

Learning Co-operatively

*Shared learning for parents and teachers
in non-profit parent participating groups!*

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The task of writing the module was undertaken by a team including parents, teachers and administrators, all with Board experience in parent participating groups.

Editing and co-ordination of the pilot course was supervised by the OPPCEO Training Committee: Dale Beach, Lorraine Dixon, JoAnn Dunn, Gayle Frisa, Jan Hayward, Catherine Shaver, and Jean Stevenson as Chairperson and guiding light of this project.

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This module is not the first effort of its kind. The preparation and presentation were aided by the study of a variety of prior approaches to such training. Much is owed to those generous people and groups whose files and recollections provided excellent resources.

We readily acknowledge that the module does not represent the only framework through which to approach the specialized training intended. Here, we have attempted to embrace all of the necessary content in a format that encourages learning and personal growth. An essential element of this format is the inclusion of a session of observation and practice in a parent participation setting during the module training period. Another unique feature is the enrolment of teachers and parents together for shared learning.

Comments and recommendations for improvement are always welcome.

GOALS FOR THE TRAINING MODULE

- ✓ To show Early Childhood Educators and other professionals working with young children, the value of the parent's role in the centre; to develop the capability to work with parents involving them in the daily children's program; to support and strengthen teachers in their understanding of and contribution to the benefits of parent participation to children, parents and teachers

- ✓ To enhance the Board member's knowledge of non-profit, parent-participating administration, leadership skills and positive interpersonal relationships

NEED FOR STAFF/PARENT ADMINISTRATION TRAINING MODULE

For over forty years, parent participation/co-operative preschools have made up a substantial sector of licensed nursery schools in Ontario. These groups are primarily self-sustaining and have a two-fold purpose; first, to provide a quality group experience for young children and second, to enhance the parenting capabilities of the parents through participation in the children's program. This strong support for parent participation is based on research and an abundance of real-life experiences in co-operative schools across North America which have demonstrated benefits to children, parents, teachers, and whole communities.

The classroom activities are supervised by the training personnel required under the *Day Nurseries Act*. The general training for Early Childhood Education at Community Colleges provides excellent grounding in curriculum, teaching methods and classroom administration. This training equips the teacher to function in a variety of nursery school, daycare, and other specialized preschool services. However, in the setting of a parent participating school, there are additional challenges which the teacher accepts if the two-fold goal is to be achieved.

At the outset, because the parent co-operative is run by a Board of Directors consisting mainly of parents and because the parents participate in the classroom with the teacher, the teacher finds their employers are also their classroom assistants. This unique arrangement requires the teacher to accept the parents as competent administrators of the school, and at the same time provide leadership, guidance and support to their efforts as part of the teaching team. This is quite different from the traditional profile of a teacher as the autonomous authority unrelated to, or at least professionally distant from the parent influence.

At the same time, members of the Board who operate the non-profit organization, in particular the President, have a serious responsibility to guide and support the philosophic and economic bases of their enterprise.

Since there is daily contact between teaching staff and parents in a co-operative, much of it on a personal interaction basis; there is constant opportunity for understanding or misunderstanding the fundamental roles of the participants. Working with adults requires special skills, skills not usually taught or practiced in teacher education courses and seldom available to novice Board members. Learning these skills by trial and error in the workplace is costly in terms of time and personal feelings and may result in the casualties of disillusioned staff and frustrated parent groups.

Allison and Bedrosian-Vernon (1986) in their paper describing the first year experiences of the APPLE Co-operative school in London, Ontario state, 'The working relationship of the teacher and the parents is probably the most vital part of the structure, indeed the literature documenting parent participating and co-operative programs shows the failure of such programs generally occurs as a result of a breakdown in that relationship.'

Along with the specialized skills of parent guide and educator, the co-operative teacher must be committed to the philosophy of co-operation as the keystone in the structure of the operation. They must be knowledgeable and enthusiastic regarding co-operative administration, the history and progress of the Parent Co-operative movement and the wide range of resources and adaptations of parent participation projects.

The qualities of a co-operative teacher as 'enabler, learner, leader and good communicator' must be nurtured through opportunities for observation, reading, discussion and practice related to co-operative settings. This could be done through a carefully planned series of training sessions to be carried out by qualified personnel, made available to pre-service or in-service co-operative teachers, parent Board members or others interested in Early Childhood Education (ECE) training.

THE WRITING TEAM

(profile information was current at the time of publication of this handbook in 1989)

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JoAnn was the founding director of a parent co-operative in St. Thomas where she taught for seventeen years. She has recently been appointed Integration Program Coordinator for the Association of Parent Participating Schools for London and District. JoAnn has been actively involved in AECEO and APPSLD and has served on the Training Committee of OPPCEO.

Patricia Fenton

Patricia has been a co-op parent for eight years and has been active at all levels of the co-operative movement; as a co-operative President, as President of Toronto and District Parent Co-operative Preschool Council; as an OPPCEO representative on the Funding Advisory Committee of the Ministry of Community and Social Services; and as Vice-President and President of Parent Co-operative Preschools International. Pat was a founding member of a modular parent participation program for children, 2 ½ to 5 years, the Deer Park Extended Program in Toronto. Pat has a Masters in Social Work and has a special interest in organizational behaviour and leadership development.

Jeannine Hack

Jeannine has been involved with co-operatives for seven years and now with a new baby, has a few more ahead of her. She has served as President of her preschool and has been very active with APPSLD for several years, as 2nd Vice-President (Consulting Services), as Editor of APPSLD's quarterly newspaper 'Appleseed' and as Canadian Secretary for PCPI.

Ruth Hill

Ruth's interest in Early Childhood Education began with her own family and led her into the position of Supervisor of a co-operative in Toronto – a position she held for ten years. She has also served on PCPC in Toronto, most recently, as President.

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Marjorie has worked in the field of Early Childhood Education for sixteen years. Her experience includes: faculty position with Centennial College, ECE Consultant – Ministry of Community and Social Services, Consultant to Simcoe Hall Children's Centre and Supervisor of several non-profit Early Childhood settings. She is currently Manager of Daycare Operations at George Brown College.

Jean Stevenson

Jean has been associated with parent co-operatives for thirty years as a parent, teacher and administrator. She was a founding member, President and advisor to Parent Co-operative Preschools International. She was attached for eight years, to the former Day Nurseries Branch of the Ministry of Community and Social Services. She subsequently, introduced and for ten years was co-ordinator of the Early Childhood Education program at Georgian College, Barrie Campus. She is currently active as Chairperson of the Education Committee of the Organization for Parent Participation in Childcare and Education, Ontario.

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For this Handbook’s purpose, all references to parent participating groups refer to non-profit, incorporated groups working with young children and involving parents

AN INTRODUCTION TO THE CONCEPT OF PARENT INVOLVEMENT THROUGH A STUDY OF THE PARENT CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

(Recommended Reading: Parents and Children Learn Together by Katharine Whiteside Taylor, Columbia University Press, 1981)

DEVELOPMENT OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF PARENT CO-OPERATIVES

The development of the human personality is a theme that has permeated the parent co-operative movement beginning with the earliest expression of the philosophy of co-operative preschools.

‘Children in the early formative years are learning to live, play and grow in ways developing respect for others’ rights, yet releasing to individual activity’.

‘In the socialization of children, co-operatives help lay the groundwork for a more socially mature future world. By developing parents and teachers dedicated to larger social values, and by giving practice in the democratic ways needful for their realizations, co-operatives provide more adults capable of contributing to the world’s desperate need for social vision in the face of hysterical competition for instruments of power.’

In planning and organization stages, not all adults involved in co-operatives are aware of this broader, deeper philosophy because the focus of their efforts is the children. It is this focus on the children that endangers the activities and relationships found in parent co-operatives, which in turn, foster adult personality development. Parents and teachers begin to sense the influence on their own attitudes and practices as they work together; establish an incorporated business; and plan and carry out the children’s program.

The philosophy of the parent co-operative movement is based on the basic principles of co-operation:

1st Principle: Voluntary and Open Membership

Co-operatives are voluntary organizations; open to all persons able to use their services and willing to accept the responsibilities of membership, without gender, social, racial, political, or religious discrimination.

2nd Principle: Democratic Member Control

In primary co-operatives, members have equal voting rights (one member, one vote) and co-operatives at other levels are organized in a democratic manner.

Sometimes co-operatives have become the vehicle for providing a service where a comparable does not exist (for example, a nursery school, daycare centre, kindergarten or school age daycare). Some offer a variation or an enriched alternative to the standard programs of the community; but in all cases, the realization of this power over decision, relating to their children encourages parents to participate in the process which in turn strengthens the group, bringing it ever closer to its goal.

3rd Principle: Member Economic Participation

Members contribute equitably to, and democratically control, the capital of their co-operative. At least part of that capital is usually the common property of the co-operative. They usually receive limited compensation, if any, on capital subscribed as a condition of membership. Members allocate surpluses for any or all of the following purposes:

- ✓ Developing the co-operative, possibly by setting up reserves, part of which at least would be indivisible
- ✓ Benefiting members in proportion to their transactions with the co-operative
- ✓ Supporting other activities approved by the membership

4th Principle: Autonomy and Independence

Co-operatives are autonomous, self-help organizations controlled by their members. If they enter into agreements with other organizations, including governments, or raise capital from external sources, they do so on terms that ensure democratic control by their members and maintain their co-operative autonomy.

