

Coop Scoop



• September 2008 •

Newsletter for the Cooperative Playschool • 611 East Prospect Avenue • State College, PA 16801 • 238-3922

Welcome All!

Welcome Co-op families, new and returning, to the beginning of the school year. The Coop Scoop is your source for upcoming school events, news from the teachers and the board, and happenings at school. If you have information, fun ideas or activities that you would like to share with the school community, please contact Mary Lee so that it can be included in the next issue.

Enrollment Openings

We still have several openings at the Co-op for this year. Most openings are in the older group, but some spots are available for each age group and each day of the week. Remember, the Co-op depends on word-of-mouth for much of its publicity!

Welcome Picnic

You are invited to an “enchanted walk” and potluck picnic at Mrs. Kat’s spectacular property in Spring Mills. This is a special opportunity to meet and socialize with other Co-op families outside of the school environment. Children (and parents!) search for gnomes in the woods participate in enchanting activities and everybody enjoys a delicious dinner.



- Sunday, September 21, 3-6pm
- Potluck supper at 5pm
- Each family should bring a potluck dish to share, their own plates, silverware and a blanket or lawn chairs. Cups, napkins and drinks will be provided. Driving directions will be provided
- Questions? Please contact Elizabeth Hay
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Allergy Alert

Some children have severe food allergies that all parents must be aware of when preparing snacks and activities. The allergies we are currently aware of are as follows:

- **EGGS and SOY, PEANUTS and TREE NUTS**

If your child has any food allergies, please alert the registrar.

September at a Glance

3	Fall Parent Meeting**
4 - 5	Get Acquainted Days
8 - 12	Modified School Schedule
12	Coop T-Shirt Sale Begins
15	Begin Regular Schedule and Hours (9-11:30 a.m.)
21	Welcome Picnic 3-6pm: Mrs. Kat’s
25	Board Meeting 6:30 @ Coop
30	Field trip to Way Fruit Farm

Theme Weeks

15-19	Summer Olympics
16-17	Bring your Bike to School Days (rain dates 18-19)
22- 26	Insects

Looking Ahead (October)

1	Field Trip to Way Fruit Farm
6-17	Parent-Teacher Conferences
t- 17	Fall Coffee
23	Board Meeting 6:30 @ Coop
23-24	Alumni Days (no school SCASD K-5)

t- this symbol indicates a tentative date

*** this symbol indicates mandatory events*

The Daily Routine

Arrival



- Our new security measures include locking the doors until 9:00am. Please play on the playground if you arrive early. Working parents and teachers will greet you as soon as they have set up the activities for the day.
- Look for the coat hook marked with your child's name. Store his/her personal belongings here, and perhaps a bag containing an extra set of clothing in case of a spill or accident.
- Your child will find a name card lying on the bench near the door. Place this card on the check-in board so that teachers know who has arrived at school. Soon there will be photographs and names for check-in.

Snack Time

In an attempt to make snack time more meaningful for the children, Snack Parents are encouraged to prepare snacks with the children as an activity. Recipes that encourage child involvement are posted on the bulletin board. Some ingredients will be provided. Please check with teachers prior to your workday as snack parent.

- Check our calendar for bread baking days (Tuesdays and Wednesdays) and sign up to bake with the kids! Please bring a complimentary item such as butter, cream cheese, regular cheese or fruit spread. The Coop will provide the bread baking supplies.
- Please avoid sweets and chocolate except for birthdays.

At the Fall Parent's Meeting, please announce any food allergies that your child has. Please tell teachers also.

Dismissal



- Children are dismissed one by one to a parent or guardian at 11:30 AM after shaking hands with their teacher.
- The handshake ensures that every child is accounted for at the end of the day.
- Parents of children in the older group will meet their children inside the activity room. The younger group will be dismissed at the door of the Quiet Room.
- Arrive a few minutes early to gather artwork, check the bulletin board, etc.

- If someone other than a parent or legal guardian is picking up a child, please let his/her teacher know.
- Please, be prompt. Children get worried and sad when they see their friends leaving and their parents are not at school yet. This is important for teachers and working parents as well because they need to complete clean up in a timely manner and can not supervise them. Thank you!

