

The Cooperative Preschool Teacher (rev. 1999)

By Parent Child Preschools of Oregon

The cooperative school represents a unique approach to education. Its success depends on the parents and teacher working together in administering the school, with the teacher in charge of the educational program.

The preschool teacher is hired by the group and is paid a salary for her services. Her role is a dual one of working closely with both parent and child. It is the preschool teacher's responsibility to provide the kind of environment and experience that will enable the young child to **grow socially** as he learns to live and play with others, **emotionally** as he begins to depend upon himself, and **intellectually** as he explores his environment in the first step away from home. The teacher finds time to foster joy in contributing to and sharing in the growth of each child through parent participation. She does not function in the traditional "teacher" role in the formal classroom. Rather, she is a "head teacher" who establishes an environment suitable for preschool children, arranging equipment and providing materials to interest and challenge them.

The teacher encourages the parents toward making a full contribution by making them aware they are expected and needed as teacher assistants. She assigns her parent staff to supervise the various play areas. She establishes the kind of flexible scheduling that permits parents to work with small groups of children. She plans for a variety of experiences which will increase the child's learning of his world.

It is important that group members feel free to make suggestions to the preschool teacher about changes in the program; however, the group must realize that educational programs are designed as a whole and not in bits and pieces.

The teacher and the school will have a compatible, written philosophy which addresses the needs of the whole child - social, emotional, physical and intellectual. The philosophy is reviewed annually and is based on current research about how children learn.

Parents need to make every effort to understand the philosophy of the school before registering by attending introductory meetings, open houses, observing, and asking questions. Parents should realize that:

- A program cannot be individually designed to please every member.
- Educational policies cannot be decided upon by majority vote.
- A preschool teacher should be free to teach in a manner most comfortable to her.

All constructive criticisms and grievances regarding the program should be expressed through proper channels, and only through these channels. Such channels should be clearly delineated and understood by all members. These channels might include:

- Directly to the teacher
- or to a member of the board
- or to a grievance committee or conflict resolution committee

The Cooperative Board & Parents

The board consists of officers elected by the members and appointed committee chairs. The board hires the teacher, and handles the administration of the school, i.e. pays salary, rents space, charges tuition, plans fundraising etc.

Board Participation:

With the advice of the teacher and through committees the board:

- Budgets for equipment and supplies
- Makes long term financial plans
- Budgets for teacher's on-going educational opportunities as a way of strengthening the school
- Enrolls children in classes
- Plans special events and projects for children
- Plans additional uses of classrooms as necessary
- Plans for school dismissal days
- Cleans and maintains the school property
- Keeps an ongoing history of the school

Members' Responsibilities:

Educational Program:

- The parents do their share of parent-teaching and committee work to support the program under the guidance of the teacher.
- A parent-teacher (parent-helper) chair schedules work days.
- Each parent is responsible for their day or trading with another member. The teacher is not involved.
- Each parent must attend orientation and other staff training.
- When working in the classroom, parents are expected to accept direction from the teacher.
- Parents are encouraged to offer their talents to be used where they appropriately support the program as determined by the teacher.
- Parents are asked to volunteer to drive on field trips when possible. A field trip chair is responsible for scheduling and securing drivers for excursions chosen by the teacher.

Parenting Education

- Parents take advantage of every opportunity to hone their own parenting skills and to become better assistants as a way of creating a quality experience for their child and all of the class members.

School Evaluation

- Participate in the evaluation process suggested by PCPO - "PCPO School Evaluation - Creating a caring community of learners by moving toward developmentally appropriate practice."

The Cooperative Preschool Teacher

The teacher is hired by the parents and responsible to the board. The teacher is in charge of the educational program for the children and collaborates with the adults on parent education.

Board Participation:

The teacher attends board meetings; reports on classes; acts as advisor but is not a voting member. (May be asked to not attend if personnel matters are to be discussed. i.e. salary)

The teacher makes recommendations and works with committees in those areas that directly effect the educational program:

- Budgeting for purchase of equipment and supplies
- Number of daily parent-teachers (parent-helpers)
- Determining total number of children in each group
- How to accommodate children with special needs
- Planning for special events and projects involving the children or additional uses of the classroom
- Planning for days when school is to be dismissed
- Consulting regarding the school's history.
- Helps the board maintain its focus on the children

Educational Program:

The teacher plans the curriculum, schedule, room arrangement, and use of equipment.

The teacher is the head of the staff of parent-teachers.

- Coordinates efforts of the parents and their training in educational philosophy and methods.
- Continuously explains and interprets her methods and objectives.
- Interprets the necessity for adequate orientation and continuing training of parent-teachers. (This is essential in order to protect the educational rights of the children.) This includes methods such as orientation meetings, parent meetings, articles in a newsletter, signs in the classroom, parent library, etc.
- Makes every effort to utilize the diverse resources and talents of the parents to enrich the program.
- Plans appropriate field trips to enhance the program.

Parenting Education

- Helps parents understand their children by consulting on child development and appropriate expectations, and on specific concerns for each child through informal contacts, and scheduled conferences.
- Advises the Parent Library Committee.

Self-improvement

- Continually evaluates her program and methods.
- Participates in PCPO Evaluation of entire school.
- Belongs to and attends meetings and conferences of organizations such as PCPO and NAEYC/OAIEYC.
- Takes advantage of training opportunities.
- Seeks outside consultant when needed.