



Parent Co-Op for Early Learning

Parent Handbook 2011-12

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MISSION

The Parent Cooperative for Early Learning is a full-day, year-round preschool, serving families who require care for their children. We are a multicultural community, organized as a cooperative, jointly owned by the families and professional staff. Parent Co-op is a partnership among the families, the teachers, and the community, attending to the social-emotional, physical, and cognitive needs of our growing children with a curriculum grounded in our teachers' knowledge of what is developmentally appropriate.

We depend on one another in order for the school to function smoothly. We value our diversity, family atmosphere, and the opportunities our children have to create, think, solve problems, work, and play cooperatively. Our children develop confidence through mastery and experience trust in a safe environment.

ON BEING A PARENT COOPERATIVE

The Parent Cooperative for Early Learning is a not-for-profit corporation that is collectively owned by our parents, who share the common interests of the care and the social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development of our children, as well as the smooth and efficient functioning of the corporation. All parents who enroll their children are members of the corporation. Membership is also extended to the professional staff who are entrusted with the daily responsibility for our children and for the day-to-day management of the corporation.

The Cooperative relies on a high degree of involvement from our parents and strong supportive roles from the staff. Parents participate in activities ranging from Board and committee membership, fundraising, and donation of equipment to laundering sheets, making a classroom presentation, or going on a field trip. The partnership is essential for the organization to carry out its mission.

LICENSING AND ADMISSIONS

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 to centers annually and issues licenses through the Department of Revenue. The Illinois Department of Children and Family Services requires all day care centers be inspected and licensed annually after a representative makes a complete evaluation of the program. A copy of the state standards is available in the office for parents to read. Parent Co-op's state and city licenses are posted in the office.

Children are accepted and staff hired without regard to race, color, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin or disability. (Preference in admission is given to current parents and siblings of children already in the program).

PHILOSOPHY

The aim of the 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.

THE CREATIVE CURRICULUM

We chose the Creative Curriculum in 2008 to guide our classroom experiences. It is flexible, developmentally based and embodies our belief that young children learn through play. This curriculum rests on a firm foundation of research and responds to new requirements for academic content. The goals and objectives for two year olds and three-five year olds incorporate social/emotional, physical, cognitive and language development.

The Creative Curriculum emphasizes the importance of assessment in building an effective program to meet the needs of every child and the class. Observing and documenting a child's experience becomes the basis for good educational planning. Teachers will build an individual portfolio for each child incorporating written observations, samples of the child's work, photographs (or other types of recordings when possible) guided by the Developmental Continuum Assessment System. These portfolios will be shared three times a year at Parent-Teacher conferences in November, February and June.

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 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, to 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 two-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 and parents receive a written daily report.

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 provide a balance of novelty and familiarity. Explorers' days include free play (self selection), and large and small group activities with a teacher.

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. Pro-social behavior is encouraged as children learn to recognize and name their feelings, and accept that others have feelings too.

Through acquiring self-help skills such as putting on shoes and socks, putting on jackets, mittens, and hats, changing clothes, hand-washing and toileting, children learn independence. Learning to use the toilet is a significant step, which is begun when a child shows readiness. As with other learning, parents and teachers work together on the child's behalf.

Enrollment in the Explorers is limited to 16 full-time students. Depending on the number of new students in the fall when the new school year begins, enrollment during the first week of school may be staggered, so that only two or three new children start each day. This allows new parents to have more teacher attention for asking questions and sharing important information about their child. Starting with a smaller group will lower the stress of a new environment and make the transition into school smoother and calmer for the new child and family. All children will officially start on the following Monday in the Explorers' 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 the staggered enrollment process, please call the school and ask to speak to the Director.

When we are using a staggered start in Explorers\ Room, each family will receive a letter about the staggered enrollment process before school opens. Thank you in advance for your cooperation.

The IMAGINATION STATION for older two and three year olds has an enrollment of up to 20 full-time children. It 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 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, colors and shapes and the development of small muscles and hand-eye coordination through cutting and painting. Children also work with a wide variety of manipulatives such puzzles, and Legos. and learn about correspondence, and matching. Computer skills are introduced – using a mouse, clicking, playing simple preschool language, math and problem solving games. Science is explored through nature walks and care of class plants and fish. 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!) Outdoor play and gym provide more opportunities to develop motor skills and expend youthful energy. During an Imaginer's day there is a balance of freely chosen and teacher-directed time, active and quiet, between individual and group activity, indoors and outdoor play.

