

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
About the Watchung Co-op Preschool	1, 2
Philosophy	
How our Co-op Works	
Advantages of a Co-op Preschool	
History of the Watchung Co-op	
School Policies and Procedures	
Behavior	3
▪ Discipline Statement	
▪ Disruptive Behavior	
Birthdays	3
▪ Celebrating in the Classroom	
▪ Tradition of Giving	
Board Positions	3, 4
Calendar, School Closings, and Delayed Openings	4
Child Abuse / Neglect Policy	4
▪ Special Requirements to Prevent Child Abuse and/or Neglect	
▪ Inappropriate Staff Behaviors Towards Children	
Church Property	4, 5
Clothing	5
Confidentiality Policy	5
Emergency Procedures	5, 6
▪ Accidents	
▪ Failure to Pick-up Child/Late Pick-up	
▪ Fire/Emergency Exit	
▪ Unauthorized Persons in Building	
Enrollment Policies	6
▪ Statement of Inclusion	
▪ Special Needs Policy	
Field Trips and In-class Events	
Health	6, 7
▪ Medical Records	
▪ Child Illness	
▪ Management of Contagious Disease	
▪ Additional Health Considerations	
Holiday Celebrations	8
Insurance	8

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>Page</u>
School Policies and Procedures continued...	
Lunch Boxes	8
Meetings	8
▪ Parent conferences	
▪ School-wide	
▪ Parent Orientation Workshop	
▪ Board Meetings	
Parking	8
Phone System	8
Responsibilities of Co-op Families	8, 9
▪ Throughout the School Year	
▪ On Your Co-op Day	
Release Policy (Pick-up)	9
Snack	10
Toys from Home	10
Tuition	10
▪ Payment Schedule	
▪ Late Payments	
▪ Refunds/Program Withdrawals	
Website	10

Philosophy

At the Watchung Cooperative Preschool we encourage learning through hands-on, child-guided play experiences. We emphasize a child's social and emotional well-being while we nurture his or her love of learning. Our cooperative structure, in which parents participate in the classroom on a rotating basis, enhances our approach by enabling a child to make a more gradual transition from home to school.

How Our Co-op Works

The Watchung Cooperative Preschool belongs to the parents and children who attend the school. In its cooperative framework, you will have the privilege and responsibility of sharing your child's first school experience.

In the classroom: Each class is taught by a caring, experienced teacher certified in early childhood education, along with an experienced teacher's assistant. Parents take turns assisting, or co-oping, in their child's classroom. For more about co-oping, see **Pages 8 and 9**.

The larger school community: Each family selects a role in administrative, maintenance, and/or fund-raising tasks required to run the school, and participates in a year-end school cleanup. Parents comprise the school's Board of Trustees, which sets policy and plans for the school's future. A professional Director works closely with the Board and administers the educational program.

The effort and ingenuity of each family is integral to the school's operation and tradition. The school is not a finished product; it grows and changes with each new group of children and parents who shape its present and build its future.

Advantages of a Co-op Preschool Education

Your regular participation in the classroom enables your child to make a more gradual transition from a home-centered life to a school-centered life, and may ease separation anxieties. Time spent in the classroom also gives you a natural opportunity to observe your child at school. You will understand what and how your child is learning, and will see first-hand how your child reaches out to classmates and adults. Working side-by-side with the Co-op's experienced staff is also a very practical learning experience for you as a parent.

Getting involved in the school and attending family events give you a chance to meet and work with other families. For you and your child, new friendships may develop that extend beyond the classroom.

Together, you and your child will enjoy the rewards of the co-oping approach to preschool education.

History of the Watchung Co-op

The national news that flickered across TV screens in 1967 was a turbulent, raucous mix of politics and pop. Massive anti-Vietnam War demonstrations surged through New York and San Francisco. Riots rocked Newark, Plainfield and 125 other cities across the country. Janis Joplin tore up the stage at the Monterey Pop Festival and a surgeon named Christaan Barnard performed the world's first heart transplant. A new magazine, Rolling Stone, hit the newsstands.

