. Learning to use the toilet is a significant step, which is begun in the second half of the year or sooner for the child who takes the initiative; as with other learning, parents and teachers work together on the child's behalf.

The Explorers Class implements staggered enrollment during the first week of school. Staggered enrollment allows the children to start at different times (days) so that the first days of school are less stressful for children, parents, and staff. Having all new children start on the same day can be stressful.

There will be two or three new children starting each day. This allows new parents to have more teacher attention for asking questions and share important information about your child. The classroom will not be overwhelming for you or your child using the staggered enrollment process. It will be a smoother transition for the children to start in a new environment with a smaller group. Staggered enrollment will create a calmer atmosphere and larger child teacher ratio. The children will officially start on the following Monday in the Explorer's class only. If you have other children starting at the Parent Cooperative for Early Learning they will start on the first day of school. If you have questions about staggered enrollment process please call the school and ask to speak to staff of Explorer classroom at 1-773-684-6363. Each family will receive a letter about the staggered enrollment. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

As the name IMAGINATION STATION suggests, the classroom provides plenty of time and materials for pretend play. A large area for block play encourages cooperative use of unit blocks, hollow blocks, and various small blocks that embody math and science principles such as balance, gravity, multiples and equalities. shape and size. An inviting home play area flooded with light from the east windows encourages imaginative play about the children's lived experiences of eating, family life, adult roles, travel, shopping, cooking, and care of babies. Available art materials allow for varied levels of interest in writing and drawing and the development of small muscles through cutting and painting. which happens as well when children work puzzles and play with Legos and other manipulatives. Sand or water (or other tactile materials) and play dough provide children with varied sensory experience and a way to drain off tension. (It's okay to pound on the play dough: it's NOT okay to pound on a friend!) During an Imagineer's day there is a balance of freely chosen and teacher-directed time, active and quiet, between individual and group activity, indoors and out.

The DISCOVERY ROOM is a place of high curiosity, where math concepts and emerging literacy are worked on in circle time as well as in self-selection and play. Throughout the one or two years a child might spend in the Discovery Room, play becomes a rich representation of experiences, both real and from stories, and friendships take on a deeper quality than those of younger children. The math and science corner with the computers, and variety of materials for counting, sorting, classifying and matching, weighing and measuring, trying out and wondering about. Individual questions and curiosities as well as group discoveries are important as free-choice and teacher-guided activity, as self-expressive and becoming representational, as having an important role in developing literacy. When children leave the Discovery Room to go off to the big world of Kindergarten they demonstrate strong social skills; comfort with caring teachers; a solid grasp of letter-sound relationship, love of books, and some skills of emergent literacy; lots of hands-on, everyday experiences with math and science concepts.

In each classroom, the values of Parent Co-op are expressed through high-quality interactions between children and adults, an abundance of language, availability of books and regular reading to children, and the expectation that each person is to be valued, respected, and included.

MOVING TO THE NEXT ROOM

Three factors determine classroom moves; age, readiness, and the availability of space. Some children move to the next classroom in July at the beginning of the summer session. Most children move in September at the beginning of the new school year. Occasionally moves occur at other times, but an effort is made to move two or more children together to ease the social transition. Decisions to move are collaborative, with input from the sending and receiving teachers, parents, and director. In late winter, evening programs will be presented: "Discover the Discovery Room" and "A Day in the Life of an Imagineer," at which teachers will show videos and talk about their classrooms. Parents of the school and the community are invited to learn about their classrooms. In the months prior to July and September moves, parents are invited to visit and observe in the classroom to which their child will be moving. Teachers visit each other's classrooms and children are invited to visit their new classrooms, making a gradual adjustment to a new room, new teachers, and at least some new classmates. Parents are also making a transition, and they are encouraged to stay in touch with new teachers, who will provide daily information for at least the first week about activities and the child's adjustment.

SAMPLE LIST OF DEVELOPMENTAL SKILLS

Through free play indoors and out, socio-dramatic play, use of art materials, music, literature, circle activities and conversations, construction with large and small blocks, experimentation with science and math materials, practicing life skills and self-care that make up your child's day, she/he is developing on many levels. One area of development reinforces the others. By allowing children to play with interesting or stimulating materials and equipment in a supportive environment, we provide the framework in which the child discovers the world, names it, describes it, represents his experience with play, language, or the arts. He/she finds a place for himself/herself in it and learns to make adjustments in order to thrive. The child's explorations, exercise of imagination, and emotional, linguistic, artistic, and physical development will grow.

Following is a partial list of areas in which your child is developing through play and other daily activities at Parent Co-op.

INTELLECTUAL (COGNITIVE) DEVELOPMENT

Critical thinking
Problem-solving
Cause-and-effect
Creativity
Ability to follow directions/series of directions
Curiosity
Increased attention span
Letter names and shapes
Numeral names and shapes
Letter-sound relationships
Emerging literacy
Representation of experiences and ideas
Decoding
Left-right and top-bottom orientation of English print
Elements of written language such as letters, words, sentences
Joy and power of reading
Effective communication
Expressing one's needs, feelings, problems, and ideas
Listening skills
Growth of vocabulary
Power of language
Recognizing more than one language
Asking questions
Quantity, sequencing, matching, grouping, comparing, classifying
One-to-one correspondence
Number concepts
Patterns, rhythm
Shapes, sizes
Equalities, multiples
Rote counting, rational counting, skip counting
Sciencing
Colors, color mixing
Length, volume, weight, texture
Balance
Velocity
Plant and animal life/growth needs
Natural environment and its care
Action-reaction
Gravity

SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL

Positive self-image

Self-respect

Value self, care for self

Recognize and name feelings in self and others

Awareness of rights, one's needs met

Ability to get one's needs met

Resilience

Willingness to take risks

Independence

Self-control

Capacity to nurture, to be kind, generous

Ability to choose and to work toward a goal

Ability to wait

Responsibility to members of one's group

Sharing/turn-taking

Cooperation

Patience

Courage

Giving and accepting help

Skills of negotiation and compromise

Ability and willingness to stand up for oneself

Ability to make and keep friends

Acceptance of limits and discipline by caring adults

Willingness to follow rules, especially health and safety

Acceptance of differences in others' looks, language, culture, ideas

PHYSICAL DEVELOPMENT

Awareness of body in space

Awareness and control of urinating and bowel movements

Dressing and undressing

Self-feeding; using a spoon, fork

Using a knife for spreading, cutting

Drinking from an uncovered cup

Washing hands and face

Cleaning up after spills

Walking, running

Jumping, climbing

Hopping on two feet, one foot

Throwing, catching

Swimming

Dancing

Construction using large and small muscles

Snipping, cutting with scissors

Holding crayon, marker, brush for scribbling, drawing, painting, writing

Holding books, turning pages

Putting puzzles together

Eye-hand coordination

PREPARING YOUR CHILD - AND YOURSELF

Starting school gives rise to many feelings in both child and parent. It is best to accept the feelings as valid, and capable of change. If it is the first separation, much of the child's energy may be spent just dealing with the sense of loss: he/she may cry often or easily, may regress to thumb-sucking or have toileting accidents even if successfully using the toilet – or the child may refuse to use the toilet at all in this strange place. Some children may appear to adjust immediately and easily, then break down after several weeks. For the child who has been at home with a parent or caregiver, group life may seem strange and demanding. Some children display anger as a response to being left at school, or they may seem angry with the parent who comes to pick them up. Transitions are hard! Parents also may feel loss or sadness, or sometimes guilt at leaving a young child with relative strangers. The trust that grows with time is not there at the beginning. Both parents and children may feel hopeful, excited, and optimistic in addition to the anxious feelings, and it is good to know that as the school environment, people and routines become familiar, more realistic feelings replace the initial anxieties. To separate from someone we love and depend on is something we don't do without a struggle, and so in resisting separation, your child may be indicating that a good, established relationship is being threatened. In working through the separation in a supportive environment, he/she will emerge stronger.

PARENTS' ROLE: It is important for your child to know that you are leaving and that you will come back to him after your work. If you can stay for a short time, do things with him/her in his/her school world (read a book, eat a snack, do a puzzle), that may help to bridge the gap and ease the separation. Hasty good-byes are harder. Never slip away unseen! Even if it means tears, your child needs to know that you are leaving, needs to know that it is necessary for you to leave, that you intend to come back. Try to give some understandable time (after nap, after snack, when the clock looks like ...) and something that you will do together after school. Bring a family snapshot to tape in her cubby. Leave some item you value with your child for him to carry in a pocket to let her know that she will be okay until you see each other again. Once you have said your good-byes, leave – even though there are tears. Children may use the “waving window” on the south side of the Explorers Room, a Parent Co-op tradition.

TEACHERS' ROLE: Teachers will introduce your child to the classroom, toilet facilities, play materials, and other children, helping him/her to think of the classroom as a place where children have fun and are safe. Teachers will give children affection and understanding, accepting feeling as real and separation as hard. They will talk about parents' love, parents' dependability, and parents' return. Teachers may help a child make a picture or letter to be given to the parent upon returning or may play with dolls or puppets to tell stories of coming and going. A child who is also new to English has language to learn as well and cannot receive verbal comfort or reassurance from teachers. Young children are in the optimum period for language learning, and teachers will facilitate that learning as well as communicating by gesture, facial expression, and comforting touch that the child is safe and cared for. Parents can teach the teachers some key words in the child's primary language: mother, father, eat, nap, toilet, come back.

NAP TIME: A favorite stuffed toy, small pillow, or quilt from home may be comforting at nap time. These will be kept on the child's cot. Depending on age and need, teachers may rub backs, rock, read

aloud, play music or story tapes to help children to rest or sleep. Older children take a book to bed, which may be from the school's collection or from home. Nap time provides a needed break in the day and is required by licensing standards when children stay 5 hours or more.

ADJUSTMENT PERIOD: One or more short visits before the first day are helpful, in which the parent stays with and is responsible for the child. On the child's first day, a parent should arrange to stay for half a day, taking breaks so that the child can become accustomed to the parent coming and going. Try to establish regular arrival and pickup times, and use these times to talk briefly with a teacher. It is reassuring to the child to see his/her parents and teachers interacting; beginning to establish trust, and it provides glimpses for each into the child's life at home and at school. As children get to know the teachers, some testing of limits will occur. Teachers will respond with gentle firmness, which will reassure the child that he is protected from his own and others' negative impulses; and that limits and expectations apply consistently to everyone in the group.

Another step in adjusting is establishing relationships with other children. Very young children form friendships of a brief and transient nature and their play is either solitary or parallel. Cooperative play develops, and by 4 or 5, friends become important. For older children, parents can help with adjustment to a new group by inviting a school friend home to visit or to go along on an outing. Teachers are also aware of the potential loneliness of a new child and will help her to find roles in group activities and classroom life.

BEFORE YOUR CHILD STARTS SCHOOL

Real life does not always permit the ideal, but if at all possible, a gradual introduction to Parent Co-op is in the child's - and the parent's - best interests. Once you have decided to enroll your child, come for a visit (an hour or two is plenty) in which you stay with your child in his/her classroom, allowing him/her to explore or participate and providing the necessary support and supervision. You are welcome to visit the playground on weekends or evenings. On your child's first day, plan to spend at least the morning with him/her; but on the sidelines. Make some trips in and out on any pretext, tell him/her you're going to the bathroom and will return in a few minutes. Each classroom has an observation booth from which you can see your child without being seen.

A medical report, including a health history completed by the parent, and immunization record and a physical examination including a TB test and a lead screening all signed by the examining physician, is a key part of preparing to start at Parent Co-op. The physical exam needs to be repeated annually, and the Director/Acting Director will let you know ahead of time when your child is due for a checkup. Parents are also asked to complete an information form about the child, provide names and phone numbers of adults who are permitted to pick up the child from school or who can come in an emergency, and sign various permissions. An enrollment agreement (contract) is completed and signed, then signed by the Director, photocopied, and returned to parents for home files. Each enrolled child has a folder in the office file, the contents of which are inspected by the City Public Health Nurse and our DCFS licensing representative.