The DISCOVERY ROOM (nearly four and five year olds) has up to 20 full-time children. It is a place of high curiosity, where math concepts and emerging literacy are worked on in circle time as well as in free choice 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. There are separate math, science, and computer areas with a variety of materials for counting, sorting, classifying and matching, weighing and measuring, and trying out such materials as magnets, magnifiers and microscopes. Individual questions and curiosities as well as group discoveries are important in driving curriculum activities and developing self-expression representation, and 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.

FIELD TRIPS

Our first responsibility as a teacher or parent chaperone on a field trip is the safety and well-being of our children. Teachers maintain primary responsibility for our children when on a field trip, even if the class is divided into smaller groups led by a parent. Small groups will consist of two to four children with one adult or parent to improve both supervision and the learning experience. An adult or parent-led group should stay within the supervision of a teacher-led group. If a situation or problem needs to be addressed, there will be a designated person in a leadership role to make decisions or provide direction. The staff of the Co-op should always remain attentive and responsible for our children. We are committed to providing an enjoyable learning experience when we are visiting different locations on a field trip. The children benefit most when teachers remain engaged and interactive with them. Each trip provides a new opportunity to:

- Learn new words
- Explore new feelings
- Ask open-ended question
- Discuss what children see on the trip

Remember, our objective on all field trips is to deliver a quality learning experience for our children from an encouraging and helpful staff.

In each classroom, the values of Parent Co-op are expressed through high-quality interactions between children and adults and an abundance of language.

It is always wonderful to have parents join us on field trips. The added adult supervision helps staff enormously. Safety of course is our main priority. Simple rules for parents are:

1. Remain with your child's classroom so staff can keep count of children in their group.
2. Do not purchase any food or souvenirs during the field trip. Other children can become quite upset by not having souvenirs or treats. Remembering these simple rules will assist my staff in making in making sure your child has a happy and safe trip.

BEFORE YOUR CHILD STARTS SCHOOL

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. 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.

Each family will receive an admission's packet and will bring:

- * A copy of the child's birth certificate.

Each family will complete the following items:

- *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. 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.

- *Emergency Care Authorization Form.

- *Emergency Information Card

- *Sunscreen, insect repellent, skin moisturizer permission

- *Pickup Form providing names and phone numbers of adults who are permitted to pick up the child from school

- *Health Alert

- *Discipline Policy

- *General Information Form

- *Parent Survey

- *Volunteer Application Form

- *Summary of Licensing Standards for Day Care Centers (DCFS)

- *An enrollment agreement (contract) is completed and signed, then signed by the Director, photocopied, and returned to parents for home files.

- *Parent Handbook

- *Job Book
- *A consent form from the state (DCFS) for day care centers
- *Parent Confidentiality and Release of Information Statement

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.

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.

WHAT TO BRING FOR YOUR CHILD

1. Every child needs a complete change of clothes, including underwear, socks, top and pants, and Explorers need two changes. It 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. 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! Remember that what fits in September may not in February.

2. Soft toy, small pillow, or quilt from home for nap time

3. Supply of disposable diapers and diaper wipes if your child is not toilet trained

4. Supply of washable cotton training pants if your child is learning to use the toilet and several changes of clothes.

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, heavy rain/lightning, or when air pollution is dangerously high. There is not enough room in cubbies for heavy 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. However, a sweater or sweatshirt for transitional weather is very useful even in the summer.

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

- | | |
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| Candy | Sippy cups |
| Gum | Pacifiers (binkies) |
| Toys of violence | Baby bottles |
| Money | Valuables |
| "Junk food" snacks | Personal toys your child is unwilling to share with other children |

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 my child wash hands upon arrival?
- 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?
- Am I sure a teacher knows my child is here?
- Does my child have a complete supply of extra clothes in case of an accident?
 - Outerwear for today's weather?
 - Swim suit and towel (during Summer Session)?
 - What he/she needs for show-and-tell?
- Is my child going on a field trip? Where? Have I signed the trip sheet in the classroom?
- Have I checked the cubby or family mailbox 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 or soiled clothes?
- Have I checked my family mailbox?
- 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)? Things we did today Report (Imagination Station)?
- 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?