That was the world at large the year Watchung Cooperative Preschool opened its doors for the first time. Its name was slightly different -- Watchung Church Cooperative Nursery School. But the mission has remained constant through 35 years of teaching small children that school can be a pretty fun place -- and helping parents become part of their children's first school experience.

Watchung Co-op began under the auspices of the Watchung Congregational Church, which was located at 143 Watchung Avenue. The church was nestled into a residential area, with no other churches or nursery schools nearby at the time. It had Church School facilities, but no preschool program. Many of its members thought a weekday nursery school would be a nice idea, not only for the church itself but for the neighborhood as a whole.

In September 1967, the first class of four-year-olds entered the Watchung Cooperative Nursery School. Their teacher was Betty Bailey, and they attended class four mornings a week. After two successful years, the school added a three-day-per-week afternoon class, taught by Marsha Brock.

The way the Co-op was run was similar to the way it's run today. An executive board of school parents administered the school. But the

early board also included delegates selected by the church, because the school was then a branch of the Watchung Congregational Church's youth ministry. The school was financially self-supporting, however, and determined its own policies.

In the classroom, parent involvement was absolutely key. What an early school brochure called "the cooperative framework" was essential to its philosophy. "It enables [the child] to make a gradual transition from a home-centered life to a school-centered one, with a parent or caretaker frequently present and participating in his nursery school," the brochure explained to parents.

Co-oping in the early days was more intensive than today, recalled Betty Bailey in a 2001 interview. There were often two or three parents in the class at a time with the teacher, and no paid assistants. The teacher trained the parent volunteers.

In classwork, the Co-op reflected a new but growing awareness that not all children learn in exactly the same way -- and that young children in particular might benefit from a more flexible approach to learning.

The curriculum represented a true departure from the 1960s norm. The children weren't forever being asked to sit still and listen up; they moved about the classroom, learning through play, experimentation and interaction. Although this doesn't sound strange or surprising now, it was very cutting-edge for 1967, said Bailey.

A great deal of music and art was integrated into the classwork. Bailey liked to play the guitar for her students -- it allowed her to face the children, unlike playing the piano. "It was a really rich program," she said.

A fire at the church in the mid-'70s marked a turning point for the school. After a transitional period, the Watchung Congregational Church dissolved; many of its members joined the Union Congregational Church (where Betty Bailey later served as an associate pastor). Meanwhile, the nursery school found a new home a few miles north at Mount Hebron and Valley Roads, in the Montclair Heights Reformed Church. The Watchung Cooperative Preschool ceased to have a church affiliation, and continues to be a nonsectarian institution.

Through the '80s and '90s, the Co-op continued its mission of introducing young children to the school experience in a positive, nurturing way, with an emphasis on parental involvement. Our current director, Mona Bucceri, in addition to being a certified early childhood teacher, is a former Co-op parent and board member.

In the first decade of a new millennium, the Watchung Cooperative Preschool looks forward to helping more children see learning as a wonderful new adventure. And the Co-op will continue to evolve, because its identity remains intertwined with the goals and dreams of its families.

"The school is not a finished product," wrote its governing board in the 1960s. "It grows and changes with each new group of children and parents who shape its present and build its future."

DID YOU KNOW...

The building at Mount Hebron and Valley roads that now houses the Watchung Cooperative Preschool is in an area once known as Speertown, named for the Speers, a Dutch family who arrived in Essex County in the 1600s. The church land was part of a cow pasture from an 18th-century homestead owned by Peter Speer, whose house still stands at 612 Upper Mountain Ave.

The picturesque stone church was dedicated in 1901, and the Parish House, where the Co-op's facilities are located, was dedicated as a separate building in 1913. Renovations in the 1920s and 1940s eventually linked the two buildings.

Behavior - Discipline Statement

Although the children generally behave appropriately with peers at school, there may be times when it becomes necessary to discipline a child for various reasons. In connection therewith, it shall be our policy as follows:

1. The methods of guidance and discipline used shall in all cases be positive, consistent with the development needs of the child and applied with the full and complete knowledge and understanding of the parent(s).
2. Discipline shall not be associated with the behavior of children in regard to rest, toilet training or food.
3. Children shall not be isolated without supervision.

