



# Information for Parent-Teachers

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Guidebook

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This Information for Parent-Teachers Guidebook is intended to be an adjunct to the Cooperative Preschool Parent Handbook that you also received upon enrollment. The following will provide you with the detailed information you need to know when you work as a "Parent-Teacher" on your participation days. It is important that you read and understand the following Parent Handbook sections: the CEC philosophy, child development theory, emergent curriculum, outdoor education, and age-specific characteristics of children as they are the basis for the specific guidelines offered in this manual.

### **What is a Cooperative or "Parent Participation" Preschool?**

A cooperative preschool is one in which parents assume the roles of teaching assistants under the guidance of paid, professional Lead Teachers. It offers a rich, stimulating, well-supervised learning environment for your child. Children benefit from the consistency and expertise of their regularly scheduled, professional Lead Teachers who determine the curriculum. The Volunteer Parent-Teachers supplement the children's learning experience by bringing their own individual talents, interests, knowledge, and relational styles to the structure established by the Lead Teachers. A cooperative preschool allows parents to both participate in and witness their child's development within a school setting with peers and other adults, which is different from their home environment. Parents who work as teachers in the preschool program also receive parent education through specific instruction and modeling from the preschool staff. They have the opportunity to apply knowledge and practice skills in the preschool milieu with support and feedback from the staff. Another benefit of participating in a cooperative preschool is that parents observe other children of similar ages to their own child and learn first-hand about normal, common behavioral patterns and growth processes.

### **Orientation**

All parents will be required to attend an orientation prior to working in the program. Parents will be oriented to the CEC philosophy and curriculum as well as to specifics about the Preschool Cooperative physical site and daily schedule. It is normal and understandable for parents to experience initial feelings of apprehension about working at the preschool, especially if they have not had previous teaching experience. The orientation and this manual will help you become familiar with the basic guidelines for working with the children in the preschool setting. The Lead Teachers will give you instructions about your role for each activity you are assigned to during your workday, but please do ask questions. Allow yourself time to observe and become comfortable, to try out the language and techniques that you see the teachers using. There will also be a Parent Education meeting with the Site Director each day you work where you can also ask questions and discuss your experiences and observations.

### **Developmentally Appropriate Practices with Children**

#### **General Guidelines**

1. ENJOY and INTERACT with the children while you observe their interests and discoveries.

2. Ask questions, investigate, find out WHY.
3. Set an example, be a positive role model; children learn through imitation.
4. Offer choices.
5. Redirect rather than stop an activity (i.e., avoid telling a child to stop playing ball and redirect him to an appropriate place to play).
6. RESPECT the children, take them seriously. They have legitimate and important thoughts and feelings.
7. Make self-correction possible. See what you can do to assist the child in making a different choice or identifying what will make them feel better.
8. Make suggestions rather than commands; save commands for emergencies.
9. Avoid phrasing necessary directions as questions. For example, when a child is finished painting and it is time to put the paints away, say, "Let's hang your artwork up to dry now" versus "Are you finished painting?"
10. NEVER make a child feel afraid, guilty, or ashamed. There is no such thing as a "bad child," only a bad situation. However, it is easy to make a child feel that they are bad and thus feel full of shame and self-hatred. We must begin by accepting the child as we find them and try to make them feel good about themselves rather than add to the feelings of insecurity and inadequacy. We can help best by conveying understanding, gaining the child's confidence, and then helping them to find better ways of personal and social adjustment.
11. Minimize competitiveness and comparisons between one child and another. Though we live in a highly competitive society, young children are not ready for the pressure of competition carried to the limits of our society. Competition does not encourage friendly social feelings between competitors, and that is one of our goals. Someone always loses and there is tension all around. For sound growth, each child should be encouraged to work at their own pace and find a joy in the work they do in their own way.
12. Do encourage each child to help themselves as much as possible to provide the maximum chance to grow independence, but give help/support as needed.
13. Help the child to understand feelings of self and others. Help the child to verbalize, "You can tell me how angry you are, but you cannot hit me." "I wonder what made you feel made enough to hit me?"
14. Praise children for their efforts made and express appreciation for help from them. At the same time, do not diminish the children's opportunities to validate themselves by praising incessantly or by disrupting activities in order to praise. Children need opportunities to discover their competence and to appreciate their own efforts without becoming dependent on adult approval to validate their

activity.