YOUR CHILD'S DAY

OPENING

The Explorers Room opens at 7:00 am as the gathering room for all ages with the Early morning staff person. Play is relaxed and self-directed as children finish waking up and become sociable. On warm days this early arriving group may play outdoors

PERSONAL SNACKS

Children who can't wait for morning snack around (9-9:30 AM) are welcome to bring a healthy snack such as fruit or yogurt or a sandwich to tide them over.

MORNING IN THE CLASSROOMS

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. All groups have a morning circle time around 9:30 to 10 AM, 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, and discussions, developing a theme, and presenting concepts, reviewing an experience, solving a problem, voting on a question. 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.

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 manipulative, 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.

AFTERNOON SCHEDULE

Explorers eat lunch first followed in a short time by Imagination Station, and Discovery Room. Threes, fours, and fives eat lunch family-style. All groups rest or sleep for 2 hours, usually from 1:00-3:00. All children are expected to sleep or rest quietly.

A snack follows nap time, and afternoon activities include outdoor play, games, free art, computer time, or gym time. Reading books, both individually and group, and continuing projects begun in the morning are typical afternoon activities.

Each classroom will have its own daily schedule (available at school or on the PCEL website) and weekly learning activities posted for parents to read.

DROP-OFF ROUTINES

Help your child, if needed, to remove and hang up outer clothing in the cubby. Sign your child in every day. Use the COMMENTS/NOTES section of the sign-in sheet to alert teachers to 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.

PICKUP ROUTINES

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, 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.

AUTHORIZED LIST FOR PICK-UP

Person(s) on the authorized pick-up list must be at least 18 years of age and able to supply documentation of their identity.

LATE PICKUP FEES

Occasionally you may be late, after 6 PM, picking up your child, so you may wish to reread the section of the enrollment agreement relating to late fees. The staff person that is with your child must be paid the late fee directly. The Director, Acting Director, or staff person will remain in the school 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 as the PCEL does not pay them for their time beyond 6 PM. 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.

CHILD'S SAFE PREEMINENT

If we have concerns about a child's safety at pick-up time, we will contact another person on the authorized list to pick up the child.

RELEASE TIME CRISIS PROCEDURE

If a crisis arises at the end of the day, we will take the following steps to ensure everyone's safety and well being.

1. Not immediately release the child. While discussing our concerns with the person picking up the child, we will engage the child with another staff member.
2. Contact other parent/guardian or person(s) on the authorized list to enlist them in ensuring that the child leaves our care safely.
3. Offer alternatives. Brainstorm with the family member ways to ensure the child goes home safely.
4. Release the child with reservations, notifying the appropriated authorities of our concern.

5. Call in the police or other authorities if anyone's well being and/or safety is threatened.

HEALTH, ILLNESS AND ACCIDENTS

Each child enrolled at Parent Co-op must have on 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.

Parents may give permission for sunscreen and insect repellent to be applied to their child.

ILLNESS PREVENTION

Together we can reduce the number of colds and other illnesses by:

Requiring thorough hand washing: upon arrival in school each day, before eating, before and after feeding a child, after being in the bathroom or diapered or toileting, after outdoor play, after touching any animals, after blowing or wiping the nose, before and after using the water table, before and after cooking /or other food experiences, when moving from one group to another ("visiting") that involves contact with the toddler/twos, before and after administering medication, after cleaning , and after handling garbage.

- Keeping toys and fingers out of children's mouths

- Teaching the proper use and disposal of tissues

- Keeping your child home until fever free for 24 hours

- Keeping your child home if symptoms are contagious

- Giving your child enough time to fully recuperate..

AIR POLLUTION POLICY

We will protect children and adults from high levels of air pollution, smog or heavy traffic, limiting outdoor activity as a precaution during smog or other air pollution. The Director will listen for public notification of Ozone Action Alerts.

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

ABSENCE POLICY

If your child will not be in school, please call the PCEL to inform us of the reason..