WHAT TO BRING FOR YOUR CHILD

1. Every child needs a change of clothes, and Explorers need two changes. The change may be used because of a bathroom accident, a lunch time spill, or too much enthusiasm at the water table. When the change you've provided is used (you'll know because you'll find a little plastic bag of laundry in your child's cubby when you pick him/her up), replace the change the next day. It's easy to forget this detail, and then when your child has an accident there are no dry clothes! It's good to pay attention to size, too, as what fits in September may not in February. A complete change includes underwear and socks, and should be brought to school in a shoebox labeled on the end with your child's name. Labeling children's clothes and jackets with a laundry pen saves mix ups.
2. Soft toy, small pillow, or quilt from home for nap time
3. Supply of diapers and diaper wipes if your 2-year-old is not toilet trained
4. Supply of washable cotton training pants if your child is learning to use the toilet
5. Box of tissues to be kept in the cubby and replaced when empty
6. Family photo to be taped inside the cubby (This need varies with age, so ask your child's teacher.)
7. Outerwear that will permit a child to play outdoors or go for a walk in all weather except very cold/windy, very hot/humid, or heavy rain/lightning. There is not enough room in cubbies for outerwear to be left at school. so parents need to assess the weather and bring what may be needed each day: hat, sweater, scarf, snowsuit, waterproof mittens, boots, and raincoat.

Rubber-soled shoes are safer for climbing and running. Children should come dressed for comfort and active play. Jewelry, especially if it has value to the family, may be played with, given away, or lost by a child who is too young understand its value, and so is better left at home. Objects of interest to the child may enrich the learning environment of the classroom and thus bringing such objects should be worked out with the teacher. Items for show-and-tell should be brought on the day of, kept in a safe place at school, and taken home the same day. Cubbies should be emptied daily of notes, reports, and children's work, and on Fridays should be emptied of everything except the change of clothes and box of tissues. Please remove any food from your child's cubby at the end of each day.

WHAT TO LEAVE AT HOME

- Candy
- Gum
- Toys of violence
- Money
- Valuables
- "Junk food" snacks

YOUR CHILD'S DAY

The Explorers Room opens at 7:00 am as the gathering room for all ages with the Assistant Director. Play is relaxed and self-directed as children finish waking up and become sociable. On warm days this early arriving group may play outdoors. Children who can't wait for morning snack are welcome to

bring fruit or yogurt or a sandwich to tide them over. As more children and teachers arrive, the age groups divide and go to their own classrooms where they may continue to play freely or eat a morning snack. All children are with their own teachers by 8:15. Teachers appreciate it if all children are at school by 9:30. A preschool child who arrives late may miss morning circle, or find that activities and social connections are proceeding without him, and that it is hard to get started. This is not meant to be a rigid rule, but an encouragement to parents to establish a regular arrival time that respects the planned learning activities and rhythm of the classroom.

Help your child if needed to remove and hang up outer clothing in the cubby. Sign your child in every day. Use the COMMENTS section of the sign-in sheet to note medications, changes in pickup plans, anything unusual about your child's day. Help your child wash his/her hands when you arrive, the first of many hand washings that form the first line of defense against the spread of infection. Speak to a teacher, being sure that a teacher knows that your child is there. If you have a substantive conversation, ask the teacher to share that information with other members of the teaching team. Unless your sense of family privacy does not permit, it is good to tell teachers about things that may affect your child's life during the day, from poor sleeping to family stress, from out-of-town guests to a dead goldfish, anything that might make your child excited or upset. If you can, spend a few minutes with your child; read a story, have some lap time, keep him/her company while he/she eats her snack from home.

If a person other than the parent will be picking up the child, write the information on the COMMENTS at the bottom of the sign-in sheet, being sure that person is listed as having your permission to pick up. We will not release your child to anyone not designated by you in advance. Such a person must present a photo ID to a staff member. When picking up, be sure that a teacher knows your child is leaving, that good-byes have been said, that there is a clear transfer of responsibility from teacher to parent. Parents are welcome to spend time at the end of the day: to allow a child to finish an activity, to transition out gradually, or to visit with another parent or just to observe. At this time make it clear to your child that classroom rules and expectations are in effect until you actually leave. It is confusing to the child if parents do not support the expectations of teachers and the rules of the classroom while at school.

Occasionally you may be late picking up your child, so you may wish to reread the section of the enrollment agreement relating to late fees. The three teachers who are working at the end of the day rotate late duty by the week and are owed late fees directly. Children whose parents are late are brought by their teachers to the Explorers Room, where quiet activities are available with supervision by one teacher. The Director or Acting Director will remain in the office until all children have been picked up and will present you with a bill stating the late fee. The purpose of this system is to minimize late pickups and to compensate teachers who have safe and secure care for a child whose parent is delayed. It is suggested that, as parents come to know and trust one another, families pair up, agreeing to pick up each other's children on occasion in order to avoid a late fee. Be sure you include this family on your list of authorized pick-up persons.

GENERAL SCHEDULE

All groups have a morning circle time, though its length, purpose, and formality differ with age. In general, circle times are used for reading stories, exercising or dancing, practicing listening skills, singing, discussions, developing a theme, and presenting concepts, reviewing, experience, solving a problem, voting on a question.

After circle, children may work in small groups, may choose from among several learning centers; may paint, build, draw, pretend, exercise small muscles with puzzles or manipulatives, play in sand or water, do a daily job, look at books, work at a computer, or exercise large muscles outdoors or in the gym. Explorers eat lunch first and are usually settling for a nap by 1:00. Threes, fours, and fives have a shorter circle time, wash, eat lunch family style, use the toilet, wash again, and lie down for rest or sleep from 1:00-3:00. All children are expected to sleep or rest quietly. Each classroom will have its own daily schedule and weekly learning activities posted for parents to read.

A snack follows nap time, and afternoon activities include outdoor play, games, free art, computer time, or gym time. Birthday celebrations are usually scheduled for afternoon snack time, as are various classroom parties. Reading books, both individually and group, and continuing projects begun in the morning are typical afternoon activities.

PARENTS' MORNING AND EVENING CHECKLISTS

AM CHECKLIST

If my child is not coming to Parent Co-op today, did I phone to let teachers know?

Did I sign my child in?

If my child needs medicine today, did I alert the teachers on the sign-in sheet?

Write instructions on the form in office?

Put the medicine in the office or kitchen refrigerator?

Am I sure a teacher knows my child is here?

Does my child have a supply of extra clothes in case of an accident?

Outerwear for today's weather?

Swim suit and towel?

What he/she needs for show-and-tell?

Is my child going on a field trip? Where?

Have I checked the cubby for notes, news, invitations, etc.?

The classroom boards for news?

The hall boards for needs and news?

Have I said good-bye?

PM CHECKLIST

Have I checked my child's cubby for artwork/notes/news/wet clothes?

Is there a special event tomorrow? What does my child need?

Is there a meeting tomorrow? Have I reserved for child care?

Have I read the Daily Report (Explorers)?

Have I read the front hall boards?