15. Help children learn to use the environment and materials in a cooperative manner. Do not pressure children to share and respect their need for privacy, ownership, and possession. If necessary, you can say, "Sally is using the ball right now, but I can see you also want to play with it. You can tell Sally you would like to play with it when she is done. Sally, please let them know when you're finished in the ball."
16. Allow children to work out conflicts or challenging situations together. Adults are present to support children's developing social skills. Parent and teachers may need to help with conflict resolution, but only after observing children's efforts.
17. Be flexible enough that you can stop a task, take care of a child, and go back for it.

### **Limit Setting**

Although we want to make sure in talking to children that we convey respect and care, it does not mean that we give up control or do not follow through in making sure children have safe, secure boundaries within which to work. Young children need, and look for, adults to provide clear and consistent limits. Our philosophy in working with children does allow them a great deal of freedom in many aspects of their day, yet there are still expectations for behavior and the need to conform to standards that best meet the needs of the community.

There are three very basic rules at the CEC around which all limit setting takes place. They are: Do no harm to yourself; Do no harm to others; Do no harm to property. All the ways we place limits on children, providing boundaries, are based on these three notions. If you are about to stop a child from doing something, ask yourself why: Are they endangering themselves? Others? Property? Wasting materials? If so, then it is very appropriate to make the limits firm and clear to the child, remembering the language guidelines stated above. If not, then maybe the best action is to watch carefully to see that it doesn't turn into a harmful situation. As with problem solving with children, each child is unique, and each situation brings unique qualities that must be carefully weighed before responding to children.

In using the word "harm," we are talking not only of physical well-being, but emotional as well. Hurtful words can be just as damaging, and often even more so, than bodily harm. For this, and other, reasons we do not use punitive punishment or time outs in dealing with children and setting limits. There are consequences for behavior, but they are natural consequences resulting from their actions. For instance, if a child is throwing blocks inside and continues after a conversation and reminder, they may be directed outside to throw balls or bean bags. This isn't meant as a punishment, but rather an attempt to help meet the child's need to throw something in a more appropriate setting. When a child has hurt another child, they are involved in the process of helping the other child feel better, perhaps getting some ice or a tissue or even giving the other child a hug if the other child is receptive to it. In situations when there are expectations for children to do something, such as participating in clean up, the teacher needs to make it clear

what those expectations are and what the consequences will be if the child does not comply, such as: "Here are the things for you to clean up. When you've put them away, then you can join us at group time" or whatever is happening next.

While setting limits for children is important, it is crucial in this process that adults understand children and their development and be clear on what appropriate expectations should be. Interactions with children should be age appropriate, looking at what is developmentally appropriate and setting expectations accordingly. For example, it would be appropriate to expect that three and four year olds would have difficulty separating from their parents. It would be inappropriate not to give children the emotional support and love needed to help them transition to school.

### **The Process of Problem Solving**

As with many aspects of learning at the CEC, problem solving and conflict resolution are not dictated by the teachers, but rather by teachers working with children to find ways to solve problems or come to agreement. Our role as teachers is not to spout out facts, figures, and information to children, but rather to assist them in learning how to gather information, test ideas, and keep moving forward. Without these tools, children will quickly learn to rely on adults to solve their problems, be it a conflict with another child or how to put the puzzle back together.

As nurturing care givers, our first instinct is often to tell them how to fix whatever is broken, to show them the "right way" to do things. When a child wants to make a paper airplane, the easy solution is to make a well-folded, flyable airplane for the child to use. This approach, however, does two things.

First, it robs the child of the opportunity to grow and learn. It gives the child the answer with no idea how to arrive at that same answer the next time. Children learn through hands-on interaction and trial and error, not memorizing solutions to problems. We want to assist children in learning to learn, in how to make predictions, in how to consider "what if", and to not be deterred by road blocks. Successful learners are those who try a number of solutions and are not easily frustrated.