Behavior - Disruptive Behavior Policy

If, in the observation of the teacher and the director, a child continually and persistently disrupts the learning environment within the classroom, the parents will be notified. A parent consultation with the director and the teacher, and, if deemed necessary by the school, a relevant professional, will be held to address the situation. The school is not responsible for any additional expenses which may be incurred as a result of fulfilling the recommended course of action.

Disruptive behavior that persists despite attempts to remedy the problem may result in termination of the family's contract with the school. Any tuition paid will be reimbursed to the family on a prorated basis.

Behaviors that place students and staff at risk of physical injury may result in termination of the family's contract with the school. The director and classroom teacher will determine whether an action plan to address the student's behaviors is possible, or whether the behaviors warrant dismissal. In the event the student is dismissed and the family's contract is terminated, any tuition paid will be reimbursed to the family on a pro-rated basis.

Birthdays – Celebrating in the Classroom

Birthdays may be celebrated at snack time. Many parents try to co-op the day that they will be celebrating their child's birthday. If that is not possible and you would like your child to celebrate in the classroom,

contact the co-oping parent to coordinate. Parents may bring in a special snack such as cupcakes, ice cream, or cookies as well as birthday cups and napkins. It is not necessary to bring in balloons or favors.

Birthdays – Tradition of Giving

Because it is valuable for a child to give as well as receive, many parents purchase a book, game or other classroom item for the child to give to the school on his/her birthday. Check with the teacher for suggestions. If possible, inscribe the item to mark the occasion!

Board Positions

Parents comprise the school's Board of Trustees, which sets policy and plans for the school's future. The Board works closely with the professional Director, who administers the educational program.

President – Coordinates and oversees all school activities. Works closely with the Lead Teacher/Director, the teachers, assistants, and other board members to guarantee the smooth running of the school. Serves as a liaison between the landlord and the school. *Must currently serve on the Board.*

Vice President(s) for Membership (one or two people) – Maintains current enrollment and recruits new students to the school. Maintains and distributes parent handbooks and registration information. Maintains student health and immunization records.

Treasurer(s) (one or two people) – Receives and distributes all school funds. Keeps accurate records of receipts and expenditures. Files federal and state taxes; reports staff payroll.

Secretary – Records and distributes minutes of all school meetings. Prepares and distributes agenda before Board meetings. Notifies members of all meetings.

PR/Marketing Coordinator – Promotes the school to the general public. Creates and distributes flyers, news releases, and advertisements to maintain a healthy enrollment.

Fundraising – Coordinates and implements all fundraising events.

Job Coordinator – Maintains and updates the school job list. Works to see that all jobs are filled and that jobs are performed as needed throughout the school year.

Communications Coordinator – Publishes school newsletter throughout the year. Updates lobby bulletin board. Coordinates content for school website.

Class Delegates – (one for each class) Acts as a liaison between the parents of the class and the Board. Coordinates parent co-opping schedule; keeps the class informed of upcoming events, trips, snow days, etc.; coordinates class gifts.

Remember, there are many ways to be active with the school. We always need help with family events, fundraisers, special projects, and classroom improvements.

Calendar, School Closings, and Delayed Openings

Our school calendar will generally follow the calendar set by the Montclair public schools, with some exceptions.

When Montclair public schools close for snow or other emergency reasons, the preschool will also close for the day. Class delegates will call to notify everyone; *please do not call the teachers.*

For every three full school day closings in one school year, one day of school may be added to the school year.

In the event of a delayed opening for the Montclair public schools, all of the Co-op's morning classes will run from 10 a.m. to noon, all afternoon classes will start at 12:30. On such days, the lunch program for Creative Play or Discovery Time students will be cancelled; due to their full-day schedule, Pre-K students will still have a lunch program on delayed opening days.