Have I picked up my child's medicine?

Have I signed out? Does a teacher know my child is leaving?

DRILLS AND CLOSINGS

FIRE DRILLS are held monthly to ensure that children are able to exit the building quickly and calmly in the event of a fire.

TORNADO DRILLS are held twice yearly once in the spring and once in the fall.

THE DECISION TO CLOSE PARENT CO-OP will be made on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration whether the building (therefore the school rooms) have heat, electricity, and water; the difficulty of travel for parents and staff; outside temperature and wind; and the amount and timing of snowfall or flooding rain. The Director in consultation with the Board officers will make the decision to close or remain open. Room parents are asked to make calls to parents in the event of a closing. An option exists to remain open on a limited basis, one or two rooms, with a partial staff if many parents do not have to go in to work. Parents should consider offering rides to teachers and other parents who may be relying on public transportation. (Board policy, 1997)

SPECIAL ACTIVITIES AND EVENTS

ENRICHMENT: These experiences or classes are provided to expand children's understanding of possibilities. Enrichment may be provided by artists or teachers who volunteer or contract with the school, or by parents who are earning credits. In 2002- 2003 Parent Co-op was fortunate to have both a professional storyteller and a violinist who regularly visited classrooms. A visiting teacher read and sang in Spanish, in 2003. Enrichment has many faces ... is yours among them?

FIELD TRIPS: Eight times a year the 3-4-5 year-old children of Parent Co-op board a yellow school bus and travel to a museum, play, or other place of interest. Among these destinations are the Field Museum, Shedd Aquarium, Brookfield and Lincoln Park zoos, Daley College children's theater, Kohl Children's Museum, Chicago Children's Museum, the Trolley and Pretend Town. The Museum of Science and Industry is within walking distance and offers "The Idea Factory" children's museum as well as a theater setting. Older children have taken a city bus to the Art Institute where a children's illustrator was exhibited, as well as riding the Metra train to a suburban park. Occasionally the two-year-old Explorers go along on a bus trip, two or three times a year, but most of their field trips are local, walking trips in the neighborhood. Older children have gone to a store, the fire station, and a coffee house/art gallery. Any excursion can be field trip if a child learns new words, sees new sights, and experiences the world outside the walls of the classroom.

IN-SCHOOL PRESENTATIONS:

Recent visits and presentations include a pediatric dentist, a children's poet, a fire safety officer, and an animal expert. All children old enough to listen and benefit from the presentation gather in one classroom. More often, in-school presentations are done by parents for their child's own classroom are more likely to be hands-on. Recent parent presentations have included an ob-gyn physician, a police officer, Jewish holidays, Chinese New Year, and tools of a scientist.

BOOKS: The Hall Bookshelf houses small collections for teachers, for parents, and for children. Books may be checked out by taking a blank card from the file box on top and writing the date, the title(s), and your name. When you return what you've borrowed, simply tear up the card.

All classes participate in paperback book clubs, a source of good quality children's books at a fraction of the price of hardcover books. The total number of books ordered by families entitles the school to free books of the teachers' choosing for the classroom libraries. Everyone benefits!

RESEARCH PROJECTS: Proximity to the University of Chicago brings occasional requests for preschool subjects for University research. Sometimes the school distributes information to parents for a project at the University to which the parent would bring the child. On other occasions researchers come to Parent Co-op, and the testing is done here with children whose parents have received information and have given prior permission. The sessions with the children are short and done in a game-like fashion under the supervision of the Director. Children's names are confidential and children participate only with parental permission. Usually children enjoy the individual attention and the departure from routine.

BIRTHDAYS: Each child's birthday is celebrated, usually at snack time. Parents join the class if possible and bring cupcakes or muffins, and everyone sings Happy Birthday.

Juice and milk are here, but parents sometimes bring the drink as well. Decorations, favors, hats, candy, and presents are not part of this school celebration in order to keep it simple.

SWIMMING: 3-4-5 year-olds (toilet training is required) swim twice a week in the summer for eight weeks at the South Side YMCA at 63rd and Stony Island, using the shallow pool that has a uniform depth of 2 feet 9 inches. The forty-five minute period is divided into age-appropriate instruction and free swim/practice/play. A member of the Y pool staff acts as lifeguard and instructor, and Parent Co-op teachers help the children in the locker rooms and in the pool. This makes for a wonderful experience for most children. Parents are encouraged to join us at the pool both to increase the adult-child ratio and to give their own children added encouragement.

Parent Co-op provides caps (required for every swimmer), arm floats, and, when needed, waist floats. Children should come dressed for swimming, which happens around midmorning, and bring a large towel. Clothes for the rest of the day are essential, including underwear. Naps are long and sleep is deep on swim days.

HEALTH, ILLNESS AND ACCIDENTS

Each child enrolled at Parent Co-op must have an file a current medical report signed and dated by the examining physician, showing all required immunizations, evidence of lead level results and TB test results, as well as a health history given by a parent.

CRITERIA FOR EXCLUSION FROM ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

Diarrhea

Rash and fever of 101

Illness which prevents child from participating in the program

Unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing

Vomiting two or more times in 24 hours

Mouth sores

Conjunctivitis until treatment started plus 24 hours

Impetigo until treatment started plus 24 hours

Strep throat until treatment started plus 24 hours; no fever for 24 hours
Head lice until morning after first treatment
Scabies until morning after first treatment
Chicken pox until at least six days after onset of rash
Whooping cough until five days of antibiotic treatment completed
Mumps until nine days after onset of parotid gland swelling

If a child becomes ill at school, a parent will be called and asked to pick up the child. A place will be provided for the child to rest until the parent's arrival.

Parents will be notified of a case of a communicable disease in their child's group, with information about symptoms to look for.

Universal precautions will be used by staff in handling body fluids or stool. Universal precautions assume that anyone could carry disease organisms.

Hand washing is known to be the single most effective deterrent to communicable disease. Children's hands shall be washed with soap and water at least at the following times:

Upon arrival at Parent Co-op
Before and after each meal or snack
After using the toilet or having their diaper changed
After handling pets or animals
After wiping or blowing the nose
After touching or wiping items soiled with blood, drool, urine, stool, or vomit
After outdoor playtime
Before and after using the water table
Before and after cooking or other food experience

MEDICATIONS

The Director/Acting Director or Lead Teacher will administer a dose of prescription or over-the-counter medication needed by a child during the hours when the child is at Parent Co-op. The following preparations should be made by the child's parent.