5th Principle: Education, Training and Information

Co-operatives provide education and training for their members, elected representatives, managers, and employees so they can contribute effectively to the development of their co-operatives. They inform the general public - particularly young people and opinion leaders - about the nature and benefits of co-operation.

Parent involvement in the classroom as assistants has resulted in the practices of parent education, orientation and the production of parent participation handbooks. Years of experience and the expanded awareness of the values of parent participation have consolidated the commitment to help parents not just in their role as teacher's assistant, but also in their role as prime caregivers and educators of their children.

6th Principle: Co-operation Among Co-operatives

Co-operatives serve their members most effectively and strengthen the co-operative movement by working together through local, national, regional, and international structures.

7th Principle: Concern for Community

While focusing on member needs, co-operatives work for the sustainable development of their communities through policies accepted by their members.

“We believe that the parent co-operative is an especially good environment for the young child because it is created and maintained by people who trust one another... Joy in achievement to which all have contributed. Co-operation is the heartbeat of the parent co-operative nursery. Co-operation is love in action.”

Dr. Stephenson, Credo of Parent Co-operative Preschools International (PCPI)

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE PARENT CO-OPERATIVE

Development of Human Personality

- ✓ In Children by:
 - Learning to live, play and grow in ways developing respect for others' rights yet releasing to individual activity

- ✓ In Adults by:
 - Developing new skills and insights needed for carrying helpful guidance into homes and classrooms
 - Learning the meaning of and living the democratic way
 - Using community resources and sharing for the good of all
 - Acquiring the sense of belonging, accomplishment, and significance
 - Developing mutual trust
 - Extending concern for one child to all children in the group, community, country and world

Owning and Operating the Co-operative

- ✓ Adoption of the co-operative style of operation with emphasis on:
 - Shared responsibilities to provide a quality program for young children based on the belief in gains to be made through investing oneself along with others of like interest; the importance of parent participation to accomplish this task in the classroom
 - Shared responsibilities in controlling both input and outcome; the empowerment of parents to decide where and how to operate, designation of leadership and membership involvement

HISTORY OF THE PARENT CO-OPERATIVE MOVEMENT

Today... There are approximately 275 childcare/nursery school co-operatives in Ontario with 15,000 member families. They exist in both urban and rural locations, in a wide variety of premises: churches, community halls, apartments, recreation centers, elementary and secondary schools, and purpose-built facilities.

*Statistics updated from:

http://www.coopscanada.coop/assets/firefly/files/files/pdfs/ProvAndSectoralProfiles/Ontario_co-ops_jun07.pdf
(June 2007 report from Canadian Co-operative Association)

Canadian Origins...

Co-operatives started forming in the 1930s and 1940s in various areas of Ontario, British Columbia and Quebec.

The first co-operative in Ontario was Manor Road Co-op (a PCPC member!) in Toronto.

The movement spread though publications, conferences and affiliations with other organizations, etc.

WHAT HAS BEEN THE IMPACT OF THIS MOVEMENT ON THE FIELD OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION?

- ✓ *Philosophy of parent education*
 - Intervention programs (such as Head Start), improved the quality of childcare brought about through parents' decision-making in their centres, parents further accepting involvement later in their child's education, and developing alternative schools with parent participation in preschool and early grades, some with complete elementary school curriculum
- ✓ *Teacher education and professional development*
 - An on-going emphasis on quality leadership in the classroom influenced government standards
 - Experienced co-operative teachers became staff of government departments and early childhood education programs at community colleges
- ✓ *Parent education*
 - Parent education goes hand-in-hand with parent involvement – the development of grass-roots, in-house sessions for parents in a co-operative introduced many people to their first parent education experience
 - Local, regional and national workshops and conferences introduced parent education more broadly to the community at large
 - Recognition of the paramount role of parents in a child's life was increased
 - Development of parent resource centres as a focus for information on parenting and operating a co-operative
 - Involvement with toy libraries and the curriculum of play at home, in school and in the community
- ✓ *Non-profit administration*
 - Development of incorporated groups
 - Development of workshops and orientation for Board members
 - Leadership of councils in promoting leadership training (handbooks) and insurance packages
 - Recognition as trustworthy agencies to receive private grants
 - Recognition by the government of Ontario in policy development with grants for integration programs, resource centres, training programs and publications

WHAT OF THE FUTURE?

Given the history of adaptability of the parent co-operative movement, future forms of parent co-operatives will likely continue to reflect their response to society's needs.

Possible examples include:

- ✓ Lowering of the school entry age in education systems and closer relationships between childcare and education will emphasize the need for an advocacy role of parents to retain their rights in the care and education of their children

- ✓ As business and labour work toward the humanizing of the employer's approach to recognizing the demand of family life, new forms or parental leave could permit enhanced programs for parent participation in childcare

- ✓ Proliferation of parent-child resource centres with government support are an indication of opportunities to reach into homes and families with infants and toddlers, and families that need information and social contact

- ✓ Private, non-profit parent participating schools may continue to offer an alternative care or education program

- ✓ Increasing impact on the public school system through development of alternative parent participating programs in public schools and through the demonstration of a positive parent/school relationship

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT IN A PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

(Recommended Reading: Leadership Development, A Facilitator's Handbook by D. Bartalos and A. Meyer, PCPI, Indianapolis, 46250, 1985)

(Recommended Reading: Leader Effectiveness Training by T. Gordon, Bantam, New York, 1980)

(Recommended Reading: Lead-On! by Lawson et al., Impact Publishers, San Luis Obispo, 1982)

WHAT IS LEADERSHIP?

What is Leadership?

- ✓ An essential ingredient in the successful operation of any program
- ✓ A process in which one or more people influence others to work towards a common goal
- ✓ Effective leadership skills can be taught to anyone through observation, training, and practice

Who are the Leaders in a Program Where Parent Participation is a Component?

- ✓ All Board members
- ✓ Committee chairpersons
- ✓ Supervisor
- ✓ Teachers
- ✓ Anyone else carrying responsibility for the operation of the program, or for getting others to carry out the group's goals or objectives

What does the role of the leader include?

- ✓ Managing
- ✓ Organizing
- ✓ Initiating
- ✓ Planning
- ✓ Communicating
- ✓ Motivation
- ✓ Enabling
- ✓ Coaching
- ✓ Supporting
- ✓ Evaluating

'Being a leader doesn't make you one.' (Gordon, 1980)

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP

What Makes an Effective Leader?

- ✓ Good communication skills
- ✓ An understanding of human behaviour and motivation as well as group dynamics
- ✓ The ability to help the group identify common goals
- ✓ The ability to create conditions where people are willing to co-operate to achieve common goals
- ✓ The ability to maintain a balance between satisfying the needs of the organization, the needs of its members, and the leader's own needs
- ✓ The ability to delegate and share leadership

'The effective leader is the person who knows himself or herself, knows the people who work with him or her, and knows the situation, and is then able and willing to adapt leadership style to varying situations.' (Wilson, 1976)

What are Important Traits in Leaders?

Imaginative	Realistic	Motivated	Thoughtful	Enthusiastic
Respectful	Creative	Resourceful	Humorous	Inventive
Confident	Responsible	Assertive	Diplomatic	Reliable
Dedicated	Empathetic	Flexible	Energetic	Conscientious

STYLES OF LEADERSHIP

Leadership style is defined as the way a leader is perceived by the people he or she is trying to influence or lead.

A leader may think that they are very fair and supportive, but if their followers see them as biased or callous, it is their perception, not the leader's, that will determine their behaviour.

Leadership styles result from a combination of factors; their personality, skill, situation, the task at hand and the people being led.

Four Basic Leadership Styles

- ✓ Directing Style
 - This leader directs, gives instructions, and closely supervises as a task is carried out
 - Works best when there is a crisis or urgent decision needed
 - Used when the people carrying out the tasks are new and inexperienced but enthusiastic and committed

- ✓ Coaching Style
 - This leader instructs, closely supervises, explains decisions, asks for input, and praises progress
 - Used when people need supervision and direction because they are still inexperienced
 - Works best when people may have some competence but need praise to boost their confidence
 - Used when people need to be involved in decision-making to begin to develop their commitment

- ✓ Supporting Style
 - This leader facilitates, supports member efforts but lets them share in decision-making
 - Used when followers have knowledge and skills but are lacking confidence and/or motivation

- ✓ Delegating Style
 - This leader gives members responsibility for decision-making and problem solving
 - Used with people who are willing and able to work on their own with little supervision and support

There is no one leadership style that will work all the time,
and each style has its own time and place!

SHARED LEADERSHIP

Ideal Leadership in a Parent Participating Group...