Working Parent Requirements

- Parents' participation on workdays is essential and appreciated! We will not open our doors to the children until we have the required working parents for the day. Please, plan on arriving at 8:45 so you have time to set up your activity and talk to the teachers.
- Feel free to limit the number of kids at your activity if you are too busy, or conversely to leave your table and play with the kids in your room if there is little interest.
- Your attention needs to be on the children, helping in the bathroom, redirecting, intervening in conflict and enjoying paying attention to the children. Please refrain from social time with other adults.
- Writing your activity on the calendar a week ahead or earlier helps the teachers decide what activities they will use to complement what is being offered.
- **Some of the children are allergic to eggs, soy and peanuts. Activity parents should not include any of these products in any activity.**
- During circle time, join the group on the rug to share stories, songs, and discussion. Your interest in the activities sets an example for the children. Redirect children as necessary.
- Working parents join teachers and children on the playground each day to ensure a safer environment. Please do not talk with other parents at this time, but focus on the children.
- Upon entering the building, the teachers will lead the children to the dismissal rooms. Working parents should help guide the children in line. Working parents should make sure everyone is in the appropriate classroom by checking the head count. Please get permission to leave from the teachers before beginning clean-up.
- In the event of a playground dismissal, teachers will let parents know when to begin clean-up.
- Clean-up: please consult the [Daily Clean-up Duties](#) checklist in the kitchen. Use this as a guideline to divide chores and check them off as they are done.

- “Wrap-up” will occur at noon (any remaining cleaning will resume afterwards).
- Please be courteous and refrain from socializing until clean up is complete. This ensures that all working parents are sharing the work.
- All working parents are expected to stay until cleanup is complete.

Helping Your Child Adjust

Both new and returning families may find that their child needs help adjusting to a new school year. Please review the handout: *Adjustment to the Cooperative Playschool* found in your GAD packet. If there are language difficulties, anxiety is often intensified. Parents are welcome to stay at the Co-op until the child is comfortable with the separation. Our teachers are very supportive of parents and children during tearful times. Please discuss any separation issues carefully with your child’s teacher.

Explore “The Closet”

The Parent Resource Closet, accessed through the Co-op kitchen, contains a wealth of materials (e.g., art supplies, musical instruments) that are available for parents to use when doing activities or projects with the children. Please feel free to browse and explore the many items that are just waiting for a myriad of creative uses.

Calling All Dads



Fathers play a very important role in the lives of young children and are encouraged to help fulfill the family workday commitment.

When fathers are able to come in to share a morning with the children at school, the experience

is fun and memorable for dads and their children; as well as the other students, parents and teachers.

Nursing Infants at Work

Co-op mothers are allowed to bring their nursing infants with them on workdays (until the child begins to crawl) and if desired, bring along a caregiver for their infant. We encourage parents to fulfill workdays before a birth when possible. If bringing a nursing infant, a mother should work with the Scheduler to ensure only one infant is present each day.

Reminders

Family Profiles

Please complete your Family Profile and submit it to Elizabeth Hay by September 20. She will compile the profiles into a booklet which each family will receive in the early fall. If you have any questions, contact Elizabeth Hay.

Come to the Board Meeting!

Yes, we really are a parent-run cooperative and that includes you! We encourage everyone to attend at least one board meeting this year. It really is inspiring to see a group of parents and teachers working together in the best interest of play-based education for our children!

September 25 6:30 – 8:30 at the coop

October 23 6:30 – 8:30 at the coop

Fundraising through Groceries

Our biggest fundraiser of the year is as easy as shopping at Giant and/or Weis grocery stores. In fact, by shopping at these two stores you can help raise \$5 for the Co-op for every \$100 you spend. For example, if every family commits to spending \$200 each month at Giant and/or Weis, the Co-op can raise \$2,000. Just by grocery shopping!

Please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board at the Co-op to indicate how much you'd like to spend each month at Giant and/or Weis. The Co-op will purchase gift cards in that amount. Use your gift card for your regular grocery shopping and 5% of the money will go to the Co-op. Leave payment in the envelope provided next to the sign-up sheet. Please make checks out to the Co-op. The cards will be delivered to everyone at school the first week of each month. Friends and relatives are welcome to participate as well!

Co-op T-Shirts and More!

The Co-op’s “T-Shirts and More!” sale begins on September 12, 2008. Choose from a diverse selection of clothing and other useful items and gifts printed with the famous Co-op logo. Proceeds help support the school financially and the items worn spread awareness about our wonderful school.

Cup Half Full Festival

The Co-op's Cup Half Full Festival will be held on Saturday, November 15th. While the festival does raise funds for the Co-op, its primary purpose is to be a fun event for the school and our community!

- Working with a local "paint your own pottery" business, *2000 Degrees*, we offer participants a chance to design and paint their own coffee mugs and other items, and then have them professionally finished at a very competitive price.
- Proceeds support the co-op's scholarship program.
- We hope to see co-op families, alumni families, and your neighbors and friends, enjoying this fun activity!