In addition to receiving a call from your class delegate, there are several other ways to determine if the Montclair Public Schools are closed or delayed:

- in the event of an emergency school closing, 5-second blasts of civil defense sirens with 5-second no-sound intervals between blasts will be issued in Montclair at 6:30 am and again at 7:00 am.
- News of school closing or delayed opening will also be broadcast on WINS 1010 AM radio beginning at 6:00 am;
- Parents may call the WOR Radio Station School Closing Hotline at 877-871-9208;
- Visit the WOR website at www.wor710.com

Child Abuse / Neglect Policy

Special Requirements to Prevent Child Abuse and/or Neglect

The director or any staff member shall verbally notify the Division Office of Child Abuse Control immediately whenever there is reasonable cause to believe that a child has been subjected to abuse and/or neglect by a staff member(s), or any other adult, pursuant to the Child Abuse and Neglect Law (N.J.S.A. 9:6-8.9, 8.10, 8.13, and 8.14). If a center is serving a child(ren) under the supervision of the Division Office of Child Abuse Control, the director or any staff member shall report to the caseworker assigned to the family any suspected abuse or neglect of the child by his or her parent(s) or other family members.

Inappropriate Staff Behaviors Toward Children:

- 1) Staff members shall not use hitting, shaking or any other form of corporal punishment of children.
- 2) Staff members shall not use abusive language, ridicule, harsh, humiliating or frightening treatment or any other form of emotional punishment of children.
- 3) Staff members shall not engage in or inflict any form of child abuse and/or neglect.
- 4) Staff members shall not withhold from children food, emotional responses, stimulation, or the opportunities for rest or sleep.
- 5) Staff members shall not require a child to remain silent or inactive for an inappropriately long period of time for the child's age.

Church Property

Our school has rented space from the Montclair Heights Reformed Church since the mid-1970s. (We have no religious affiliation with

them.) We strive to be considerate of our landlord and respectful of our lease obligations. Please:

- keep the children out of the flower beds and trees at all times;
- encourage children to enjoy the flowers, but never pick them;
- do not bring children into the kitchen area while you clean up;
- do not enter non-school related spaces in the building;
- please do not park on the grass.

Clothing

Provide clothing that is easy to manage so the child can succeed in learning to dress him/herself. Please choose sensible, comfortable, and washable clothing. The children are encouraged to wear smocks while painting, but it helps to make it clear to children that you don't mind of these clothes get a little soiled while playing, creating, etc. We also encourage that you send your child in rubber-soled shoes

Extra Clothes: Since many young children do not like wearing unfamiliar clothing, we recommend that you leave an extra set of their clothing in the child's cubby in case a spill, splash, or "accident" requires that they change while in school.

Labels: Clearly label all clothing and possessions with your child's full name – especially coats, hats, boots, and extra clothing stored in the cubby.

Confidentiality Policy

The Watchung Cooperative Preschool provides for protection of confidentiality and against the disclosure of children's records. Any disclosure of children's records beyond their parents or guardians, or program personnel requires familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect). All program personnel have an obligation of confidentiality. We maintain confidentiality and respect the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we have reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, we will share confidential information with appropriate agencies.

Emergencies – Accident Reporting

Report an accident to the teacher, no matter how small.

Emergencies – Unauthorized Persons in Building

If the teacher, assistant or co-op parent is uncomfortable with the presence or behavior of anyone in or near the building, call 911.

Emergencies - Failure to Pick up Child by School Closing/Late Pick-up:

In the event that the parent(s) or other authorized person fails to pick up or is late in picking up a child, at time of closing the following steps will be taken:

1. The child shall be supervised at all times;
2. Every effort shall be made to contact persons authorized to pick child up;
3. If arrangement cannot be made to return child to parents or other authorized person, the staff shall seek assistance from the NJ Dept. of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) Child Abuse Hot Line at 1-609-292-1021. Local police may also be called.

The Board may fine and/or suspend families for late pick-up.