Secondly, it lowers children's sense of accomplishment and esteem and makes them overly dependent on adults. A more appropriate solution is to sit down with the child and talk them through the steps of folding an airplane. The teacher and child would be engaged in conversation about the process: the teacher asking the child questions, listening to the responses, and offering words of encouragement. A three-year-old might need much more guidance than a four year old so teachers need to tailor their responses to the individual child. Perhaps the folds will not be as straight and crisp and maybe it won't fly like an adult model would, but these are opportunities for learning.

By the same token, it is important for teachers to resist the urge to make drawings for children or to model building with legos or clay. Children are very anxious to do things "right" and like adults, yet they are not physically or cognitively ready to do so. If adults in their environment are modeling adult abilities in drawing and building, children will quickly become discouraged and not want to draw because it won't look like an adult's

version. One of our goals for children is to help them feel good about who they are and if they are overly dependent on adults to solve their problems for them, they don't feel confident or competent in their learning. It then makes them less willing to attempt problem solving on their own the next time.

In conflict situations, teachers need to first assess the situation to see if intervention is needed. Sometimes children are able to work through disagreements on their own, and teachers only need to be watchful to be sure all is well. Our goal is for children to be confident and competent to successfully resolve their conflicts without teacher intervention.

This doesn't mean, however, that children are left on their own to physically resolve their differences. Rather, teachers are there to offer support, suggestions, and reassurance as children work through their conflict. Teachers should remain calm at all times and treat all children with respect. It is not appropriate to shame children into compliance, but to help them understand how their behavior affects others.

Please use the following guidelines when conflict situations arise:

1. **Observe and move in closely.**
  - a. Before automatically intervening, wait to see if children are able to find appropriate solutions on their own. If the conflict escalates and injury (emotional or physical) is predicted; then follow steps 2-8:
2. **Find out what is going on and why; investigate. Help the children identify the problem.** The role of the teacher in these situations is to ask questions to gather information. "What were you trying to tell her when you hit her?" "How did that make you feel?" "Were you using this toy before they took it?"
3. **Listen to both children.** Their story and having it heard are important. Sometimes just telling it will resolve the conflict. Empathic listening helps to diffuse the situation.
4. **Help children hear one another; narrate what you're hearing.** Assist children in talking with one another about how they are feeling and what they might need, restating what you are gleaning from their conversation. "It sounds like you weren't done with the truck." Paraphrase for children what to say, such as, "Let them know you weren't done playing with the truck and you need them to give it back to you."
5. **Give children a chance to work things out in their own way, find their own solutions.** Encourage children to listen to each other as they explain their wants and needs and attempt to negotiate a solution.
6. **Offer choices or alternatives that are acceptable to you as needed.** Suggestions should come from adults only after the children have exhausted their own ideas for resolution.

7. **When the children involved reach an agreement, as long as it seems fair to them, it is not up to us to impose our standards of fairness.**
8. **Follow through, make sure the solution is working.** It may be that the solution leaves a child quite sad, and our role in those instances is to offer comfort and support while explaining what happened. "Thank you for giving them the truck back. I can see that you really wanted to play with that truck and that you are feeling sad. Remember that you can have a turn when they are done. What can I do to help you feel better?" Though they may be sad, children should feel cared for and respected by the teachers at all times.

When facilitating conflict resolution with pre-verbal children, or those speaking or accustomed to languages other than English, you can observe the children's body language, facial expressions, and visible emotions. Verbalizing your observations, such as, "Your friend looks sad, his hands are reading out toward you. I wonder if he wants the shovel back?" Verbalizing your observations for children will help them not only develop language, but also to pay attention to these non-verbal communications with children.

### **Saying "I'm Sorry"**

Expecting children to say "I'm sorry" is unrealistic for several reasons:

1. They probably are not sorry so you are asking them to say something untrue.
2. Learning to say "I'm sorry" becomes a quick fix, an easy way to move on.
3. It does not help the injured party feel better or repair any damage. Helping a child find a way to make the situation better is more effective.