CRITERIA FOR EXCLUSION FROM ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL

A child may be excluded from school if he/she has the following symptoms or illnesses:

- 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

ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

If a child becomes ill at school, a parent will be called and asked to pick up the child. If it appears to be a vaccine-preventable disease, the following plan will be used.

1. Identify and implement appropriate isolation precautions according to Isolation types: airborne, contact, droplet, or strict. Staff will use personal protective equipment as needed: gloves, gown, masks (including N95 masks), and hand sanitizers. 2. Have child in designated area until picked up. 3. Parents will be contacted to pick-up the child, or 4, in case that no contact is made in a reasonable time period, PCEL will contact the emergency pick-up persons designated by the parents or get immediate attention (911) if necessary. 5. Communicable disease exposure form will be sent out to parents of children exposed

Clean up spills (Red Z) and dispose of any used materials in red biohazard bag.

RETURN TO SCHOOL AFTER AN ILLNESS

A **physician's note** is required for readmission in the following instances:

*After an absence due to illness of three or more days

*After any length of absence due to a reportable communicable disease as defined by the Illinois Department of Public Health and enforced by the Chicago Department of Health

*At the discretion of the Director

A child who had a fever must have 24 hours of normal body temperature before returning to school.

When coming back after an illness, a child must be ready to go outside. Outside play is an important part of a healthy day and we try to spend some time outdoors every day, weather permitting. A teacher cannot be spared to stay in with one child. A doctor's statement restricting outdoor activities may be presented in the case of childhood asthma.

NOTIFICATION OF EXPOSURE TO ILLNESSES

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

MEDICATIONS

The Director/Acting Director or 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 only if the child's record documents that the parent or legal guardian has given the program written permission. The child's record must include instructions from the licensed health provider who has prescribed or recommended medication for the child. Any administrator or teaching staff who administers medication has (a) specific training, (b) a written performance evaluation updated annually by a health professional on the practice of the five right practices of medication administration: (1) verifying that the right child receives the (2) right medication (3) in the right order (4) at the right time (5) by the right method with documentation of each time the medication is given, and (c) will wash his/her hands before and afterwards. The person giving the medication signs documentation of items (1) through (5) above. Teaching staff members who are required to administer special medical procedures have demonstrated to a health professional that they are competent in the procedures and are guided in writing about how to perform the procedures by the prescribing health care provider.

Medication must be labeled with the child's first and last name, the date the either the prescription was filled, the name of the licensed health care provider, the expiration date of the medication or the period of use of the medication, the manufacturer's instructions or the original prescription label that details the name and strength of the medication, and instruction on how to administer and store it. All medications will be kept in the Director's Office.

1. Parents should pick up the medication request form from the office and fill out the parent's part of the form completely, 2. leave the form with the Director, Acting Director of designated staff person, and 3. the medicine must be left in the office.

ASTHMA, SEVERE ALLERGIES, SEIZURE DISORDERS AND OTHER SPECIAL CARE REQUESTS

If your child has asthma, severe allergies, a seizure disorder or special care needs, see the Director immediately and file a written care plan from the child's physician to alert the staff to how to recognize health emergencies and what needs to be done to meet your child's needs.

ACCIDENTS, INJURIES AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL TREATMENT

Reports are prepared for each accident or serious incident and must be signed by parents the day of the occurrence. PCEL staff are trained in CPR and first aid and handle most minor injuries; there is a first aid kit in each classroom, a first aid kit is taken to the outside play area and on all school outings away from school. In severe emergencies, we will call 911 and then the parents. If the child goes to the hospital, a staff member goes too, In the event of poisoning, we will call the Poison Control Center and follow their directions, then call the parents.

CAR SEAT SAFETY

Children transported in vehicles must be buckled safely into car safety seat belts that meet state requirements. Parents should take whatever steps necessary to maintain and use car safety seats. Another person on the authorized list will be called if this requirement is not met.

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.

Each family will receive a detailed DISCIPLINE policy with the enrollment packet which will be signed by the parents/guardians acknowledging its receipt and discussion with the Director.