Emergencies – Fire/Emergency Exit Plan

If emergency evacuation from the premises is necessary for fire or any other reason, the following plan will be executed:

- children will be led from the classroom in an orderly fashion with one adult at the head of the group and one adult at the rear;
- the teacher will take a class roster with emergency telephone numbers to check that all children are accounted for and to call parents/guardians in the event that the group will not be returning to the classroom;
- the group will gather at the designated meeting area: Bradford Academy elementary school, located at 87 Mt. Hebron Road, just west of the Watchung Co-op;
- the last adult out of each classroom will turn off lights and close doors;
- the group will remain in the designated meeting place and await further instructions from the fire marshal or other authority;
- one adult will call 911 from a phone outside the school building (cellular phone or pay phone at Valley/Mt. Hebron Rd. corner).

The co-oping parent's first responsibility is to help escort the children to safety out of the building. Fire extinguishers are available, however the children's safety comes first.

Enrollment Policies

Statement of Inclusion: It is the policy of the Watchung Cooperative Preschool to not discriminate in allowing students to enroll in our school based on race, color, religion, national origin, sex, or disability. We allow students with disabling conditions to enroll in our school whenever it is the best placement for the child and does not require a fundamental alteration of our programs.

Special Needs Policy

The Director, teachers, and Board of Directors will make individual assessments about whether the School can meet the particular needs of each child with a disability who seeks services from our program without fundamentally altering our program. After the initial assessment of a child, it may be determined that a "trial enrollment period" be arranged for a timer period of up to one month. The duration of the trial enrollment period shall be determined by the Director, teachers, and Board of Directors. A prorated tuition for the class must be charged. During the trial enrollment period, constant communication and feedback between the School and the child's parents/caregivers is necessary to monitor the progress of the child. Upon completion of the trial enrollment period, a final assessment must be made to determine if our program is best suited to meet the child's needs.

If a child currently enrollment in our program is determined to have special needs, a consultation with the Director, teacher, and parent must be held to determine the proper course of action in terms of whether our program, without fundamentally alteration, can continue to meet the specific needs of the child. Additional consultations may be required from professionals or other resources outside our School. The parents, teacher, and Director agree to follow the recommendations given as a result of such consultation(s) or following the recommended course(s) of action determined through such consultation(s). If a determination is made that our School can no longer meet the needs of the child, the family may need to withdraw the child from the School, and any tuition paid will be reimbursed to the family on a prorated basis. The

Watchung Cooperative Preschool will assist the family in appropriate placement of the child.

Field Trips and In-Class Presentations

Teachers may arrange field trips, individually or collectively. The school's director must approve all trips and presentations in advance. Parents will be notified at least two weeks in advance of any off-premise field trip or in-class presentation.

Field trips are optional for families. If a parent chooses not to participate, they may keep their child home that day.

Generally, teachers arrange one (1) school-wide off-premise field trip in the fall and one (1) school-wide off-premise trip in the spring. Additionally, individual classes may take one (1) off-premise field trip in the fall and one (1) off-premise field trip in the spring. Added field trips beyond this general guideline may be scheduled within reason with the approval of the director, taking into account feedback from students' families.

Parents provide transportation to off-premise field trips. Carpooling is permitted (and encouraged). Please notify staff of any carpooling arrangements prior to the trip. There may be a fee associated with a field trip; the cost is usually per child and/or adult, and is the responsibility of families. Generally, fees are nonrefundable.

In-house presentations are coordinated by teachers, with assistance where necessary from the Co-op family assigned to the In-Class Special Events job, as well as class delegates.

Health – Medical Records

Each child shall have a complete physical examination by a physician before admission. Health forms will be distributed prior to the start of school; they must be completed and returned to the school by the child's first day of school. **No child may enter school without these records on file.** All immunizations must be current. These records are checked by the both the state and local authorities; if a student's records are found to be non-compliant, that child is not to attend school until the records are completed satisfactorily.

Health – Illnesses, Contagious Diseases, Other Considerations

We strive to provide a school environment that is as safe and healthful as possible. However, such a goal depends upon understanding, cooperation, and communication between home and school. By conscientiously adhering to the health guidelines below, the spread of illness and infection can be significantly diminished.