### **Language/Talking with Preschoolers**

1. Always go to a child and speak to them directly. Do not yell across the yard or room, since it adds stress and noise levels and is not effective with children. They need and deserve closer contact.
2. Do be aware of your voice and gestures. Your tone of voice and general posture are more important than what you say. Our verbal and non-verbal language are a key factor on conveying care and respect for children.
3. See that you have the child's attention before you make a request.
4. Verbalize what you are going to do before you do it so they can have time to respond and participate in the action.
5. Try not to use too many words in giving directions. Use words and phrases the child understands and avoid unnecessary explanations.

6. Appeal to the child's own motives and interests when diverting him from an undesirable activity when possible.
7. Give suggestions or directions in a POSITIVE rather than negative form:

<b>SAY</b>	<b>DO NOT SAY</b>
Sand needs to stay low to the ground	Don't throw sand
Use both hands when you climb	You will fall if you don't hold on
Keep the puzzle pieces on the table	Don't dump the puzzle on the floor
Turn the pages carefully	Don't tear the book
Talk in a quieter voice	Don't yell
Wipe your hands on the paper towel	Don't touch anything with your messy hands
Sit on your chair	Don't rock in your chair
Move back on the rug	Don't lean forward; other children can't see
Wipe your brush on the jar	Don't drop paint on the floor
Time to go outside!	Shall we go outside?
Wash your hands	Don't you want to wash your hands?
Drink out of your own cup	Don't drink from their cup

### **Facilitating Preschool Program Activities**

#### **Art:**

1. Avoid making models in any art medium for the children to copy (i.e., molding figures out of clay, painting pictures). This tends to be frustrating for children, making them feel inept, they may then be prompted to ask the teacher to do another for them. This detracts from the creative process for the child.
2. Emphasize the importance of the creative process with children, not the end product. Avoid asking, "What is it?" Rather, say, "Tell me about your picture" or just comment on your observations of the process: "I see you enjoyed making that" or "You put a lot of effort into your work." Comment on the colors, lines, and use of space in a non-judgmental way.
3. Children will mix colors of paint, play dough, ooblick, etc. when exploring art materials. This is a natural and important process for children, and adults should respond as though it is okay to do. As children turn four and five years old, you can gently remind them to try to return the brushes to the same color container.

4. After an art activity, children may rinse their hands with a hose before going to the bathroom to wash with soap. This helps to eliminate slippery conditions in the bathroom.
5. Caution should be taken to ensure children use art materials in safe ways. This includes appropriate use of scissors, pointed brushes, sharp pencils, stapler, etc.
6. Avoid setting slippery substances, like ooblick, in high traffic areas.
7. All messy activities need to be completely cleaned up when finished.

**Sand and Water:**

1. Sand toys should be sorted and stored in labeled crates. It is easier for children and adults to access equipment when it is organized. Children are less likely to dump out all the toys if they can find what they need easily, making clean-up of the sandbox go much more smoothly.
2. Sand should stay in the sandbox and not be carried to other places in the yard.
3. Sand must stay on the ground and not thrown in the air. Children may need to be reminded of this gently. Encourage digging that keeps sand on the ground, in the sandbox, and off of others.
4. Children should refrain from digging under the sandbox's retaining walls.
5. When a hose is on in the sandbox, the water should be running at no more than a trickle.
6. Whenever there is water on in the sandbox, there must be an adult there to supervise. **Never leave water unattended in the yard.** If children are leaving an area and there is water remaining in puddles or left in containers, fill in the puddles with sand and dump the containers before moving on. Remember, it only takes two inches of water to for a child to drown.
7. The water is to come from the hoses or buckets only, never from the bathroom or drinking fountain.
8. For health purposes, children may not sit in puddles of water. Standing and kneeling in puddles is fine.
9. Water tables should be supervised at all times.
10. Water tables should be emptied, rinsed, and bleached at the end of the day.

**Bikes:**

1. Bikes are to remain on the bike path and in the designated paved area.

2. Children must be riding safely, free of accidents and crashing. Double riding may only take place on vehicles designed for two passengers.
3. Towing empty vehicles is okay.
4. Children must wear shoes at all times when riding or playing on bike areas.
5. The garage where the bikes are stored should be kept closed at all times.