60th Anniversary

Celebration and Fundraiser

In honor of the Co-op's 60th anniversary, plans are being made for a Spring '09 magic show and music concert. This exciting event will feature superbly talented professional performers from our own Co-op families. The magic and musical selections will be designed to appeal to all ages. We need to reach out to an audience outside our Co-op community to make this event profitable, so get ready to spread the news to anyone who would love a great family show and would be glad to help support the Co-op at the same time!



Scholastic Book Club

The Co-op provides us with a great way to order books for our families through the Scholastic book company. With the holiday season coming up, why not give the gift of reading? Every month there are dozens of new books, cassette sets, games and parent resource guides to choose from. Most of the books are only a few dollars, and each purchase benefits the Co-op with bonus points that are exchanged for books for the Co-op's library. Catalogs will be on the blue bench by the front door, and it only takes a couple of weeks for the orders to arrive once they are placed.

Creating Meaningful Experiences for Our Children

by Mary Macalus (former coop teacher)

As parents and teachers of pre-school age children, we have all had the opportunity to witness our children meaningfully engaged in an activity. Whether it be dropping stones into a mud puddle to watch what happens, or squashing a ball of dough between their fingers again and again, children are learning by exploring the world around them. Our goal here at Coop is to create such experiences for our children without focusing on a finished product or outcome. By this we mean engaging children in play, giving them a variety of new materials to explore, and allowing them to do so on their own terms.

Imagine a child has just been asked to sit and create the same little white snowman she just saw her friend creating. This experience is not meaningful to her, but simply providing various art materials and allowing children to explore them is much more valuable to a child. That is not to say that a child should never create little white snowmen, but if she is left to do so in her own creative way, then she will be gaining much more from such an activity.

Consider the child who has been actively engaged in building with blocks for most of the morning. Although he has created nothing to take home, he has created his very own masterpiece again and again. For him it has been about the experience and not the finished product. He has been learning pre-math skills such as weight distribution, and has been working on social skills such as discovering the boundaries of others, compromise and working together.

Children learn best in an environment where they feel safe and secure. Part of feeling safe and secure is feeling as though you have ownership over your surroundings. Here at Coop the environment belongs to the children. We want children to feel free to explore what is here by setting boundaries, but not strict limits. We want to encourage our children to engage in play with others, but must respect the choices they make. We want to facilitate play experiences, but not dominate them. Flexibility is important when it comes to making changes in a planned activity. Observe what excites children and go with it.

The primary focus of each day should be to create meaningful experiences for the children you encounter. We can achieve such experiences by following the lead of our children. Children are experts at having fun and learning while doing so.



A Morning with Bev Bos

By Mrs. Kat

This past May the Coop generously paid my tuition to attend a workshop with Bev Bos. Bev Bos was the mentor of Mrs. Nancy and came highly recommended as the ‘expert on play based programs’. I was not disappointed. She was a dynamic, enthusiastic, talented, insightful preschool teacher/director who left me inspired and motivated. Her departing advice was to “start with one or two areas and apply these ideas.” She is the author of several books which will be available on the Parent Lending Library Shelf. Please sign out these books for one week and learn what a brilliant child advocate can accomplish at her own play based school.

One of the biggest tenets of her program is to set up areas that encourage exploration and discovery. She has an amazing assortment of accoutrements in her block center that yield ramps, tunnels, marble runs, ping pong ball tracks and more. She asks that no toy be brought in front of the children with only one attribute. She decries the use of character toys because are locked into one identity and application. She refuses to let art be anything other than an exploration of materials. She made me cringe when she said “If there is an adult model of the project, then I question if it is really art.” While some ‘craft projects’ are acceptable, the bulk of her program focuses on developing creativity. I left the workshop vowing to create a clay play area, build a large sand pit and add on to their block building centers.

With the support and contagious enthusiasm of our Co-Chairs and Mrs. Lori we all took up her challenges and are doing our best to enrich your child’s experience here at Coop. Our first steps are to add a clay area and to have a large art exploration center using the bulletin board as an easel. Her book [Please Don’t Move the Muffin Tins; A Hands Off Guide to Art for the Young Child](#) has many ideas and examples of ways to rotate new materials and mediums in and around the art

center. Please feel free to sign up to be the facilitator at this center as an activity. We will also be rotating the clay play area with the woodworking table to bring more exploration with a variety of materials.