Any group member can be considered a leader if they help the group work towards its goals. In a group that is functioning well, all group members contribute and influence other members of the group to work toward its goal. When this happens, we have what is called *shared leadership*.

Characteristics of Shared Leadership

- ✓ Each group member takes responsibility for his/her own participation
- ✓ Each member encourages others to work toward the group goals
- ✓ There is a maximum use of group resources (ideas, opinions, information and skills)
- ✓ There is an atmosphere of trust and confidence among the group
- ✓ Members experience an increase in positive feelings about the group and membership in it
- ✓ Members experience a high commitment level
- ✓ Productivity is enhanced
- ✓ Effective decision-making is obtained
- ✓ Higher quality programs and projects result because of increased member commitment

What is Organizational Climate?

Organizational Climate is how it feels to work in or belong to an organization. It can affect motivation, making the difference between a member being committed enough to give their very best or just doing the minimum.

Common Approaches to Leadership that are Problematic

- ✓ Boss - sees self as the maker of all significant decisions, excluding others from decision making
- ✓ Expert - a knower of all significant things, who tells, but doesn't ask for information or other people's input
- ✓ Doer – a doer of all significant things, who seems unwilling to involve others in tasks to be done because they 'can do it quicker themselves'; these leaders easily burn out, and when the person is gone, the program falls apart or the group has to start all over again
- ✓ Hero Martyr – a doer who has burned out, making themselves indispensable
- ✓ Abdicrat - a person who keeps the title without doing the job

The 'Enabler' style uses all of the other approaches but only as appropriate to the person, situation and time frame. Their main approach is to help others succeed in doing what they have asked them to do. They are a pleasure to work with and place emphasis on people as well as

programs. They believe everyone has gifts and talents, and helps those they lead to discover their skills and develop them while meeting goals.

COMMUNICATION

- ✓ Effective communication is important to everyone but especially important to someone in a leadership role
- ✓ Communication is successful when it passes from one person to another and the receiver clearly understands its intended message
- ✓ Recognition of barriers to successful communication will help to control and minimize their effect
- ✓ Formal communication within an organization takes many forms including: newsletters, meetings, bulletin boards, policy manuals, etc.
- ✓ Informal communication or the 'grapevine' is important - this information moves quickly and tends to be distorted, but effective leaders learn to cultivate this phenomenon and use it to benefit the organization

Listening Skills...

'God gave us two ears and one tongue so that we could listen twice as much as we talk.'
(Folk saying)

The Effective Listener...

- ✓ Listens to what others are really saying
- ✓ Tunes into the meaning behind the spoken words
- ✓ Removes distractions to facilitate concentration
- ✓ Sets aside their own opinions, attitudes and beliefs
- ✓ Is aware of cultural differences
- ✓ Is sensitive to body language
- ✓ Maintains a detached involvement

Active Listening can bring positive results. Its goals are empathy, acceptance, and problem-solving. One can be an active listener by providing continuous feedback, rewording, and identifying feeling behind the spoken words. Frequently when approached with a problem, we fall into the patterns of response that are, in fact, barriers to communication. Common barriers include:

- ✓ Ordering, directing and commanding ('you've got to do it...')
- ✓ Warning, admonishing and threatening ('if you don't do this...')
- ✓ Moralizing, preaching and imploring ('it's your responsibility to...')
- ✓ Advising and giving suggestions ('what I think you should do...')
- ✓ Lecturing, persuading with logic and arguing ('the facts are...')
- ✓ Judging, criticizing, disagreeing and blaming ('you are wrong')
- ✓ Praising, agreeing and buttering up ('you'll do well')
- ✓ Name-calling, ridiculing and shaming ('you're being unreasonable')
- ✓ Interpreting, analyzing and diagnosing ('what you really need is...')
- ✓ Reassuring, sympathizing and consoling ('it's not that bad')
- ✓ Probing, questioning and interrogating ('why do you think that?')
- ✓ Distracting, diverting and kidding ('this is just like the time when...')

<i>Passive Listening</i>	<i>Active Listening</i>
Silence	Continuous feedback
Acknowledgement	Rewording
Door openers	Identifying feeling behind the spoken words

Levelling is the ability to be direct, open and honest with others, clearly expressing thoughts and feelings, using words like ‘I’ and ‘my’. Many communication problems stem from someone making incorrect assumptions – it is critical to take the time to check out assumptions.

Writing needs to be clear and simple with features that attract the reader’s attention. Use well organized, short format with a direct style. Keep in mind who the reader is and what they want and need to know.

MOTIVATION

People volunteer for many reasons: to gain personal satisfaction, to feel needed and useful, to gain work experience, to build self confidence, to gain recognition and status and to use special knowledge and skills, etc.

There are three basic motivating factors behind human behaviour:

- ✓ The need for achievement... ‘achievers’
 - Achievers like to work to get things done; like to wrestle with problems and find solutions; like to take part in planning; are goal-oriented and have high standards; and, may prefer to work alone
- ✓ The need for affiliation... ‘affiliators’
 - Affiliators are concerned with relationships, feelings an belonging; want to be liked; dislike conflict and work to achieve consensus (smooth over conflict); display a lot of team spirit and like to work with people; and, are more interested in process than product
- ✓ The need to influence... ‘influencers’
 - Influencers like to be in charge and have impact and influence; think long term; understand the political aspects of the organization and its work; seek information and view it as critical to success; and, can work alone or with others and work to empower others

A group needs all types of motivators to function effectively – all are valuable players in the functioning of a childcare centre!

General Principles of Motivation...

People are more likely to be motivated to engage in the group’s activities if:

- ✓ The goals are clear
- ✓ There is a clear job description
- ✓ They are given an opportunity to participate in planning
- ✓ Efforts are made to provide resources and conditions that facilitate the carrying out of the job
- ✓ They feel they are listened to

- ✓ They receive praise and recognition for their participation

RECRUITMENT

Recruitment is Most Effective If...

- ✓ It is done by someone who is enthusiastic about the job to be done
- ✓ There is a clear job description including specifics
- ✓ It is a one-on-one, face-to-face situation rather than a blanket request
- ✓ The process includes efforts to get to know the person being recruited; find out what they like, their specific skills, expectations, etc.
- ✓ There is an appropriate match between person and a job to be done

Techniques to Avoid...

Warm Body Syndrome is putting anyone in the position without looking at appropriateness of the match.

Absentee Recruiting is electing or assigning jobs to people who are not present at the meeting.

Con Job is recruiting or downplaying the work to be done or the commitment required ('nothing to it' is commonly heard and it is dishonest).

'It's Your Turn' is assigning jobs in rotation so everyone serves in a given position regardless of ability, desire or skills.

Recruitment by Guilt or Fear predicts a dire outcome if the recruit doesn't take the job.

CONFLICT

Understanding conflict is important before you can deal with it effectively!

Conflict can be caused by differing needs or values, perceptions, assumptions, degrees of knowledge, expectations, unclear goals, unmet needs, poor organizational climate, and so on.

Conflict, when not managed, becomes destructive and...

- ✓ Diverts energy need for other activities
- ✓ Destroys morale
- ✓ Creates polarity
- ✓ Underlines differences in values

Conflict is constructive when it...

- ✓ Helps to clarify issues and brings them into the open
- ✓ Works towards a solution
- ✓ Involves people affected by the issues
- ✓ Facilitates communication
- ✓ Provides an outlet for expression of frustration, and built-up feelings
- ✓ Builds a cohesive group because members share in the conflict and its resolution
- ✓ Promotes personal growth and learning

Three steps to effectively deal with conflict...

- ✓ Define the situation, the facts, the aim or outcome (recognize and define)
- ✓ Search for alternatives and their implications (generate alternatives)
- ✓ Make a decision (choose a solution)

Strategies for communications that involve conflict...

- ✓ Avoid being judgemental
- ✓ Deal with present behaviour rather than past or potential injustices
- ✓ Pay attention to the non-verbal content of communication
- ✓ Use 'I' messages that describe behaviours, feelings and effects
- ✓ Practice strategic openness about feelings
- ✓ Choose words carefully
- ✓ Restate what the other party says
- ✓ Actively listen to the other party
- ✓ Use questions of clarification; avoid accusatory questions
- ✓ Break the interruptions habit by using silence and delayed response
- ✓ Do not fear to tell others that they are correct about something
- ✓ Avoid interpreting the motives of others
- ✓ Refrain from giving advice

MEETINGS

Why Have Meetings?

- ✓ To get a sense of the whole, to see how all the work being done fits together
- ✓ To compare notes
- ✓ To share information
- ✓ To be visible to each other
- ✓ To hear others' opinions
- ✓ To do group problem-solving
- ✓ To engage in group self-critique
- ✓ To develop consensus, resolve conflict
- ✓ To brainstorm, stimulate ideas

Public Speaking...