On occasion, it may be necessary for a teacher to send a child home if the child's condition warrants it; in this situation, the teacher would use the emergency contact information provided to contact a parent or other authorized person to pick the child up.

Child's Illness: Please keep your child home if any of the following circumstances are present:

- first stages of a cold, accompanied by runny nose, persistent cough, or sneezing.
- fever (elevated oral temperature of 101.5 degrees F or over within the last 24 hours)
- rash or cold sore (within the last 24 hours)
- if you are waiting the results of a throat culture.
- severe pain or discomfort
- acute diarrhea, characterized as twice the child's usual frequency of bowel movements with a change to a looser consistency within a period of 24 hours.
- two or more episodes of acute vomiting within a period of 24 hours
- sore throat or severe coughing
- yellow eyes or jaundiced skin
- red eyes with discharge
- infected, untreated skin patches
- difficult or rapid breathing
- skin rashes, excluding diaper rash, lasting for more than one day
- weeping/bleeding skin lesions not been treated by physician or nurse
- swollen joints
- visibly enlarged lymph nodes
- stiff neck
- blood in urine

Contagious Diseases: In accordance with State guidelines, contagious diseases that require a staff member or student to be excluded from school are:

- | | |
|---|----------------------------|
| - chicken pox | - German measles (rubella) |
| - flu | - measles |
| - meningococcal meningitis | - mumps |
| - typhoid | - tuberculosis |
| - whooping cough (pertussis) | - giardia lamblia |
| - hepatitis A | - salmonella |
| - shigella | - impetigo |
| - lice | - scabies |
| - pink eye (conjunctivitis) | - ringworm |
| - diphtheria | - small pox |
| - haemophilus influenza | - polio (poliomyelitis) |
| - strep throat (streptococcal infections) | - staphylococcal disease |

It is important that you notify your child's teacher when your child has contracted a contagious disease. (This is particularly true of German measles, so that pregnant mothers may be cautioned.) It shall further be the policy of the Watchung Co-op to notify, in writing, each parent whose child may have been exposed to a contagious disease if such an outbreak should occur at school.

If your child will be absent, it is suggested that you notify the school before that day's class begins.

Other Medical Conditions: The school should be informed of any ongoing medical condition concerning a student, e.g., orthopedic, allergies, asthma, etc.

Emotional Factors: Please tell the teacher when your child has had a difficult night or weekend, if there has been a death in the family, or of any other situation that may be upsetting to the child. The staff can be better able to help the child through their day.

Holiday Celebrations

Under the guidance of the teachers, holidays will be considered in non-sectarian terms, emphasizing cultural awareness, family customs, and respect and appreciation for diversity. Families are encouraged to

speak to their child's teacher about sharing cultural celebrations and traditions with the class.

Insurance

The school has a regular liability policy that covers accidents to children and assisting parents. We also carry Workmen's Compensation for teachers and assistants. The school is not responsible for accidents that occur while children are being transported to/from school.

Lunch Boxes

Lunch boxes are stored in a child's cubby. Therefore, you are advised to pack lunches with ice packs as needed.

Meetings – Parent Conferences

Teachers conduct parent conferences twice each year during school hours. Special conferences may be requested by the parent or teacher at other times; it is recommended that the students not accompany parents to these conferences.

Meetings – School-wide – Parent Orientation Workshop

In order to have your child gain the most from a cooperative preschool, parents must participate in an Orientation Workshop held just prior to the start of the school year. Attendance by both parents is encouraged; attendance of at least one parent is mandatory. Educational philosophy, the operation of the school, and techniques to help children adjust to school are discussed. Parents (and others who will be assisting in the class) have an opportunity to meet their child's teacher and other families in the class and to learn about the ways they will assist the teacher while co-oping. *It is asked that parents attend this workshop without the children.*

Meetings – School-wide – Board Meetings

Co-op Board meeting notices are posted regularly on the main bulletin board and outside classrooms. Parents are invited to attend some or all of the monthly board meetings to be informed, get involved, and/or voice any concerns. The Co-op's Executive Board, consisting of the President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and School Director, may meet as needed to address matters that arise between Board Meetings. Executive meetings are called at the discretion of the President.