TRANSITIONS TO NEXT CLASSROOM

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 the weeks prior a child's move, parents are invited to visit and observe in the classroom to which their child will be moving. Teachers visit each others' 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

Children are moved from one classroom to the next based on age, readiness, and 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 three children together to ease the social transitions. The Director will inform the Lead Teacher that there is an available space open, and the decisions to move are discussed collaboratively among the Teaching Team, with input from the sending Teacher, receiving Teacher, and Director. In the weeks prior to a child's move, staff meets with the parents to discuss that their child is ready to transition to the next classroom. Parents are invited to visit and observe in the classroom to which their child will be attending. Teachers visit each others classrooms and children are invited to visit the new classroom. The date is discussed amongst the staff and parents are informed of the date for the child. The week

before the move the child will make multiple visits to the classroom to get gradually adjusted to the new classroom, students and staff. Parents are also making a transition, and they are encouraged to communicate with new teachers who will provide daily information for at least the first week about activities and the child's adjustment. The Lead Teacher will set up an appointment with the parents after the child's transition has taken place so they can give them an introduction to policy and procedures of the classroom.

Transition Week

Monday 9:30-11:00am

- Circle
- Small group play

Tuesday 9:00-11:00am

- AM snack
- Circle
- Small group play

Wednesday 9:00-12:00pm

- AM snack
- Circle
- Small group play
- Gym/outdoors

Thursday 9:00-12:30pm

- AM snack
- Circle
- Small group play
- Gym/outdoors
- Lunch

Friday 9:00-3:00pm

- AM snack
- Circle

- Small group play
- Gym/outdoors
- Lunch
- Nap
- Return to room

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.

FINANCIAL INFORMATION

All payments paid by check, cashier's check or money order; NO CASH ACCEPTED

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

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 \$200 registration fee is required the first time a 10 month contract is signed to hold a space. This registration fee is non-refundable to families once you have signed a contract. The registration fee 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 for full time children in the Explorers Room or Imagination Station is the same while slightly lower in the Discovery Room. (There is a 10% discount for each sibling). Tuition is due on the first of each month with a 10-day grace period. Parents being assisted by an IDHS subsidy should pay the family portion of 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, and a fee of \$25 invoiced to your account.

To pay non-refundable \$536.25 arts, crafts, and equipment fee, on or not later than December 1st. This fee consists of \$250 activity fee, \$203.25 Spanish Program, and \$80 Music program.

This one-time annual fee covers materials, toy replacements, field trip admissions, classroom projects, and similar expenses.

Four installments of \$134.06 per month are due by the third Friday of every month beginning September 2011 and ending December 2011. Please write "Activity Installment Fees" in the memo section of your check.

Summer only students will pay a \$50 program fee due at the time of registration.

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 May 1st.

The swim fee of \$150, which 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. Eight credits are required during the summer session, July-August. A record of credits is kept in each classroom.

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 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.

VOLUNTEER ACTIVITIES AND CREDITS

Each family is responsible for 4 credit hours per month or a total of 40 in the school year from September-June. Eight credits are required during the summer sessions. There are many ways to contribute to the life of the school and earn volunteer credits that relate to an individual's interests and skills. A more detailed description of the ways credits can be earned is in the parents' Job Book

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. . Each classroom keeps a record of credits by the month.

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 school 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, a spring break, the Memorial Day, and Independence Day (the 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.

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.

KITCHEN USE

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.

EATING WITH YOUR CHILD

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.

OUR MENU: WE ARE A NUT FREE SCHOOL.

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.

Suggestions for varying the menu to include various food traditions are most welcome. We follow the licensing standards for nutrition, serving fresh and frozen, cooked vegetables; varied protein foods, mostly turkey and chicken as a meat (no pork); varied starches including rice and pastas, wheat bread; 2% milk; canned fruits; occasional cookies. AM snacks include various low sugar, dry cereals, hot cereals, eggs, pancakes, biscuits, toast, yogurt and fresh fruit PM snacks include juice, crackers of various kinds, fruit, pudding, cheese, and occasionally cookies. We will try to include foods from various cultures if parents will share recipes.

SPECIAL DIETS PROVIDED BY FAMILIES

The Director will inform parents or legal guardians of the food service plan of the school and suggest ways to coordinate with this plan. The PCEL will supplement a child's home-provided meal within the restrictions of the child's special diet if the nutritional content appears to be inadequate.