A preparation checklist for giving oral presentations:

- ✓ Be clear on what the topic is
- ✓ Know the audience
- ✓ Know what your objectives are
- ✓ Select material that is relevant, interesting and what the audience needs to know
- ✓ Organize your material with a beginning, middle, and ending; tell the audience what you're going to tell them (beginning), tell them (middle) and then tell them what you told them (summary)
- ✓ Prepare any audio-visual materials; check that it is all working before-hand
- ✓ Control nervousness
- ✓ Practice to refine your delivery

A checklist for giving presentations:

- ✓ Be positive - be yourself
- ✓ Get your audience's attention
- ✓ Being well prepared gives you confidence
- ✓ Have an appropriate opening for your speech; establish a rapport with the audience
- ✓ Avoid jokes, jargon and clichés
- ✓ Anecdotes are desirable as long as they are brief and relevant
- ✓ Avoid distracting mannerisms
- ✓ Maintain good eye contact with the audience – do not read notes
- ✓ Avoid using a lectern if possible
- ✓ When using visuals, face the audience, not the visuals; memorizing the content is not advised - use cues on cards
- ✓ If you are presenting new ideas or information, begin with something familiar or related
- ✓ Concentrate your attention on the audience and you'll be too busy to worry about yourself

Basic Communication Skills Required for Successful Meetings...

- ✓ Listening - a leader's role is...
 - To help the group listen to what is being said
 - To actively encourage listening
 - To summarize what has been said to ensure the group heard
- ✓ Supporting...
 - Being supportive in a group is not always easy since a frequent first reaction to change or new ideas is negative
- ✓ As a leader...
 - Assume that every idea has some value
 - Encourage more thinking so that a good idea doesn't end up being thrown out too soon

Preparing for a Meeting...

(*clarify the purpose and objectives for holding the meeting)

- ✓ Agenda
 - Assigning time allotments for each item – be prepared to be flexible or recommend an important item be tabled
 - Try to keep most meetings to a maximum of two hours
 - One or two small items at the beginning, other small items at the end of the agenda
 - Ask other members for their input into the agenda
 - Circulate the agenda in advance of the meeting
- ✓ Give adequate notice to those expected to attend
- ✓ Arrange for a space, speakers, equipment, refreshments, name tags, etc.

Running a Meeting...

- ✓ Start on time

- ✓ Establish group spirit by helping the group become acquainted and making comments that help them realize their connectedness
- ✓ Get them talking within the first few minutes so that they get used to the idea of participating
- ✓ Have an agenda visible; explain the goals of the meetings and negotiate regarding further items to be included
- ✓ Keep to the time allotments; if more time is needed for an item, plan another meeting, or defer other agenda items to the next meeting
- ✓ Leaders must be familiar with parliamentary procedures since they may have to be used, despite the fact that most group decisions in parent participating groups are probably by consensus; all financial matters not covered by the budget need to be supported by motions

CHILDREN'S PROGRAM IN A PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

(Recommended Reading: Parents and Children Learn Together by Katharine Whiteside Taylor, Columbia University Press, 1981)

(Recommended Reading: Young Children in Action by David Weikart, The High Scope Press, 1979)

The main goals in designing a children's program are to support and encourage the emotional, social, physical and intellectual development of each child; to provide opportunities for the child to make choices and decisions and to provide a setting that encourages spontaneity and enjoyment.

The children's programs in a parent participating centre takes on the added dimension of promoting the goals to the participating parents and have them accept and support them.

KEY ELEMENTS OF THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAM IN A PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

Play is the focus...

Why?

- ✓ Research in early childhood education points to the value of play in a child's learning
- ✓ Children learn by doing; from first-hand experiences
- ✓ Young children must first form concepts from first-hand experience before their thinking is to be sound
- ✓ Later, on the basis of first-hand experience, they can understand the reports of others or grasp generalizations
- ✓ Play gives preschool children many 'laboratory experiences'

How?

- ✓ The program content or curriculum is determined by this focus on a play-oriented, child centered philosophy
- ✓ Classroom planning will be determined to encourage play activities that are child-centered
- ✓ Scheduling of time

Interpreting the Value of Play to Parents...

Parents who come to the program without a clear understanding of and acceptance of the value of play need, through education and observation, to arrive at an appreciation of this philosophy and a support of it.

Why?

- ✓ The partnership of parents and teachers will be most effective if the parents understand the set-up of the classroom, the activities, the time frame and the reasoning for these things
- ✓ A true partnership results when all members support the program and all its aspects
- ✓ Parents will come to the program at various stages with respect to understanding and acceptance of the value of play
- ✓ On-going education will enhance appreciation for a play-oriented program

How?

The teacher can promote the value of play to parents in several ways:

- ✓ Orientation of parents through handbooks, parent education library, bulletin boards, newsletters, meetings, speakers
- ✓ Through in-service training such as modeling appropriate behaviour, discussion of what occurred during a parent's participation time, the drawing of parent's attention to a situation during observation in session

PLANNING THE PROGRAM AND CURRICULUM

(The Teacher's Role)

The word curriculum suggests a concern with intellectual aspects of development. The young child is a learner. He is curious. He observes. He asks questions. He investigates. He persists. He delights in activity and in mastery of problems in the environment. This is a period when a tremendous amount of basic information is being acquired. The program is planned to stimulate learning through play.

A good program will meet the child's needs by giving children...

- ✓ Encouragement to learn to work with a minimum of direction
- ✓ The time to play freely as long as they are interested in an activity
- ✓ A variety of materials and opportunities to play and work with
- ✓ Space to move about freely
- ✓ Encouragement to make mistakes without penalty, to be given the opportunity to explore and to produce individual variations in observation and response
- ✓ The opportunity to form a variety of relationships
- ✓ A consistent timetable and daily routine
- ✓ The opportunity to extend and organize their own questions and interests and to construct and create devices to stimulate first hand investigation

Play is the total of all the spontaneous, creative activities in which children choose to freely engage, making play the best preparation for further learning. It is through play that children can respond creatively to water, paint, building and construction materials, puzzles, music, books, etc. Children are given the opportunities to learn when they show an interest and readiness. Teachers and parents take advantage of the many opportunities children offer them and see that the children's experiences are extended to include all areas for learning in which they show an interest.

CLASSROOM PLANNING

The well-planned classroom needs...

- ✓ Space
 - For active children, free to move about
 - For a wide variety of materials and equipment

The arrangement of space for activities in large groups or alone is important because it affects everything the children do.

It affects:

- Their choices

- The ease with which they carry out their plan
 - The way they use materials
 - Their relationships with other people
 - The degree to which they discuss their work
- ✓ Well-defined work areas
- Materials in each area should be logically organized
 - Materials should be clearly labelled

There should be distinct work areas so children can see what their choices are and learn which unique sets of materials and work opportunities are available in each area.

- Each area should have storage space that is visible and accessible to the children
 - Work areas should be around the perimeter of the room, leaving the centre for movement from area to area or for group activities
- ✓ Labelling
- Children know where to put things away
 - Children know where things are when they need them without requiring help

Labels can be pictures. Pegboards can have outlines for items drawn on them. Art areas can have containers and bins with pictures or a sample in it.

- ✓ Choices
- Learning from play is accelerated when children are exposed to a wide variety of stimuli and have lots of time for spontaneous play
 - Children should have a choice of a variety of games and varied use of equipment and materials to develop muscular skills and co-ordination (large and small motor skills)
- ✓ Timetable
- A consistent timetable gives three and four year olds a specific way to understand time
 - Once a child has participated a number of times in a daily routine and has a name for each part, they can begin to understand classroom time as a series of predictable events

A consistent routine is a framework which frees the child from worrying about what is next. It allows the child to be less dependent on adults. The idea is that the largest segment of time be free play, allowing children time to 'develop' their play. Tidy-up time gives children the opportunity to be responsible for the materials they use and promotes pride in their classroom. The schedule should allow children to be relaxed and unhurried.

GUIDELINES FOR PARENT HELPERS

A parent participating program should be a secure, comfortable environment, where children can grow socially and intellectually. It should be a place where children can try out various ways of acting and interacting without fear of ridicule or neglect. The children need structure from which they can be free to choose and experiment. Parents need guidelines to help them promote the program's goals and ensure that the children enjoy all that the program has to offer.

- ✓ Adults need to support the children's actions and language
 - Children should be encouraged to communicate as they play; adults (without imposing), should talk to children about what they are doing and help them talk to each other; adults may use physical contact to support and acknowledge the children's efforts
- ✓ Adults can help the children learn to make choices for themselves
 - Sometimes children need help in making choices and decisions but adults should avoid doing things for the children that they are capable of doing themselves
- ✓ Adults should make suggestions or directions in a positive rather than negative manner
 - Use a tone of voice and choice of words that will help reassure the child and make them feel confident
- ✓ Adults should avoid making models at art centres for the children to copy
- ✓ Adults should avoid comparisons between children as a means to motivate
- ✓ Adults should give children choices only when they intend to leave the situation up to them
- ✓ Adults should always keep the children's health and safety as a primary concern

ORIENTING THE PARENT TO THE CLASSROOM

Each year teachers in parent participating programs must help new parents understand what happens in the setting where learning occurs but does not mirror the traditional classroom. Parents who are involved in the program see much more than parents who drop their children off each day. The program depends on these parents to assist in the classroom. They need to know what is happening and why, and what is expected of them.