Write the child's name on the container.

Place the medication and any dispenser in a Ziploc plastic bag.

Write the child's name on the bag. Bags and markers are available in the office.

When you sign your child in, indicate that child needs to have medicine administered.

DISCIPLINE

What We Believe About Discipline

Parent Cooperative believes that the goals of setting limits are as follows:

- *Ensure the health and safety of all the children
- *Help each child to grow in self-control
- *Help each child to become aware of the rights and needs of others
- *Help each child assume responsibility for his or her own actions

*Help each child to exercise care for personal and school equipment

We believe that children need discipline in the form of limits on behavior and impulses. Developmentally appropriate practice affirms that discipline is an important part of learning necessary for young children. Discipline has two long-term goals: to teach children what they need to know so that eventually they will be able to control their own behavior and to teach them in such a way that the children's positive sense of self and relationship with others is maintained.

In order to meet these goals, we use the following approaches:

Discipline in teachings: Frequent reminders, redirections, the use of natural and logical consequences, and conflict resolution are teaching strategies. Actively involving older children in the creation of classroom rules helps to gain their cooperation. Trust, kindness, firmness, respect, and consistency form the foundation of discipline.

Simple, understandable, statements are used: "I can see you are angry, but I cannot let you hurt another child with your body or your words." The child will be encouraged to think about her actions: "Look at his face. Is he crying? What happened that made him cry? What could you do to make him feel better?" "Have you talked to her about this problem? Can you work it out?" This helps the child understand that although their feelings are accepted, their negative behavior is not.

Consequences: Will be developmentally related to the child's actions and will be in proportion to the particular inappropriate behavior. The child shall always be made aware of the relationship between their behavior and the consequence. The loss of privilege or removal from the group may help a child gain control of his behavior (Cubby time). The teacher provides support as the child settles down and assists the child as he or she reenters the group. This ensures that this consequence is positive discipline and not punishment.

No child shall be subjected to corporal punishment, shaming, or verbal abuse. Meals or parts of meals may not be withheld as a consequence of misbehavior. A child may not be punished for a toilet accident.

Discipline at school will be the responsibility of the teachers who have an ongoing relationship with the child. In the event a parent of the PCEL observes a child's health and safety at risk, please inform the PCEL staff. A parent may intervene if a child is in imminent danger, but parents will not verbally (scold) or physically punish any child. Parents are encouraged to talk with the teachers or director if they have concerns about problematic behavior.

General Rules:

The following rules are intended as a guide for behavior in involving the children. They do not represent all the rules of behavior that may result in discipline. The director reserves the right to respond to any disciplinary situation in a manner she deems appropriate. All situations will be evaluated based on the age of the child.

All behavior will be monitored and documented. Good behavior will be praised and acknowledged. Children who are having trouble with self-discipline will be observed. Parents will be informed of unacceptable behavior. If your child poses a danger to others, he or she will be excluded immediately.

Continued misbehavior will require a parental conference to correct the problem if the undesirable behavior continues or affects the learning and safety of the other children. The parent or guardian will be asked to place the child in another center. We reserve the right to dismiss a child for continuous inappropriate behavior at school after a child has exhibited this behavior numerous times.

A. There is to be no fighting (play or real), including no shoving, no pushing, no tripping, no kicking, no name calling, no foul language, no teasing, and no biting on a consistent basis.

B. When a child hits, spits, or scratches another child, they will be disciplined age-appropriately. Defacing of property will not be tolerated.

For example:

C. Child is sent to the cubby on the third time if the same behavior has occurred. The child spends one minute per year in time out. The staff will discuss with the child why they were sent to the cubby.

D. In accordance with the laws of the State of Illinois, we will not use physical punishment or verbal abuse with young children.

Working with parents to help the child:

1. The teacher will observe the child to see when behavior occurs and why it happened.
2. The teacher will inform the parents of what has been observed at school with the child's behavior.
3. The parent will be invited to come and observe their children in the observation room.
4. The parent and teacher will discuss how to change the behavior. The child may be present at the conference if appropriate.
5. The teacher and parent will get together to discuss the plan, implementation of the plan, and what has happened after the plan was put in place.
6. The director will meet with parents and teacher to determine if a new plan is needed, consulting other resources as needed.
7. If all of the above are not effective, the director will recommend that the parents find other care arrangements for their child. Parents' failure to cooperate with this process, or with the plan, will result in dismissal of the child.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT POLICY

The staff of Parent Co-op are mandated by Illinois law to report child abuse and neglect. Staff members are also guided by the ethical standards of NAEYC. Reportable abuse and neglect may be actions by a parent or a staff member, but it is the school staff that are mandated. The Director will call in the report to DCFS.

LICENSING STANDARDS FOR DAY-CARE CENTERS

Parent Cooperative for Early Learning is licensed by the City of Chicago and the State of Illinois. The city sends plumbing, ventilation, electrical, kitchen, fire, and health inspectors and then licenses centers annually through the Department of Revenue. The Department of Children and Family Services (Illinois DCFS) has a department of daycare licensing, which assigns a representative who determines the number of children relative to available space and looks at all aspects of the program, including credentials of teachers, number of toys and play materials, hours, discipline and other policies, menus, outdoor space, and so on. The licensing representative makes regular visits and does a complete evaluation every year. A copy of the state standards is available in the office for parents to read. Parent Co-op's state licenses are posted in the office.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

A non-refundable \$40 application fee is to be submitted with the application, which identifies the applicant as seriously interested and places the child's name on a waiting list. The family will be notified when there is a space open.

A non-refundable \$200 registration fee is to be paid when the family decides to enroll or when the first enrollment agreement is signed. The deposit declares the school's intention to hold the space for that child and assures the family that the child will indeed enroll and use the space being held and that the family will meet the obligations agreed to in signing the enrollment agreement.

Tuition is a flat annual charge divided evenly into monthly payments. Tuition is not related to attendance, and therefore there is no rebate in case of absences related to illness or family vacations. The monthly tuition fee for full-time children in the Discovery Room or Imagination Station is the same (10% discount for each sibling) tuition for the Explorers Room is slightly higher. Tuition is due on the first of each month with a 10-day grace period. Parents being assisted by an IDBS subsidy should pay the family portion or the tuition between the first and the tenth of each month. After the grace period, tuition is considered late, and a \$20 late fee will be added to the tuition payment. Payments made by NSF checks will result in future payments made by money order or cashier's check.