Parking

Please do not park between the signs that read "No Parking" in front of the school on Mt. Hebron Road – even if you are just dropping-off/picking-up. That space is used for garbage/recycling pick-up and for emergency vehicle access.

Other than that small restricted area, parking is permitted along the rest of the building's Mt. Hebron Road frontage and along Valley Road. Additionally, parking on Nassau Road is a short, ½-block walk away (south of Mt. Hebron).

Please be considerate of expectant mothers, those with smaller children in tow, or others with special needs. If possible, leave the gravel spots directly in front of the school open for them, especially if you are co-oping and your car will be parked for several hours.

Phone System

If classes are in session, callers are likely to get a message that encourages them to leave a message. However, parents with a truly urgent need to reach someone at the school during school hours have the option of hitting "0" after the message to be transferred into the classroom where an assistant will answer. If you are calling to report that your child will be absent, please hit the "0" to get transferred into the classroom at that time. If your call does not require immediate attention, please leave a message; they are usually checked daily after classes. (If someone is in the office or a teacher is in her classroom prior to the start of school, the phone will probably be answered before the voicemail system picks up your call.)

Responsibilities of Co-op Families – Throughout the School Year:

What are my family's responsibilities at the Watchung Co-op?

Families are expected to participate at our school, as parent involvement is integral to its cooperative operating structure and tradition. By enrolling a child here, each family commits to the following activities:

1. **Assist in the Classroom.** Parents sign up to assist in their child's classroom on a rotating basis. This sign-up usually occurs at the Orientation Workshop just prior to the start of school. Frequency

of co-oping varies by class and enrollment, but generally: Creative Play - once every 5 or 6 weeks; Discovery Time - once every 4 or 5 weeks; Pre-K - once per month. If at the last minute a family is unable to make its co-op day, it is that family's responsibility to arrange with another family to trade for another day. Or the family may hire an assistant approved by the school for a fee as follows: Creative Play and Discovery, \$35; Pre-K, \$40. Parents who miss a co-op day without making alternate arrangements will incur a \$50 fine.

2. **Family Job.** Parents choose from a variety of administrative, maintenance and/or fundraising tasks required to help run the school and make it a fun, well-informed, and functional community. There is likely to be a job that meets every family's time and schedule preferences, as the assignments are so varied. The Family Job sign-up process is explained in the packet each enrolled family receives in late summer; families who enroll after September will be given a choice of remaining jobs. Families unable to meet their job requirement agree to pay a fee.
3. **End-of-Year Cleanup.** At least one adult from each family completes 2 ½ hours of cleaning at the end of the school year. This cleanup is scheduled over several days, including a weekend. In the event that a family cannot meet their end-of-year cleaning responsibility, they agree to pay a cleaning fee.

The school is continually enriched by the many and varied talents of the families involved. These are also great opportunities to get to know other families, teachers, and staff.

Responsibilities of Co-op Families – On Your Co-op Day:

One parent assists in each class each day (except for Pre-K P.M. which is a non-co-oping class). Parents sign up for their co-op days on a schedule prepared by the class delegate (usually at the Orientation Workshop).

Each class has its own daily routine and each teacher will make clear what her expectations are of co-op parents, but in general:

- Bring snack, juice, and one roll of paper towels;
- Arrive a few minutes early to help prepare the room for the day's activities
- During free play, play/read with the children or assist teacher as requested with craft, etc.
- As children wash hands for snack, wash tables and distribute snack
- Participate with teachers and children during "circle time" activities
- While the children are outside under the supervision of both the teacher and assistant, clean tables, sweep, vacuum, clean materials as necessary. *It is important to note that the end-of-day cleaning responsibility is the parent's-- not the teacher's or assistant's-- and you need to stay until its completion.*
- The classroom assistant (not the co-oping parent) is responsible for disposing of garbage at the end of the school day.