If parents or guardians send food on a regular basis:

1. Each parent will receive a copy of the CACFP meal pattern requirements for preschool ages. so that parents understand the portions and types of food needed for each meal.
- 2, The food must be brought in containers labeled with the child's name, date and type of food in container. Parents/guardians need to designate what meal it is intended for, whether it needs refrigeration and instruction for preparation.
3. The cook will determine that the food temperature is safe at the time of its arrival.
4. Any leftover food which is perishable or has been heated for serving will be disposed of after serving.
5. No bags or lunchboxes may be put in our refrigerator.

SNACKS FROM HOME

Please DO NOT send in NUTS or any items containing NUTS

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. Food which is not consumed at the snack time will be discarded.

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

SHARED FOOD

Children will not be allowed to share food provided by the child's family unless the food is intended for sharing with ALL children. Food that comes from home for sharing must be either whole fruits or commercially prepared packaged foods in factory-sealed containers.

CANDY POLICY

Parent Co-op policy on candy is as follows: candy may be given to children at school in connection with the holidays 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. It is better to err on the side of too little than to deal with the consequences of too much. (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. Over various years, the Parent Co-op has had a professional storyteller, a violinist, a visiting teacher who read and sang in Spanish, a parent who was a dancer who visited each classroom on a regular basis. The co-op has a professional Spanish and Music program presently. Enrichment has many faces ... is yours among them?

FIELD TRIPS: Between five to eight times a year, the 3-5 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. The whole school has gone to Johansen's Farm in the fall. Older children have taken a city bus to the Art Institute where a children's book 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. In-school presentations 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!

OBSERVERS, VISITORS, RESEARCH PROJECTS: Proximity of the PCEL to many universities brings occasional requests for preschool subjects for university research, a practicum or observations as part of a course curriculum. Parents will receive notification from the Director if there are to be visitors or observers in the classroom. Research will be done only if approved by the Director and if parents give specific, informed consent for their child's participation.

BIRTHDAYS: Each child's birthday is celebrated, usually after lunch or at the afternoon 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. Parent volunteers are encouraged to join us at the pool both to improve the adult-child ratio and to give their own children added encouragement.

Parent Co-op provides a school T-shirt and, waist floats. Parents need to purchase a swim cap that is required for every swimmer. Children should come to school dressed for swimming 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.

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 what has been part of their child's day: stories, art, outdoor play or other adventures, a bathroom accident, a skinned knee, etc.

Non-Fraternization

Members of *PCEL* are strictly prohibited from fraternizing with any employees of *PCEL*. Members of *PCEL* shall be provided with the best possible quality service. Employees shall treat members, vendors, co-workers and the public with courtesy, appropriate distance, and respect. Employees attending "social events" or a "private gathering" with members of *PCEL* shall occur only when approved by the Board of Directors. Employees shall abstain from any intimate physical contact and involvement with members. This shall include dating members. Employees who violate this policy will be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination.

If communication is not two-way, then it fails. Here are some ways that Parent Co-op plans for communication:

THE SWEET PCEL NEWS, a school-wide newsletter comes, out bi-monthly, and includes classroom news written by each teaching team to tell parents highlight of classroom learning and family news. 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 entry hall, the dry-erase board has news bulletins. The big cork board has a calendar, Board of Directors minutes, news about Hyde Park events, and resources for families

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

THE COMMENTS/NOTES lines at the bottom of THE DAILY SIGN-IN SHEET are 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**.

PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES will occur twice a year, November and February.

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.

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 and Director have stacking tray on the wall in the office. Family mailboxes (folders) are used in the Imagination Station and the Discovery Room. 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, or staff may call a parent of a child who is still learning English so that parents can translate a child's concerns or problems for the staff. Room parents may telephone the parents in their class 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.

EMAIL COMMUNICATIONS: Parents have increasingly turned to our website for information (www.parentcoop.org) and have expressed an interest in using email for PCEL communication. Therefore, email addresses will be used by the webmaster to distribute some information, and will be made part of the ALL SCHOOL ROSTER.

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.

ADS are 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.