The \$250 classroom fee may be paid any time between September and October. This one-time annual fee covers materials, toy replacements, field trip admissions, classroom projects and similar expenses. (Summer only students pay a \$50 classroom fee). The fee for our music enrichment program is \$80 per year.

Any unfulfilled fundraising commitment up to the limit of \$250 not met through the sale of tickets or other fundraising efforts will be billed on June 1st.

The swim fee includes transportation to and from the YMCA and 12 swimming sessions in July and August, is due by June 1st.

A total of 40 Co-op credits per family is due by June 30th, 4 credits per month. Unfulfilled credits are billed monthly at the rate of \$20 per credit. A record of credits is kept in each classroom.

Checks may be mailed or placed in the check box on the office window shelf.

APPLICATION, ENROLLMENT, AND DISCHARGE Application may be made at any time of the year and consists of completing a one-page information form and paying a \$40 application fee. If the family has not already visited to see the program, parents are encouraged to do so between 9:00 am and noon or between 3:30 and 5:30 pm. If the enrolling child accompanies the parents on this visit the child is understood to be under the parent's direct supervision.

Enrollment will be offered when there is an opening, but primarily on July 1 for the summer session or by September 1 for the 10-month school year. Enrollment is accomplished by completing an enrollment agreement (contract) and paying a one-time non-refundable \$200 registration fee. A physical exam including a health history, immunization record, lead level result, and TB test result, signed by the child's doctor, must be on file when the child starts attending. In case of known allergies, the child's doctor should provide a statement identifying the allergies and any interventions which may be needed during the school day. A developmental history including information about the child's interests, family discipline, and other information; a list of persons authorized to pick up the child; and the granting of various permissions all are part of the pre-admission packet to be completed by parents prior to the child starting to attend Parent Co-op. Parents or guardians are responsible for maintaining current information at the school, especially phone numbers which may be needed in an emergency.

Release from the contract is permitted at the completion of a contract period. Please refer to the contract Summary of Terms and Conditions for additional information.

Up to five spaces may be used by children attending part-time, usually three full days or five mornings. Other schedules will be considered (e.g., two full days) when two part-time schedules can be arranged to coincide.

CONTRACT TERMS AND CONDITIONS

The Parent Cooperative for Early Learning (PCEL) Contract covers the 10-month period of September-June, the two summer months of July and August, or the remainder thereof of either time period, where applicable. The total sum stated on the contract agreement form covers the complete charges for the period of the contract.

The PCEL Contract is binding for the entirety of the contract period as defined above and will only be terminated by the PCEL Board of Directors either prior to the period of assignment or during the period of assignment under the conditions described in the section entitled "Termination" below.

The family that holds this contract agrees to observe and abide by all PCEL expectations, policies, and procedures.

PCEL Application Deposit: A non-refundable \$250.00 registration fee is required from all families wishing to assume a space at PCEL. The registration fee is subject to forfeiture as a cancellation fee if the family is permitted to withdraw from, or does not attend, PCEL as agreed to.

Termination

The PCEL contract formalizes the relationship between PCEL and the client families and protects the organization from financial hardship. This protection is absolutely necessary to PCEL as the program is entirely dependent upon tuition money to operate effectively. For the health of the organization, therefore, the terms of all contracts are enforced rigorously. Nonetheless, we recognize that various

emergencies and life changes occur. In extreme cases, a family can petition the PCEL Board of Directors to be released from their contract and the Board will decide whether to grant the petition for release.

1. Prior to the contract period

- A. If the family requests permission to withdraw from, or does not attend the PCEL as agreed to, this contract will be terminated by the PCEL Board of Directors only after the family submits written notification (a petition for release) to the PCEL board of directors. The written petition for release must be submitted during the month before the month of the desired termination date. For example, if a family is petitioning to break their contract for the month of May and beyond, the release request must be submitted to the board before the end of April. For each request, the PCEL Board of Directors will render a decision by their subsequent Board meeting and will deliver a reply in writing within 48 hours of their meeting; at the latest. Petitions are considered on an individual basis and only in cases of extraordinary financial or personal exigency that have arisen after the contract was made. Examples of extraordinary personal exigency include the family moving from Chicago or the child in question developing a medical condition that requires him or her to be taken out of a school setting. In all cases, the deposit will be presumed to be forfeited.
- B. If PCEL occupancy is one hundred percent (100%) and a waiting list for child-care services exists, then the petition may be granted depending on the nature of the petition. If the Director of PCEL cannot reassign the space without creating a vacancy in the program, this contract will not be terminated. The family will be held to the full terms of this contract, including full payment of all charges.

2. During the contract period

- A. If a family wishes to be released from this contract, the family must submit a written petition to the PCEL Board of Directors. The written petition for release must be submitted during the month before the month of the desired termination date. For example, if a family is petitioning to break their contract for the month of May and beyond, the release request must be submitted to the board before the end of April. For each request, the PCEL Board of Directors will render a decision by their subsequent Board meeting and will deliver a reply in writing within 48 hours of their meeting at the latest. Petitions are considered on an individual basis and only in cases of extraordinary financial or personal exigency that have arisen after the contract was made. Examples of extraordinary personal exigency include the family moving from Chicago or the child in question developing a medical condition that requires him or her to be taken out of a school setting. If the petition is granted by the Board, this contract will be terminated and the deposit will be forfeited. If the petition is not granted by the Board, the family may be held to the full terms of this contract, including full payment of all charges.
- B. The family that wishes to be released from this contract will not be required to demonstrate extraordinary financial or personal exigency if the Director can produce an eligible replacement family that will take a contract. If positive arrangements can be made to assign

a contract to the eligible replacement family, the contract will be terminated for the family seeking release, and the deposit will be forfeited. If positive arrangements cannot be made, the family seeking release may be held to the full terms of this contract, including full payment of all charges,

- C. If this contract is terminated by the Board of Directors of the PCEL because the family failed to meet its obligations.

VACATION AND HOLIDAYS

Parent Cooperative closes for a week (dates change depending on the way holidays fall on the calendar of a particular year) between Christmas and New Year's Day and beginning with Christmas Eve; and for a week at the end of the summer for major cleaning, usually ending with the Labor Day weekend. The new year thus begins the Tuesday following Labor Day. The school also closes for a two day Thanksgiving holiday, the observance of Martin Luther King, Jr.'s birthday, the Memorial Day holiday, and Independence Day or 4th of July. Please see the annual calendar for further information about days when Parent Co-op is closed.