While fulfilling classroom responsibilities such as snack and clearing up are important, don't forget that experiencing the classroom with your child is one of the most rewarding aspects of enrolling at the Co-op. So make sure you take the opportunity to interact with the children, or simply enjoy them!

Additional notes about your co-op day responsibilities:

- Please make care-giving arrangements for siblings or other non-attending children for whom you are responsible, as they are not permitted to accompany you during your co-op day.
- Keep track of the days for which you sign up. Co-op calendars are posted outside the classrooms. Or contact your delegate to verify dates. *If you are unable to make a scheduled co-op date, refer to the procedures outlined above.*
- If you must contact a teacher on your co-op day, call the school between 8:30-9:00 am when she is setting up for the day; DO NOT leave a message on the school's voicemail, as those messages are not retrieved until later in the day.

Release Policy

A child may be released only to his/her custodial parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the custodial parent(s). The child shall not be visited or released to a non-custodial parent unless specifically authorized by the custodial parent. Authorization shall be done by written consent – a

note which includes name, telephone number and address of the authorized person.

Snack

Snack time is a very important part of the school day. It provides an opportunity for social interaction, practicing table manners, appropriate language, and sharing while re-energizing busy little bodies and minds.

Please notify your child's teacher of food allergies as soon as possible.

Try to reinforce good eating habits with nutritious foods that are easy to eat. Some examples include:

- Raisins and fresh fruits;
- Vegetables such as carrots, celery
- Banana bread, carrot muffins, etc.
- Cheese and crackers
- Peanut butter or cream cheese on bread, crackers, or celery
- Yogurt or frozen yogurt
- Mini-bagels, mini-sandwiches, pizza morsels
- Snack mix containing raisins, cereals, pretzels
- Fruit juices are preferred

Toys from Home

Generally, bringing toys from home is discouraged, with the exception of the early weeks of school when a certain toy/item may be needed for security. The preschool program provides varied and creative activities; toys from home tend to be distracting and limit what a child does during free play. If a toy is brought from home, children are encouraged to keep it in the cubby until dismissal.

However, recognizing that children often wish to show classmates items from home, teachers may incorporate “sharing” or “show-and-tell” segments into their programs. This is an opportunity for the child to present an item from home to the class on a specific day during the school week.

Tuition Policy

Payment Schedule: Prompt payment of quarterly tuition installments is a core responsibility for each and every family, and is vital to ensuring the smooth operation of the school. Tuition is due as stated on the

tuition schedule included in each student’s orientation packet. In addition, the tuition invoices mailed to families include the date upon which each payment is due. It is the responsibility of the family to contact the treasurer should alternate payment schedules need to be arranged.

Late Payments:

- If tuition is not received within ten (10) days of the due date, a late fee of \$30 will be assessed.
- Failure to pay balance 30 days after initial due date may result in suspension of services.
- Re-admission for the student or enrollment of a sibling for the following school year will not be permitted until the tuition account is made current.
- Parents are responsible for bank fees for all returned checks.
- The Watchung Cooperative Preschool reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of a child due to non-payment of tuition.

Refunds/Program Withdrawals: All registration and tuition fees paid to the Watchung Cooperative Preschool are *non-refundable*. There will be no refunds or adjustments made to tuition for time missed due to illness, holidays, vacations, weather conditions, or withdrawals from the program.

In the event it is determined that a child should be withdrawn from our program for developmental reasons or reasons relating to the health of the child, any tuition paid will be reimbursed to the family on a prorated basis. See Enrollment Policy, Page 6.

In the event that it becomes necessary to dismiss a child from the program due to disruptive behavior, any tuition paid will be reimbursed to the family on a prorated basis. See Behavior Policy, Page 3.

Website: www.watchungco-op.org

The website is a helpful resource for currently enrolled families, with information on upcoming school events; the year’s school calendar; co-op schedules; registration forms; profiles of Co-op teachers and classes; and much more. Please be sure to check it out.

Also, if you know anyone who is looking for a preschool, please encourage them to check out our website as well!