Ideas for Orienting New Parents to a Parent Participating Program...

- ✓ Parents are asked to visit the program before enrolling their children; the teachers discuss program philosophy, program goals, policy guidelines, and the parent's obligations within the classroom and as a member of the group; parent observation of the program will answer questions and raise others; the teacher needs to be available to discuss these questions
- ✓ After registration, a parent meeting is planned for the incoming group of parents; parents have the opportunity to come together and begin to feel a part of the group; there is free

time to visit and informally discuss concerns and ideas; parents are given the handbook, which includes program philosophy, program goals, a year's calendar and suggestions for participating parents

- ✓ Before school begins in the fall, parents are encouraged to come for a workday - this workday will help parents to understand the set-up of the program, and its physical make-up, while they are cleaning and getting ready for the program to begin; the parents have a better idea of what material the program has and where things are kept
- ✓ Home visits are made by the teacher before school begins; these visits help to ease the child's transition from home to program by making the teacher a familiar face; it gives parents an opportunity to observe the teacher and child together and to ask specific questions about their child and the program; the parent begins to get to know the teacher – and they begin their partnership; teachers who know parent and children well can be more sensitive for their individual needs
- ✓ Monthly meetings ideally should be held in the program setting so that parents will understand references to specific duties and activity centres; these meetings help parents to participate more effectively in the classroom; they will prepare parents for the goals of the program; an explanation of what they will be doing and what the children will be doing
- ✓ Specific parent education meetings will focus on areas that will help parents in their relationships with the children; the teacher explains what is expected of parents and they also explain what behaviour is expected of the children and what their goals are, in terms of behaviour for each age group; these meetings are meant to enhance parents' understanding of child development and the program philosophy
- ✓ In-service discussion following a parent's participation or during the day's activities will help the parent assimilate his/her recent observations; informal discussion with the teacher can be invaluable for a parent who can relate information to a recent situation
- ✓ Orientation, in some sense, is a year-long endeavour - it may become necessary at some time to change some rules or make scheduling changes; weekly or monthly newsletters help maintain continual communication with the parents; these newsletters can include new routines in the schedule, program plans, upcoming field trips and other announcements

In accepting play as the heart of a program for young children, the teacher and group members realize that children learn best by doing. Everything about the children's program is based on this premise. The teacher promotes this philosophy and the program's goals to the parents who, on accepting it, join into a partnership with the teacher to provide a setting that meets these goals. Parents need to accept and support the value of play and the significance of the curriculum and classroom plan as a means of that end.

'Play is the way a child learns what no one can teach her.' – Unknown

SUGGESTIONS FOR PARTICIPATING ADULTS

In the Classroom...

- ✓ Please read your assigned group's timetable on the bulletin board, so you are familiar with their morning routine
- ✓ As children begin to arrive, be ready to give each one a warm welcome
- ✓ Adults should distribute themselves around the classroom so that the children are well supervised
- ✓ Check with the teacher as to where you are most needed
- ✓ If you are unsure about handling a particular child or situation, ask the teacher for help
- ✓ Your behaviour, more than words, shows children your real feelings - if you are relaxed and interested, this encourages children to become involved too; if your manner is abrupt or disapproving, a child can be 'turned off'
- ✓ Choose your words carefully - children don't need continual chatter!; if you're not sure what to say, don't say anything!; sometimes a smile tells far more than a long stream of sentences

Washroom...

- ✓ Help children wash and toilet, as needed
- ✓ A gentle reminder about these routines is all that is necessary

Snack Time...

- ✓ Enjoy this sociable time with the children - Eat! Talk to them! Listen to what they have to say

Rest Time...

- ✓ Help the teacher get children settled with a mat and book
- ✓ Encourage them to do things for themselves, but give help when needed, too
- ✓ If the teacher requests, read a story to a small group
- ✓ A quiet tone of voice, a gentle pat is very comforting to a fussy child

Yard Time...

- ✓ Watch the children carefully on all equipment - accidents can happen so easily!
- ✓ Remove clutter and stray equipment as it collects and is going unused
- ✓ Assist in yard clean-up with teacher and children

Going Home Time...

- ✓ Help children get their outside/additional clothes and belongings together
- ✓ Assist teachers in tidy-up of classroom

ASSESSING CHILDREN'S NEEDS THROUGH OBSERVATION

Observing children at play helps an adult discover a child's interests, his/her strengths and needs and how he/she sees himself and the world around him.

- ✓ Does the child play alone?
- ✓ Does the child play in groups or observe others?
- ✓ Does the child go to the same activities during free play each day?
- ✓ Is the child a follower or a leader?

- ✓ Does the child copy others or do things their own way?
- ✓ Has the child developed their large and small motor skills and hand/eye co-ordination?
- ✓ Is the child eager to attempt new challenges?
- ✓ Does the child find it hard to get involved in an activity?
- ✓ Is the child showing more preference for adult attention or attention of their peers?
- ✓ Does the child have a 'concern for others' or always wants their own way?
- ✓ Does the child have leadership qualities or are they a follower?

OPERATION AND ADMINISTRATION OF A PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

(Recommended Reading: Growing Co-operatively by M. Brachi, Toronto and District Parent Co-operative Preschool Corporation, Toronto, 1986)

(Recommended Reading: Parliamentary Procedures by the Lambton-Kent Preschool Council, London, 1981)

The operation of a parent participating organization requires that both teachers and parent administrators have a working knowledge of the mechanics that ensure the smooth running of the business aspect of the organization.

It is essential that all members of the Board and staff are aware of the administrative and operational structure of a parent participating group including government regulations, sound business practices, employee/employer relations, and health and safety regulations. It is the obligation of the Board and teachers to uphold the policies and bylaws governing the organization.

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF A PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

Non-profit parent participating groups vary according to need and objectives, as determined by their membership. While each group is unique, the operational model usually falls under one of three categories:

Group 1...

- ✓ Qualified ECE teacher/professional oversees the day-to-day operations of the centre as established by the parent group
- ✓ Parents provide staff-time duties which may include supervising, providing meals and/or snacks and general tidy up
- ✓ Parents are responsible, through an elected Board of Directors, for the administrative operation of the centre

Group 2...

- ✓ Qualified ECE teachers and Supervisor operate and implement the program
- ✓ Parent staff time on a limited basis and assist the smooth operation of the school with duties such as lunch, snack, general clean up and supervision
- ✓ Parents and teachers are jointly responsible for the administrative duties in the operation of the centre

Group 3...

- ✓ The administrative co-operative is run entirely by the Supervisor and qualified teachers
- ✓ Parent participation is limited to policy guidelines, administration, finances and general operation of the centre

As needs of the membership and community change, it is conceivable that the parent participating centre will evolve from one model to another according to size, membership and basic co-operative philosophy.

The basic administrative structure, common to all parent participating groups is the formation of the Board of Directors or Executive elected from the general membership.

The five key positions are:

- ✓ President
- ✓ Vice-President/Human Resources
- ✓ Secretary
- ✓ Treasurer
- ✓ Registrar

While each executive position has its own responsibilities, all directors' work together to ensure the smooth running of its business affairs. This would include having the authority to make decisions on immediate problems, acting on behalf of the membership during the summer months, and mediating staff grievances or concerns from parent members. The Board of Directors informs and makes recommendations to the general membership on policies and bylaws, student fee structure and the centre's budget.

GENERAL DUTIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE BOARD

President...

- ✓ Implements policies approved by the Board
- ✓ Works with the Supervisors/teachers on matters arising from the day-to-day operation of the centre
- ✓ Co-signs all documents and cheques
- ✓ Presides and plans all meetings
- ✓ Encourages group cohesion and parent participation
- ✓ Maintains written reports on centre's operational requirements

Vice-President/Human Resources...

- ✓ Substitutes for President during their absence
- ✓ Carries out special assignments as directed by the President
- ✓ Assists the President as required
- ✓ Handles all Human Resources issues (if the centre has a Human Resources officer, the Vice-President is not responsible for these issues)

Secretary...

- ✓ Records and presents all minutes of meetings
- ✓ Gives notice of all meetings
- ✓ Establishes and maintains correspondence and minute books, including bylaws, member's information package, contracts, etc.
- ✓ Establishes and maintains a book of motions
- ✓ Carries out assignments as directed by the President
- ✓ Co-signs documents and cheques

Treasurer...

- ✓ Prepares budgets for approval by the Board
- ✓ Co-signs cheques and documents

- ✓ Maintains accounting records to include: bank audit, salaries, taxes, benefits, receipts, acquisition of equipment, and resources etc.
- ✓ Collects, receives and disburses funds as required
- ✓ Prepares financial statement for fiscal year and financial report for each meeting
- ✓ Arranges for audit as required under incorporation

Registrar...

- ✓ Maintains membership and waiting lists
- ✓ Handles inquiries and describes school policies to prospective members through in-school visits, open houses and phone calls
- ✓ Receives and processes all registration and membership forms
- ✓ Promotes the school by planning publicity

Additional directors may be included as designated by the centre's bylaws to meet the needs of individual parent participating programs. Other centres may opt to assign these same responsibilities to Standing Committees. Regardless, these positions ensure full participation by all members. These positions may include:

Parent Liaison...