Occasionally parents can work an exchange to care for each other's children on days when the school is closed. It is good to plan ahead for such days when parents must go to work by arranging with grandparents or other family members to be available then, or if a child is too ill to be at school. If no family members are nearby, then identifying a babysitter or establishing a trust relationship with a neighbor or member of the family's religious community will make such occasions less anxious for parent and child.

Tuition is an annual fee divided evenly into payments. Therefore it is not related to attendance and there is no rebate in case of illness or family vacations.

MEMBERSHIP IN THE COOPERATIVE

ENROLLMENT AGREEMENTS (CONTRACTS)

Enrollment agreements are signed twice a year. The first covers the period from September through June 30, and the second the summer period of July and August.

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VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AND CREDITS

Following is a list of some of the ways credits can be earned. Each classroom keeps a record of credits by the month.

- * attendance at General Membership meeting
- * attendance at a room meeting
- * assisting with the Hyde Park Preschool-Kindergarten Fair
- * assisting with Parent Co-op open house
- * chaperoning a field trip
- * assisting with 5th Street Children's Book Fair
- * serving on the Board of Directors
- * serving on a standing committee

- * being on a standing committee
- * being a Room Parent
- * laundry – sheets, blankets, t-shirts, puppets, dolls, doll clothes, dress-up clothes, smocks; stuffed animals, and soft blocks
- *sanitizing washable plastic toys
- *donations
- * classroom presentation on a subject of interest to the children
- * spring cleaning weekend

Some recent volunteer activities have included,

- * procuring software for classroom computer
- * washing classroom chairs once a month
- * painting waterseal on the frame of the redwood playground structure
- * pulling up the old carpeting in the Discovery Room
- * providing paint for another parent to paint the Imagination Station play structure
- * rehabbing our gym
- * serving on a short-term marketing committee
- * providing for “An Evening of Jazz” spring fundraiser
- * providing cookies for the August open house
- * creating an alumni mailing list
- * arranging for our new signs
- * creating a Parent Co-op web site – and lots more!

There are many additional ways to contribute to the life of the school and earn volunteer credits that relate to individual interests and skills. Lead teachers should initial classroom credits. The chairperson of a committee or activity should sign for that participation. Attendance at a meeting will be accounted for by a sign-in sheet.

FUND RAISING is essential to the healthy future of Parent Co-op and participation is required by each member family. Examples of recent fundraisers include the creation of a cookbook entitled Rainbow Stew for the sale to friends, family and community; “Brunch with Winnie the Pooh”; a children’s craft fair; and a jazz concert held at the South Shore Cultural Center and featuring our own Don Moye. Everyone helps, everyone sells tickets, everyone benefits. FUNDRAISING is one of three standing committees of the Parent Co-op Board. Increased visibility and a broadened base of support for our preschool are two long-term outcomes of this kind of fundraising.

COMMUNICATION

For any organization from a marriage or family to a business or agency to function well without confusion or misunderstanding, good communication is essential. At Parent Co-op, teaching teams must communicate internally and with the other teams, and the Director cannot expect that teachers will be able to guess what’s on his/her mind – or vice versa: Parents as advocates for their children can be helpful by letting teachers know all sorts of things from a child’s sleep habits to a new pet, from out-of-town company to upcoming surgery – anything that may affect the child’s day. Teachers will let parents know about the day: what stories, what art, what outdoor play or other adventures, a bathroom accident, a skinned knee.

True communication must have a sender and receiver: one writes, another reads; one tells, another listens; one telephones, another answers; one prepares, another uses. If communication is not two-way, then it fails. Here are some ways that Parent Co-op plans for communication:

CLASSROOM NEWSLETTERS are written and distributed by each teaching team once a month to tell parents highlights of classroom learning and family news.

THE SWEET PCEL NEWS, a school-wide newsletter comes, out monthly, parents are invited to advertise, business card size, businesses, services, or items for sale.

BOARDS in every classroom are for teachers to tell parents. About the day and coming events, the menu for the week, and requests for parent help. In the hall teachers display children's work and tell parents about what children are learning. In the front hall, the dry-erase board has news bulletins. The big cork board has a calendar, Board of Directors minutes, news about Hyde Park events, resources for families

THE COMMENTS LINE OF THE DAILY SIGN-IN SHEET is for parents to tell the teachers of a child's need for medicine, an early pick-up, a change in pick-up person.

CONVERSATIONS between parents and teachers can happen at the beginning of the day or the end of the day, or they can happen on the phone during the day or at scheduled **CONFERENCES**.

THE MEDICATION FORMS just inside the office door is for parents to tell the Director/Acting Director or Teacher specific instructions about giving medicine that day.

THE SIGN-IN SHEET is for parents to tell teachers that their child is there and what time he/she arrived. This sheet is our permanent record of attendance.

AN ALL-SCHOOL ROSTER will be distributed by the first general membership meeting and is the way the Director/Acting Director lets the families of the school know how to get in touch with each other and with staff members.

AGENDAS are distributed by the President of the Board of Directors to tell parents and staff what will be discussed at the next Board or General Membership meeting; any member may request an item to be included in the agenda.

MEMOS are frequently used by the Director and the President but may be used by Coop members who want to get a message to another family – **USE CUBBY MAIL – JUST CUBBY IT TO ME!**

MAILBOXES come in three forms: Each child's top cubby can serve as [family mailbox. Teachers, Director and Administrative Assistant have stacking tray on the wall in the office. The bottom rack contains a supply of extra copies of current literature.

TELEPHONE CALLS may be made by parents to children during the day for reassurance or information. Occasionally a lonely child will ask to call a parent. Room parents may telephone the parents of their call about anything from an upcoming meeting to volunteer needs to an unexpected

school closing. Teachers will telephone parents if a child becomes ill during the school day or has an accident serious enough to notify parents prior to pickup. The Director/Acting Director will call if a child has an accident requiring emergency treatment.

THE PARENT HANDBOOK attempts to be comprehensive and communicate everything about Parent Co-op to everyone who reads it.

THE ANNUAL CALENDAR lists days closed, Board meetings, General Membership meeting, special events, known field trips, and due dates for various fees.

THE "I HAVE AN IDEA" BOX is for any parent, staff member, or child to tell the Director about a new or different way of doing something at Parent Co-op – or the need for such an idea. The IDEA box is in the front hall.