ANNUAL PCEL OPEN HOUSES are held twice a year in November and April for the community. We always need parent volunteers for these events

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, any member of the PCEL may bring the matter 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 6:15 pm. 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 adult supervision, to answer the telephone and respond to the doorbell.

BUILDING, GROUNDS AND SECURITY

SECURITY

The doors to the PCEL will be locked to the outside except for the entry door at the top of the ramp. The inner entry door and emergency doors on the south and east sides of the building are closed and locked. When a classroom is playing on the school playground, the inner entry door maybe left open while they are on the playground.

The Hampton House has building security cameras which permit them to view our playground and entry ramp. They also have intercom access to the PCEL to be used in case of a building emergency which affects the safety or security of the Co-op.

During hours when the PCEL is not in operation, the playground will be locked (a requirement of the Chicago Fire Department).

SUPERVISION

Children should be supervised by an adult at all times. Staff will position themselves so they can see and hear the children. Teaching staff must supervise children primarily by sight; children should be checked on frequently if they are out of sight for short intervals of time. When the children are engaged in free play, are playing outdoors, in our play areas or toileting, staff must move around to supervise children appropriately (sitting in one spot is not an option). Children should never be alone in the building.

Staff should be vigilant about keeping track of all children and count them frequently during the day.

PLAN FOR LOST OR MISSING CHILD

The Parent Cooperative for Early Learning, Inc. takes preventative measures to ensure that no child will be lost

1. Sign-in/sign-out sheets for parents and caregivers provide a daily log of children present in the school
2. Staff and students participate and take active roles in our “Daily Count” in the morning which makes all aware of who is absent/present during a particular day.
3. Whenever the class makes a transition, a count is taken – whether the classroom, gym, outdoor play area, the park, a field trip, etc.
4. The staff should make random counts of children throughout the school day.

SHOULD A CHILD BE MISSING OR LOST, the following procedures will take place:

1. The PCEL staff persons that are responsible for the child will alert the director or acting director to the situation and a description of the child will be given at that point.
2. All available personnel/volunteers will be called upon to search the building and outdoor premises of the school.
3. The parents of the child will be notified.
4. If the child cannot be located, the proper authorities will be notified.

DRILLS

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

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

EMERGENCY EVACUATIONS:

At the sound of the alarm or verbal order to evacuate, staff will give children and any visitor clear, simple instructions about exiting the building immediately according to the plan practiced in safety drills.

Staff will count the children in each group being evacuated and count the children again when they reach the sidewalk on South Shore Drive.

The designated staff person from each classroom will carry attendance and emergency contact information from the facility, and compare the attendance sheet to be sure no children or staff have been left behind.

If reentry into the building is not possible, children will be evacuated to a safe location within walking distance of the school or to warming bus provided by the city until parents, guardians or designated persons can take the children home.

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)

SMOKING, PROHIBITED SUBSTANCES, AND WEAPONS

Parent Co-op is dedicated to maintaining a healthy and comfortable learning environment. To accomplish this goal, and in accordance with building policies, the entire PCEL facility, including the outdoor play area is entirely smoke-free. No smoking is permitted in the presence of children by staff, parent or guardians at any time, including field trips. The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the facility premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is also prohibited. All child care providers and staff will maintain sobriety while providing child care. Caregivers, staff or other adults who are inebriated, intoxicated or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering substances or drugs will be asked to leave the premises immediately. No guns or weapons will be in the facility with the exception of a law enforcement officer in uniform.

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. Please put on your vehicle's emergency flashers when using this zone. If you are going to stay for a while, look for a legal parking space. The police department will ticket cars that stay too in the loading zone. If you park elsewhere for drop-off/pick-up because the loading zone is full, still use your flashers, 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!

The Hampton House lots north and south of our playground are *private*, for residents only. Please do NOT park in them.

PARENT/GUARDIAN ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

I have received the 2011-2012 Parent Handbook of the Parent Cooperative for Early Learning. I/we agree to comply with these policies and all of the policies of the PCEL.

Student Name (printed): _____

Parent/Guardian # 1 Name (printed): _____

Parent/Guardian #1 Signature: _____

Parent/Guardian #2 Name (printed): _____

Parent/Guardian #2 Signature: _____