- ✓ Acts as liaison between Board of Directors and teacher
- ✓ Accepts all feedback from members and informs Board of Directors
- ✓ Assists in the evaluation of the teacher

Social Committee...

- ✓ Plans and provides for special activities for children and parents to include workshops, seasonal parties, and parent meetings

Equipment & Maintenance...

- ✓ Labels, repairs all toys and equipment
- ✓ Cleans and disinfects all toys on a regular basis
- ✓ Equips dress up centre, paint centre, etc.

Fundraising...

- ✓ With Board approval, organizes the membership on money making projects

Publicity...

- ✓ Publicizes all activities of the centre
- ✓ Keeps a supply of literature on hand which advertises the centre

Parent Education...

- ✓ In consultation with the Board, arranges for workshops, films, guest speakers
- ✓ Develops a library for use by the parents

* Other committees might include: Programming, Telephone, Transportation and Library.

ADMINISTRATIVE COMPONENTS

Administrative Components of a Non-profit, Parent Participating Group

INCORPORATION

Incorporation is vital to the parent participating centre.

Incorporation allows the parent participating centre to be a permanent, ongoing entity. It allows centres to:

- ✓ Apply for funding from the Ministry of Community and Social Services
- ✓ Contract, borrow, and hold real estate in its own name
- ✓ Simplify the method for renewal of the Day Nurseries license
- ✓ Exempt members from personal liability for debts and obligations
- ✓ Have an administrative structure through bylaws
- ✓ Join their local council

Parent participating centres are incorporated and regulated by the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations, Companies Service branch. Two avenues of incorporation are possible:

The Co-operative Corporations Act

(Centres use the term “co-operative” in their official name)

- ✓ No proxy voting is permitted
- ✓ A co-operative may be exempted from auditing if they have never issued securities and that at the end of a financial year has less than \$5,000 in capital and less than \$5,000 in assets
- ✓ Annual financial statements must show receipts and disbursements with comparative figures (this years and previous years) and include a balance sheet, indicating assets, liabilities with comparative figures; this Financial Statement must be kept on file and a copy is to be filed with the Form 1 – Initial Return/Notice of Change plus Form 1 – Ontario Corporation Schedule A to Financial Services Commission of Ontario
- ✓ ‘No gains clause’ required in bylaws to be eligible for funding by the Ministry of Community and Social Services and other organizations
- ✓ Filing fee lower than in Corporations Act Part III

Corporations Act, Part III

(Centre cannot use the work “co-operative” in their official name)

- ✓ Certified audit of financial records must be done annually and show the signature of two Board members
- ✓ Voting by proxy is not permitted by non-profit groups

- ✓ Financial report approved by Directors and membership at annual meeting is on permanent file and need not be sent to the Ministry of Consumer and Commercial Relations
- ✓ 'No gains clause' required for possible funding
- ✓ Filing fee higher than Co-operative Corporations Act

To maintain good corporate status in Ontario, centres must:

- ✓ Complete FORM 1 and mail to either the Ministry of Consumer & Commercial Relations or to Financial Services Commission of Ontario, within ten (10) days of any change of Directors or location
- ✓ Approve the Financial Report, dated and signed by two directors and sent to the membership ten (10) days prior to the Annual meeting
- ✓ Centres incorporated under the Corporations Act Part III must have a certified auditor examine books at fiscal year end
- ✓ Centres incorporated under the Co-operative Corporations Act require examinations of the books by a person knowledgeable in bookkeeping as long as records show less than \$5,000 in capital and less than \$5,000 in assets in any given year
- ✓ File income tax forms as required under tax laws

*Centres with charitable status must file additional tax forms as required by law.

CONSTITUTION

The Constitution or bylaws are drawn from the Letters Patent (Corporations Act Part III) or the Articles of Incorporation (Co-operative Corporations Act). They should include the following information:

- ✓ The centre's name and purpose
- ✓ Membership requirements
- ✓ Fees and other financial arrangements
- ✓ Board of Directors – positions, duties and how they are to be elected
- ✓ Committees, their functions and requirements
- ✓ Meetings, quorum, number required
- ✓ Amendments
- ✓ Staff
- ✓ Bonding
- ✓ Distribution of assets on dissolution
- ✓ Conflict of Interest
- ✓ Indemnification

SCHOOL POLICIES

In addition to the Constitution, the centre should have in place a set of centre policies/procedures and events listing the following topics:

- ✓ Centre objectives
- ✓ Admission and membership requirements (enrolment participation, responsibilities, fees, refunds, withdrawal policy)
- ✓ Health and safety regulations (accident procedure, fire drill, snack policy, discipline policy and medicine dispensing)
- ✓ Centre session (length of each daily session, number of sessions per week, number of programs, length of school year)
- ✓ Staff (professional development days, responsibilities)
- ✓ Voicing concerns (appropriate method)
- ✓ Participation responsibilities (assisting days, committees, meetings, fundraising, publicity)
- ✓ Calendar of events
- ✓ Facilities and centre's layout
- ✓ Schedule of daily activities and theme activities

MEETINGS

In accordance with good business practice, the parent participating group should hold two types of meetings:

- ✓ Executive or Board of Director meetings
- ✓ Membership meetings (general and annual)

Why have meetings?

- ✓ To inform and record finances, policies, etc.
- ✓ To adopt policy
- ✓ To uphold sound business practice
- ✓ To share ideas
- ✓ To set goals

A well run organized meeting will allow the general membership:

- ✓ Opportunities to become actively involved in the running of the centre
- ✓ To share in the decision making
- ✓ To acquire new knowledge
- ✓ To meet other members of the group

THE ANNUAL MEETING IS MANDATORY FOR ALL CORPORATIONS!

The constitution should outline the time of the annual meeting.

This is necessary to:

- ✓ Conform to the bylaws
- ✓ Present a financial statement or the audited statement as required
- ✓ Present reports by out-going executive
- ✓ Nominate and elect the new executive

- ✓ Ratify any amendments to the bylaws
- ✓ Inform the general membership what was done at other meetings

STAFF CONTRACTS

Staff contracts, written annually, will ensure that all members, as well as teachers have a clear understanding of expectations, responsibilities, salary and benefits.

Contracts and Employee handbooks should collectively contain the following:

- ✓ Terms of contract
- ✓ Probationary period
- ✓ Statutory holidays
- ✓ Designated holidays
- ✓ Vacation pay
- ✓ Additional leave
- ✓ Maternity leave
- ✓ Terms of salary: preparation time, sick leave, bereavement, deductions
- ✓ Benefits: liability insurance, workers compensation, professional development, health plan, bonding
- ✓ Hours worked
- ✓ Renewal
- ✓ Termination
- ✓ Duties and responsibilities
 - Planning and implementation of centre program
 - Instruction of parents in practical application of program
 - Keeping records on each child – schedule parent/teacher meetings as needed
 - Taking reasonable measures to uphold the regulations and standards of the Day Nurseries Act
 - Working closely with the Board and attend meetings as requested by the Board
 - Reporting to the Board any health and safety problems

The Board of Directors and the teacher/Supervisor should have a working knowledge of:

- Centre policies/procedures
- Staff contracts
- Insurance policy and liabilities
- Bylaws
- Rental agreement
- Government regulations: licensing, incorporation responsibilities, health and safety concerns

OPERATIONAL STRUCTURE OF THE PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

The partnership of teacher and parents is at the heart of any parent participating group. The teacher needs to recognize the value of parent participation in that group. The teacher must have the skills to teach children successfully as well as guide and work with adults. They must be open to new ideas and be able to facilitate change and grow with the group.

The teacher affirms the purpose of the centre and works in an environment where relationships are intense. The role of the teacher in a parent participating group differs from other early childhood educators in the following ways:

- The teacher is an employee who often supervises their employers in the program
- The teacher guides the employers' children in the program
- The teacher works with staff which may be made up of non-professional assistants
- The teacher needs to maintain flexibility because of the constant turnover in membership and therefore in classroom assistance
- The teacher shares the responsibilities of establishing policies and programming with parents

The parents in a parent participating group must be expected to take fiscal responsibility and administrative control of the centre. At the same time, the parents need to act as teachers' assistants in the classroom.

The administration and operational flow of the parent participating group is developed by the working knowledge of the Board of Directors and the teachers.

In a setting where responsibility is shared, it is imperative that all participants (parents, teachers and Board members) have some knowledge of the administrative and operational components of the group. Limitations and guidelines, both internal (bylaws, policies) and external (ministry regulations, licensing) require that administrators, both Directors and staff, understand the principles under which they must operate.

A centre, whose administrators recognize their obligations, and meet them, will provide a positive learning atmosphere for children, parents and teachers.