**Indoors:**

1. Walking is the general guideline for indoor safety. Exceptions can be made for activities approved and designed by staff once the indoor environment has been cleared for possible dangers.
2. If the high energy of children inside begins to disrupt other children, encourage and guide children (in a positive way) to lower their volume and activity level or suggest they take their activity outside.
3. Children are not permitted to throw objects inside and should be redirected outdoors for appropriate throwing activities.
4. Children should be encouraged to keep their personal belongings in their cubby when they are not using them. Children should not be removing items from another child's cubby without that child's approval.
5. Encourage children to use furniture in safe ways. "Tables are for coloring and puzzles and snack, but not for climbing."
6. Help children take care of the environment. This includes assisting them with clean up activities at group times and throughout the day. Clean up should be a positive process. Find ways to make it fun!
7. Children are encouraged to join group time at least for a short while. If a child protests, the teacher may consider if there are alternatives to participating in group, such as helping with snack. Group time should be a fun and interesting time and not a test of obedience and endurance.

**Use of Equipment and Toys:**

1. Toys and tools from table activities must stay in the general area where the activity is located (i.e., paint brushes stay at the easel).
2. Shovels and other sand toys should remain in the sandbox areas. Digging is restricted to the areas as well. Holes out in the yard are tripping hazards.
3. Children should not be picked up and put on a piece of equipment they cannot reach by themselves. This puts them at a higher risk for injury as they may not be able to

get down independently or they may try to do it later on their own without having the proper level of skill to successfully attempt it.

4. Crates may be stacked for building purposes as high as the child can reach. They work best if put out into the yard where children have ample space for building and are visible for supervision. Crates are not stable or sturdy enough for children to climb onto. Children may need reminders as to where it is appropriate and safe to climb.
5. Children should only throw toys designed for throwing such as balls, bean bags, and paper airplanes.
6. Children must leave all toys, balls, and personal items on the ground when climbing. They must have two hands free for climbing to ensure their safety.
7. If a child has fallen, allow the child to get up on their own rather than scooping them up and holding them.
8. Always inform a teacher or another parent volunteer if you need to step away from your assigned supervision post. Be sure an adequate adult:child ratio is adhered to before you step away.
9. Fibar should stay in designated areas only.
10. Encourage walking on the sidewalks and porches.
11. Children are not allowed to climb or slide on poles or rails that are used to support overhangs attached to the buildings. These have no cushioning under them to prevent injuries.

**Snack Preparation, Snack Time, Clean Up:**

1. Each day, a Parent-Teacher will be assigned to prepare the daily snack. On Thursdays and Fridays, there will typically be a more involved cooking project for snack.
2. Supplies, ingredients and a recipe will be set out in the kitchen for you. Be sure you have everything you need and wash your hands before getting started.
3. Invite children to participate in making the snack and have them wash their hands in the bathroom before sitting down to help.
4. Provide children with child-safe food preparation tools and show them how to use the tools properly.
5. Maintain constant supervision of the children while they are assisting with cooking. Do not leave the table and ask another adult to bring what you need.

6. Children may help for a brief time and then lose interest. It is fine for them to come or go at any time in the process.
7. Talk to them about what they notice, what they anticipate, and what is happening in the cooking process.
8. During snack time, children should be seated and eating should take place at tables or areas designated by staff. Children may not roam about the yard or house with food.
9. At least one adult should sit at each table with the children and facilitate meal time conversation and assist with passing and serving of food.
10. When finished eating, encourage children to clear and clean up their eating space before leaving to play.
11. At the end of snack time, a Lead Teacher will assign one parent to do the dishes and clean the eating areas (tables and floors). Please do this quickly and efficiently to be able to rejoin the group as soon as possible.
12. Throw away any left over food that was served.

### **Scheduling Your Program Participation Days**

Each family will be required to work two to four days a month, depending upon their child's enrollment schedule and program needs. Upon enrollment, and then prior to the start of each program year, you will be asked to submit your scheduling requests. Every attempt will be made to accommodate schedule preferences and create routine schedules, but this is not always possible. For example, we will try to assign you one specific day to volunteer in the program throughout the program (i.e. if your child attends on Tuesdays and Thursdays, you may be scheduled to work every other Tuesday).