Our challenge to provide open ended sand play gave rise to the construction of a large sand pit near the playground fence. Using a hose or filling the magic well with water and providing buckets gets these engineers inspired to build moats, lakes, waterfalls, and roadways. We hope to bring out the cars, shovels, sifters, shells, treasure box etc. to this area and use it as long as possible. Bev Bos has photos of children stripped down to their underwear in the cold November weather filling moats with water! This area will also become the site for our butterfly garden. If you have perennials that need dividing this fall that are insect friendly, please give us some plants. We are hoping to construct a shed with the children’s help to store our gardening and sand play equipment. If this inspires you please see the Co-Chairs or the Teachers and we will co-conspire to build a small lean-to shed together. Bev’s book, [Tumbling Over the Edge, A Rant for Children’s Play](#) has many inspiring and creative outdoor and indoor ideas along these lines.

Lastly, we are hoping to have your cooperation as snack parents to help us make that a meaningful activity, rather than something done in the kitchen before the children arrive. We understand that some of you don’t have the time or inclination to cook with kids, and there will be times when a bag of pretzels and some grapes will be our snack option, but we hope to have many parents embrace our goal of making the snack preparation a chance for the children to learn and explore and make discoveries too. Some of our ideas are : husk corn and serve corn on the cob; make butter in a jar; make ice cream in a bag; bread baking in it’s many forms and incarnations (pretzels, bread, pita, doughnuts, fry bread, chapattis, tortillas) ; making nut butters; making applesauce; using the apple peeler/corer to prepare apples for snack; scrubbing potatoes and making mashed or broiled potatoes; simple soups using a few vegetables the kids wash and put through a food processor or hand slice; mixing up trail mix, making pasta, preparing pizza, baking a pie, no-bake cookies, healthy muffins etc. etc. The children will also be washing their own cloth napkins each week as part of our effort to cut down on disposables. Mrs. Kat will provide a hand wringer washer for this weekly ritual, as well as a child sized clothes hanger. We hope to make every part of our day meaningful and play-based to give your children the best experience possible.

Activity Ideas

Often parents struggle to find activity ideas to share at school other than craft activities. Although these types of experiences are enjoyable from time to time, we would like each parent to attempt at least one play-based activity and open-ended art experience.

Here are just a few non-art ideas to get your own juices flowing:

1. Fill a basket with some of your favorite books, stuffed animals, etc. Bring a colorful blanket and gather small groups of children on lawn or in corner of the hallway and share stories. Having the stuffed toys to hold onto makes the story extra special.
2. Venture outdoors with child-size rakes, clothes baskets, etc. Spend the morning raking and playing in the Autumn leaves with groups of four or five. (We have some small rakes at Coop.)
3. Set up some toys from home in the Activity Room and interact and play. Little people farm, garage, etc. are always a hit. Anything school-appropriate – no action figures or violent toys please.
4. Build things! Gather small or large blocks from home or around the school and build, build, build.
5. Act out stories in the Activity Room or outside. Stories that children are familiar with work best. For example: *Caps For Sale*, *Three Pigs*, *Three Bears*, *Billy Goats Gruff*. Use props from school.
6. Sign up to use our newly constructed sand area. Buckets and water + sand = fun!
7. Play Ball – Bring in basketball hoops from home, mini golf game, or play a game of outdoor soccer.
8. Outdoor scavenger hunts. Let's find these five things. Or where have I hidden the pumpkins?
9. Tunnels and play huts – set these up in the activity room, interact and monitor play. If you are clever at constructing things, the children could help you

make some tunnels and tents with old sheets and blankets.

10. Game day! Bring in some simple, non-competitive games from home, find a quiet spot and gather some children together.
11. Obstacle course – we have many things at school to use for such an activity.
12. Bubbles – find different things around the house to use for blowing bubbles – we have some things at school.
13. Baby bath – wash school baby dolls in water table. You could also set up a little changing station with towels, diapers, doll clothes, etc.
14. Trains – Bring in Brio or other train sets from home. Set them up in the activity room, play and interact. It is usually very popular.
15. Play house – add a few new things to dramatic play area to pique interest, or better yet, set up a home in the Activity Room.
16. Look up our recipe for Goop in the Coop Activity Book and have the kids play with it. Always enjoyable.
17. Sign up to introduce new material into our art exploration area. Kids can paint with sponges, feathers, flowers, marbles and more!
18. Explore various exotic fruits and seeds. If available, bring books, pictures or other information about what you're exploring.
19. Gather stuffed animals and set up a veterinarian hospital, pet shop, etc.

There are several resources containing open-ended art experiences and some with music and movement experiences available at school. If you are struggling for an activity idea, please ask a teacher or our programmer, Susan Leach, for help. Remember, just have fun and the children will too!