WORKING TOGETHER IN THE PROGRAM

(Recommended Reading: Parents and Children Learn Together by Katharine Whiteside Taylor, Columbia University Press, 1981)

‘All true learning is a co-operative process. Nowhere is this more evident than in a parent participating school, where parents, children and teacher all learn together’.
(Whiteside Taylor, 1981)

Most parents are avid learners, and they are in an ideal learning situation, as they raise their children. A unique value of parent participating groups is the opportunity for intensive learning that they make possible. Parents have no greater motivation than the desire to be and to do what is best for their children. The rewards of learning to deepen understanding and enjoyment between themselves and their children are very great. Learning to help is important, but the unique value of learning provided in a parent participating group is what parents take back into guiding and living with their children at home.

Learning how to successfully apply parenting skills gives parents confidence and self-respect. A teacher in a parent participating group is an individual who can provide a quality children’s program while still keeping an open mind to new ideas and learning opportunities. In this type of environment, shared learning for all participants is possible.

KEYS TO WORKING TOGETHER

- ✓ It is important to set standards and guidelines at the beginning of the year, in order to create an atmosphere of co-operation
- ✓ Communication, clear and precise, is paramount in any parent participating group
- ✓ Parents must understand and accept the programs goals
- ✓ Teachers need to understand and accept the value of parental input for the good of the group
- ✓ There are regular opportunities for all to raise, discuss, and resolve issues and new ideas

Everyone in a Co-operative Setting Has Responsibilities...

The Board of Directors (Administration) role...

- ✓ Being aware of the teacher’s program philosophy within accepted program guidelines
- ✓ Understand the regulations and laws governing non-profit parent participating groups
- ✓ Being open to the concerns and ideas of the general membership and the teacher
- ✓ Respect confidentiality

The Parent’s role...

- ✓ To accept and promote the program’s goals
- ✓ Further the goals of the program by clarifying any misunderstanding they might have
- ✓ Share any talents and gifts they may have that could enhance the children’s learning and enjoyment
- ✓ Fulfill their responsibilities to the group
- ✓ Model appropriate behaviour for other parents and children
- ✓ Make new parents feel welcome
- ✓ Make the experience in the group a positive one for all children and adults

The Teacher's role...

- ✓ To understand and accept the value of parents in the group and promote their positive involvement
- ✓ Give parents many opportunities to understand the stages of child development and ways of encouraging children
- ✓ Provide resources to parents who need encouragement or ask for information
- ✓ Make the transition from home to group setting as comfortable for the parent and their child as possible
- ✓ Model positive behaviour for parents
- ✓ Ensure that parents understand standards and guidelines for the program, from the beginning of their introduction to the program
- ✓ Make parents feel welcome and useful
- ✓ Make the experience a positive one for all children and adults

COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is vital to a parent participating group. Lines of communication must remain open between the Board of Directors and the teacher; parents and teacher; and Board of Directors and the parent body.

PROMOTING THE PARENT/TEACHER PARTNERSHIP

The teacher needs to orient and support the parents in the program. Each centre can develop its own approach to training a new parent for participation, but the program needs to be flexible enough that it can be adjusted annually, if required.

The Parent/Teacher partnership may be encouraged by...

- ✓ A series of planned visits to the group in session
 - New parents observe how the group generally functions, and specifically, how parents function in the setting; this visit provides an opportunity for discussion with parents and teachers
- ✓ An introductory workshop for parents before their participating begins
 - The specifics of participation are introduced, (i.e. how it works, how often or how much parents are needed, scheduling and the responsibility involved); the workshop can outline daily routines, adult responsibilities and provide a discussion about parents' reactions, their attitudes and parents' specific questions; parents have the opportunity to handle the materials offered to the children
- ✓ Activity cards or posters throughout the setting that outline for adults, the purposes of the activities, routines, and their responsibilities at each activity
 - These can be placed as a guide near the activity centre to assist parents working with the children; they should be placed at adult eye level in large, clear print

Example: BLOCK CENTRE

PURPOSE: The Child

- Develops large and small muscles

- Experiments with space, size and shape
- Learns to work with and share with others
- Has an opportunity to create, design and form
- Develops language skills
- Is experimenting with mathematical concepts such as halves, quarters, etc.

ROUTINE: Children may need guidance here if activity becomes unsafe. However, supervision should be casual and unobtrusive.

CLEAN-UP: Allow the children to leave their building in tact until the end of FREE PLAY. Encourage children to return blocks to shelves, helping and working together with them.

- ✓ Schedule cards which tell how to set up the activity area, when and where an assistant is needed, clean up and storage routines.
 - These cards can provide a useful aid in helping the parent feel comfortable in the group setting; any information will serve as a reminder to make them feel like a useful participant; as time progresses, adult reliance on these cards will diminish

- ✓ A demonstration class to ease parents into the program

This involves:

 - The oldest group of children in the organization (including children who are familiar with the routine and teachers)
 - New parents who meet at the beginning of the session for coffee, greeted by the teacher and encouraged to get acquainted with other parents
 - Parents observe the session and gather for discussion after awhile

- ✓ An Orientation Meeting should clarify many questions, concerns and issues

It should cover:

 - An introduction to the teacher, philosophy of education and program
 - School policies including snacks, siblings, field trips, *Day Nurseries Act* (and/or other regulations), Incorporations Act
 - Responsibilities of parents, teachers and Board
 - Tour of facilities to locate various areas, activities and exits
 - Behaviour management policies
 - Explanation of orientation kit for parents
 - Procedure for dealing with difficult situations, concerns or programs
 - Car pooling, babysitting and other arrangements
 - Public health concerns
 - Confidentiality

The Parent...

The benefits of parent involvement in the program are many. All parents come to the parent participating group with many gifts and talents. They often discover and develop new talents.

- ✓ Parents can enhance the program by sharing these talents and gifts, thus adding to the resources available to the children
- ✓ Teachers can ask parents to list their hobbies, work background, interests and contacts so that the group can use this information to plan programs (field trips, visitors) and enhance existing programs
- ✓ Parents in the setting improve adult supervision and assistance for children:
 - Teachers are freed up to work with the children while parents assist in clean/set up. (Teachers must take special care not to assign only clean/set up responsibilities to parents)
 - Parents need opportunities to work with the children individually and in small groups (when they feel comfortable doing this)
 - Small group activities are encouraged with more adults available
- ✓ Parents need to be trustworthy and dependable
 - Parents need to understand their responsibilities and act on them
- ✓ Parents help to create a warm, caring atmosphere for the children; the teachers and parents together can create this atmosphere by modeling for each other in speech and action
 - The tone of voice used by an adult helps a child feel secure and confident or afraid and guilty
 - Adults need to choose their words carefully; to give short, simple instructions in a positive, rather than negative way
 - Children need to be offered choices as a way of helping them make decisions
 - Adults should avoid making comparisons between children

WORKING TOGETHER IN THE PROGRAM

Parents and teachers working together in the program develop an increased sharing of human talents and resources. Together, they provide life-long learning and enrichment opportunities for all ages as well as building strong community and school relationships.

Mutual Support...

Parents and teachers:

- ✓ Support each other in the program
- ✓ Work together to resolve issues and concerns
- ✓ Support the children's development by understanding developmental stages and encouraging growth through the program's goals
- ✓ Make all participants in the program feel they are valuable, productive members of the group

PROBLEMS IN THE CLASSROOM

Different ideas abound in parent participating groups. Parents and teachers alike must understand each other's roles in the classroom and at meetings. The ability to handle criticism in a positive manner allows for effective growth and development of the program as well as the group.

Problems and concerns will still arise, despite preventative measures. It is important, as teachers and/or administrators, to be effective listeners and communicators. A system that allows all members to air their grievances is necessary for the smooth running of the parent participating group. All members should be informed about how their grievances and concerns will be handled.

Concerns can be handled by:

- ✓ Discussion with the President of the Board, or
 - ✓ By discussion with the teacher if the concern is regarding the program
 - ✓ Discussions between the President, the parent liaison and teacher (works for most issues)
 - ✓ Using a liaison for each session to the Board for a more personal link to the Board in order to discuss particular situations
-

Parent participating groups promote shared learning. Teachers set the tone of the centre through their approach and their program. Parents accept and support the goals of the program. Together, they acquire new skills that become the foundation for future growth and development of all. The children blossom under this partnership based on trust, co-operation and sharing.

Through planning and specific strategies, the teachers and Board administrators can implement a program that provides a comfortable, positive learning environment for parents, children and teachers.

Through education and communication, parents learn to support the philosophy of the program and to support the development of their children and themselves.

GROUP DEVELOPMENT IN A PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

(Recommended Reading: *Joining Together, Group Theory and Group Skills* (Third Edition) by David W. Johnson and Frank P. Johnson, Prentice Hall, NJ, 1987)

THEORIES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT

Group development is a process through which groups grow and develop. Group dynamics is another expression of this field. The study of groups is a recent field that resulted from concerted efforts to strengthen democracy by strengthening the groups that occur naturally in society. The field branched into two areas – social psychologists who concentrate on group discussion, group productivity, group attitude change and leadership and another movement that concentrates on methods for training leaders and group members in social skills.

What is a Group?