ADS placed in the Hyde Park Herald, the U of Chicago papers, the Chicago Defender, Chicago Parent, and the Yellow Pages are to communicate with the community that we're here and welcome inquiries about joining the Co-op.

FLYERS advertising open houses, open meetings or fundraising events, if posted by Coop parents in churches or temples, grocery stores or dry cleaners, laundry rooms or on bulletin boards in offices, condos, apartments, or schools - are a way for us to communicate with neighbors, friends and co-workers the good news of our preschool.

RESOLVING PROBLEMS

In case a problem arises over any classroom matter, the first step is for teachers and parents to talk together: to identify the problem and suggest possible solutions. If the problem is not resolved, a second or third effort is worth trying. The next step in resolving a classroom problem is to bring the matter to the Director/Acting Director, which can be done by a teacher or a parent. The Director will try to be an objective listener to both parents and teachers, make suggestions intended to improve the problem situation, and share professional knowledge and state school policies if needed. If the problem remains unresolved, the parents may write to the President of the Board of Directors and ask for its advice and recommendations.

In case of a school-wide problem, the matter may be brought to the Director who will work with the member on a solution, or the member may request time on the agenda for considering the problem at a board or general meeting. Remember the saying: IF YOU'RE NOT PART OF THE SOLUTION, YOU'RE PART OF THE PROBLEM! Let's work to solve problems cooperatively.

MEETINGS

General Membership meetings are scheduled in odd-numbered months, September through May and are open to all members. Agendas for these meetings are available ahead of time, and members are invited to request agenda time for a matter of concern to them by contacting the Board President or a Board member. These meetings are held at the school and begin at 6:15 pm. Child care is offered by an experienced adult for \$5 per child. Reservations are necessary so that an appropriate number of sitters can be hired. Please sign-up in your child's classroom.

Room meetings are held in September for orientation to that specific classroom by its teachers, and at other times for the purpose of getting acquainted and discussing shared concerns. We always hope that the membership of Parent Co-op will become a trusting, caring community, knowing that, like all human relationships, it will only grow through opportunity and effort. Room meetings are usually held at the school and start at 6: 15 pm. Child care is available by reservation.

Board of Directors meetings are held in even-numbered months year round, either at the school or a member's home, starting at 6:30pm. The agenda is published ahead of time and members who have concerns appropriate to discussion by the Board are invited to contact the Board President to request agenda time. Members are elected to the Board of Directors in February, and appointments are made to fill vacancies at other times; the Board elects a President, Vice President, Secretary, and Treasurer. Teachers elect one or two representatives to the Board. Board meetings are open to the membership except in personnel matters, and non-Board members are welcome to speak to an issue during the first part of a meeting. The Secretary posts minutes of the Board meetings on the front hall bulletin board.

Committee meetings are arranged by their members and chairpersons. The Board is to have three standing committees: Fundraising, Parent Involvement and Personnel. Other ad hoc or short term committees may be formed. One or more Board members and the room parents comprise the Parent Involvement committee, which organizes the membership of the cooperative. The fundraising committee may well be two committees: one fall and one spring with different membership. Well-functioning committees make a priceless contribution to the health of Parent Co-op.

Child care during meetings is automatically provided for General Membership meetings and can be arranged for other meetings by making a request of the Director. Making a reservation for your child(ren) is necessary so that an adequate number of sitters can be called. Payment of \$5 per child is made directly to the sitter at the close of the meeting. If there is more than one sitter, they will divide the income equally. Children who have child reservations on the evening of a meeting will be taken to the child care room at 6:00 pm. Many parents bring supper for their children who are staying during a meeting.

Staff meetings take place once a month during nap time, during which three parent or grandparent volunteers act as "nap sitters," one in each classroom, for the security of the children and responding to the telephone or doorbell.

KITCHEN, NUTRITION, AND FOOD SERVICE

Food purchased for children's meals and snacks is not to be used by parents or teachers, nor given to children outside of the regular meals and snacks.

If the kitchen is used outside of the Cook's hours, food sanitation regulations are to be followed regarding the use of the single west sink for hand washing and the three steps for dishwashing in the three stainless steel sinks: hot soapy water in # 1; hot rinse water in #2; and 2 1/2 cups of bleach to 10 gallons of water for sanitizing in #3, followed by air drying. Children should not be in the kitchen except for supervised educational activities.

Under no circumstances should leftover food be left out in the kitchen or unwashed dishes be left in the sink.

Parents are welcome to join their child's class for a meal or snack, but it helps to know ahead of time, especially for lunch so that extra place(s) can be set and enough food sent from the kitchen.

Suggestions for varying the menu to include various food traditions are most welcome. We follow the licensing standards for nutrition, serving fresh and vegetables, cooked vegetables, varied protein foods, mostly turkey as a meat, no pork, varied starches including rice and pastas, wheat bread, 2% milk, canned fruits, occasional cookies, jelly or honey as sweets. We will try to include foods from various cultures if parents will share recipes.

If you bring an early (7-8:30 am) breakfast for your child, it should follow rules of healthy nutrition.

Suggestions include yogurt, fruit, crackers, cheese or a sandwich.

Please do not send high salt or sugar snacks (chips, Kool-Aid, and cookies) which lessen the child's appetite for nutritious foods.

Parent Co-op policy on candy is as follows: candy may be given to children at school in connection with the holidays of Halloween, Easter, and Christmas and not at other times. Please do not give out candy as a birthday party treat at school, nor to your child to give to other children, nor to children with the expectation that they will take it home and eat it. Better to err on the side of too little than to deal with the consequences of too much. (Board Policy 1997)

The menu for the week is posted on the kitchen door and in each classroom. Parents who need a copy of the menu at home should ask the Director/Acting Director, who will provide copies.

PARKING

The three-car loading zone directly in front of the school on the west side of the South Shore Drive can be used for drop-off/pick-up parking, with the understanding that your stay will be brief. If you are going to stay for a while, please look for a parking space. When you are dropping off or picking up, put the red "schoolhouse flyer" on your dashboard and turn on the car's flashers. This will alert a ticketing officer of your brief business. The police department will ticket cars that stay longer than the posted time in the loading zone. If you park elsewhere for drop-off/pick-up because the loading zone is full, still use your flashers and dashboard flyer, although the police tell us that they are not allowed to give preferential treatment when ticketing. Parking in Hyde Park is challenging, no doubt about it!