The Parent-Teacher calendar will be posted at the site and on SignUpGenius ([signupgenius.com](http://signupgenius.com)). If you are unable to attend one of your scheduled workdays, it is your responsibility to secure a replacement for yourself by contacting another parent and making a switch. Please notify the Site Director of any such swaps that are made. All parents should establish a back up plan in the event that their child is ill and cannot attend school on their scheduled workday.

### **On Your Participation Day**

The Cooperative Preschool could not function without you! We value your participation. The program is enriched by the fact that the parents who are working have various of backgrounds, interests, and talents. If there is a special activity or contribution you would like to make on your participation day, please consult with a teacher in advance about your idea.

- Arrive promptly by 8:15 am. Since the Lead Teachers rely on you to assist with set up for the day.
- Leave cell phones stored with your personal items in the designated area, out of reach of the children.
- Wear old, comfortable clothes. Be prepared to get messy!
- Be present and ready to interact with the children.
- Refrain from socializing with other parents who are working; keep conversation focused on the children and the program tasks at hand.
- Supervise children and ensure their safety.
- You can expect that the Lead Teachers will give you instructions about your duties for the day as well as information about licensing regulations that must be followed.
- Do not hesitate to ask questions when you need guidance or clarification.
- You may be asked to help prepare the daily snack/facilitate a cooking project with the children.
- You will help clean up before and after snack time.
- You will help clean up the site at the end of the day.
- You will be expected to remain on duty until all children are picked up, unless otherwise released by the teacher.

### **Typical Daily Schedule**

Note: Activities listed are examples and may not all be offered at once or every day.

**8:15:** Parent-Teachers and Lead Teachers set up

**8:30:** Parents and children arrive and sign in

**8:30-9:30:**

Indoor Activities: Reading, Cooking, Crafts, Building, Puzzles, Dramatic Play, Writing or Hand/Eye Activities

Outdoor Activities: Painting, Additional Arts or Crafts, Texture Play, Science, Wheel Toys, books, building manipulatives and materials

**9:30-10:00:** Parent-Teachers meet with Site Director for Parent Education Discussion

**9:50:** Clean-up, Washing of hands, Transition to Rug Community Time

**10:00:** Rug Time (Songs, Stories, Community Announcements/Discussion)

**10:20:** Snack Time

**10:40-11:20:**

Outdoor Activities (weather permitting): Balls, Instruments, Wheel Toys, Art, Play Dough, Gardening, Large Motor Activity (i.e., Jump Rope, Parachute)

**11:20:** Clean Up, Story Time (while awaiting pick up), Good Bye Time

**11:30:** Children released to parents as parents arrive

**11:45:** Parent-Teachers for the day are released once clean up is complete and all children have been picked up

### **Emergency and Disaster Preparedness**

The CEC is well prepared for emergencies. Staff members receive extensive instruction on what to do in various emergency situations. Fire and earthquake response drills are conducted on a regular basis to test and refine emergency procedures. You will be given information about emergency supplies and evacuation procedures during orientation.

During monthly fire drills, Lead Teachers, Parent-Teachers, and children evacuate to predetermined areas when the fire drill bell sounds. After each drill, its success is reviewed, including consideration of any procedures needing improvement.

We also have extensive emergency plans in case of moderate and major earthquakes. We conduct "duck and cover" drills monthly. We use the expression "Rabbits in the Hole," when we want children to duck and cover indoors or outdoors. We say "Rabbits All Together" when we want the children to gather in the center of the yard or the room. Once children come together, Parent-Teachers should wait for instruction from Lead Teachers to evacuate by designated routes. The Cooperative Preschool has its own supply of food, water and activities.

### **Individual Illness and Emergencies**

The Cooperative Preschool Director and Lead Teachers are trained in CPR and first aid and are required to keep their certification current. Notify staff immediately of any injuries so they can assess and attend to the injured child. When a child falls ill or is injured, parents are notified as soon as it possible to do so. In the event of severe illness or injury, the preschool Lead Teachers will first contact emergency services, then contact a parent.

Appendix

Article: Brain Research, Infant Learning, and Child Care Curriculum

Article: Children's Lively Minds - Deb Curtis