- ✓ A number of people or things together
- ✓ A number of people or things belonging or classed together
- ✓ A number of people or things that act as a unit

When people are required to interact with one another to reach a common goal, we have people acting as a unit. The goal of a cohesive group should be to have the members act collectively in order to accomplish what could not be achieved individually.

TYPES OF GROUPS

- ✓ Groups in a work situation
 - Formed mainly for accomplishing tasks, however, it is also important to consider individual needs and maintenance needs to most efficiently reach goals
- ✓ Therapy Groups
 - Formed mainly to meet the needs of the individual; maintenance needs must also be met for individuals to be comfortable; the task is the rehabilitation or support of the individual
- ✓ Volunteer Groups
 - Formed to accomplish tasks, but must meet maintenance needs and the needs of the individuals or else the motivation to stay will not be strong enough to maintain the group for any length of time

In the volunteer group it is vitally important to consider all level of needs – individual, maintenance and task, for the group to function smoothly.

Task refers to the set of activities performed to get the task done.

Maintenance is the set of activities performed to keep the group functioning to get the task done.

Individual refers to the individuals who are members of the group.

This description considers the group as a unit and the action described is the action of the group.

Another division of groups is into the process/product controversy.

Process-oriented people put emphasis on the group functions – is everyone being heard? How is everyone feeling?

Product-oriented advocates concentrate on getting the task accomplished. Products are the goal of the organization. The process is the way the goal is approached.

Often, the conflict over which is more important causes both sides to lose, because so much time is wasted in the process/product debate.

Another way of considering the group is the process that occurs individually within the group members. Group members move through three stages throughout the life of the group.

INCLUSION

CONTROL

ACCEPTANCE

Inclusion is the stage in which people ask themselves: ‘Where do I fit in here? What do I have to contribute? How much of myself should I commit, or divulge?’ The sooner people work through this stage and feel that they fit in, the sooner they can move on to the next stage.

Control is the stage when people try to analyze: ‘Who is in control here? What are the goals of the group? What are the behaviour norms? How will I be treated if I contradict these norms?’

Acceptance is the stage when people have opened up, have been listened to, have been appreciated. Their ideas are received and put into practice. They now feel like a valued member of the group.

This sequence can reverse as new issues or conflicts arise and the group may go through the series many times in the life of the group. However, it is at the acceptance stage that most members feel most satisfaction and tasks are efficiently accomplished.

WHY DO GROUPS FORM?

Sociologists tell us ‘*Formation of an adult’s identity may be strongly affected by membership in secondary or voluntary associations, groups that are based on special interests and are formally organized. ... Secondary Associations provide individuals with a sense of purpose by involving them in large social undertakings. Such associations extend the power of individuals to achieve common goals through collective action...*’ (Crysdale, 1973)

Groups form...

- ✓ To satisfy individual needs of inclusion, socialization and convenience
- ✓ To accomplish what could not be done individually

- ✓ Because of common interests, convenience, proximity

Because groups are made up of people with individual needs, meeting those needs first will greatly assist the effectiveness of the group.

Individual needs are...

- ✓ To be accepted
- ✓ To be included
- ✓ To be needed/wanted
- ✓ To be appreciated
- ✓ To feel comfortable
- ✓ To be listened to
- ✓ To have an opportunity to express concerns and feelings

Specific needs may vary as individuals are all different. However, if the general needs of the individual are met, they are more apt to feel comfortable enough to express their own specific needs. The group is less likely to become bogged down by hidden agendas (which are these unexpressed, unmet individual needs of the members that interfere with the accomplishment of the group goals/tasks).

THEORIES OF GROUP DEVELOPMENT APPLIED TO A PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

Why Join a Parent Participating Group?

The unique beauty of a parent participating group is that it is a support group for the most important job in the world - raising our future generation.

It has been shown that peer support groups like Alcoholics Anonymous, Weight Watchers and free from fear groups are most effective means for helping people. If the group is built on trust, caring, mutual respect and acceptance, then it will provide opportunity for growth, learning and achieving your group goals.

What do members of a parent participating group have in common?

- ✓ They have children of approximately the same age
- ✓ They desire a satisfactory educational experience for their child
- ✓ They are prepared to share their time and talents with the group

Groups That Form Within the Parent Participating Group...

- ✓ Primary group is the family
 - Couples and child/children
 - Single parent and child/children
 - Extended families and children
- ✓ Secondary groups begin with friendships
 - Parents become friends with other parents
 - Children develop friendships with other children

- ✓ Formal groups
 - Committees, organized to share the work load, accomplish tasks
 - Board of Directors share the task of operating the organization
 - Total membership - parents, children and teachers make a large loosely knit group

- ✓ Umbrella groups
 - Similar parent participating groups bring some of their parents and teachers together on an occasional basis
 - This umbrella group then forms its own group, separate from the individual groups

TECHNIQUES FOR EFFECTIVE GROUP PROCESSES

ESTABLISH GROUP GOALS

A goal is...

- ✓ An ideal to be achieved
- ✓ A desired point towards which people work
- ✓ A situation that people value

A group goal...

- ✓ Is the goal desired by a group of people
- ✓ Co-ordinates, energizes and guides the behaviour of members
- ✓ Directs, channels and motivates achievement if accepted by the group

To Achieve Group Goals...

- ✓ The goal must be decided by a process of interaction among members
- ✓ The goals must be clearly defined
- ✓ The goal must be broken into achievable tasks

Types of Group Goals...

- ✓ Long range or global goals – generally are lofty ideals worked toward but seldom achieved, usually decided first
- ✓ Immediate goals/tasks or objectives – these are usually of greater significance to members, are the building blocks for long term goals, are achievable and are easily recognized when achieved

Reasons for Goals...

- ✓ Guide for action
- ✓ Framework for deciding roles
- ✓ Basis on which conflicts can be resolved
- ✓ Motivation for group membership

Members will be committed to achieving goals if...

- ✓ The goal is desirable
- ✓ The goal is achievable
- ✓ The goal is challenging
- ✓ The goal's achievement is easily recognizable
- ✓ The goal's achievement will bring member satisfaction

- ✓ The goal's achievement produces a positive environment of members working together, in a cohesive manner
- ✓ The goal's setting resulted from input of members

**WHEN GROUP GOALS ARE ALSO MEETING INDIVIDUAL GOALS
THERE IS MORE MOTIVATION FOR ACTION!**

Setting Effective Goals...

- ✓ Long term goals should be reviewed and re-clarified regularly (at evaluation time or annual meeting time)
- ✓ New short term goals should also be set at these times
- ✓ Tasks necessary for accomplishing these goals can be developed and a timetable and plan of action devised
- ✓ When Board members reach the end of their term, it is time for evaluation, allowing the new Board to set their goals

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective interpersonal communication in a group situation is similar to dialogue, but more complex because when there are more than two in a group; people can dominate the group so that it appears that discussion is taking place. It is possible for people to withdraw, without being noticed.

The key to effective group interaction is clear communication.

Members can then...

- ✓ Achieve understanding
- ✓ Build trust
- ✓ Co-ordinate actions
- ✓ Plan strategies
- ✓ Evenly divide labour
- ✓ Resolve conflicts

When a group is co-operatively structured, communication is more apt to be open, honest and effective. The opposite occurs in competitively structured groups, defensiveness, withholding of information and uneasiness occur.

Types of Communication...

- ✓ One way – often no way to clarify meaning from the top down, sometimes going from one person to another, the message is distorted
- ✓ Two-way is the most satisfactory for goal-directed, problem-solving groups. It may appear to take longer, but it encourages participation by all members and is therefore more effective.

DECISION MAKING (A Group Process that Produces More Effective Decisions)

'Decision makers who do not listen have less information for making sound decisions.'
(Davis, 1985)

Reasons for group decision making...

- ✓ Produces higher quality decisions
- ✓ Increases member's allegiance to the group
- ✓ Increases member's commitment to implementing the decision

Group Decision Making is...

Useful When:

- ✓ Decision is new, unusual, and unprecedented
- ✓ No single individual has all information necessary to make the decision
- ✓ There is a high level of group skills and/or resources available
- ✓ The group is mature and interdependent
- ✓ Results of the decision affect many people

Not Useful When:

- ✓ Results do not require committed action by group members
- ✓ Results are so simple and routine or generally agreed upon
- ✓ Results are needed very quickly
- ✓ Results of the decision affect only a very few people

When people are part of a decision making process, they are much more committed to changing their attitudes and to abiding by the decision made.

In order to change people's behaviour and attitudes, it is most effective to involve them in group discussion leading to public commitment and perpetuate the belief that all members of the group support the new behaviours.

Drawbacks to Group Decision Making...

- ✓ It requires time to work through the process
- ✓ It requires an interest in participation by most group members
- ✓ It requires effort by all members to research/become familiar with the topic or issue

Techniques for Decision Making – 'Harnessing Creative Conflict'

- ✓ Controversy - the most important type of conflict for effective, high-quality decision making and creative problem solving
 - Usually necessary for members to attempt to reach a common position
 - It involves researching, gathering facts and formulating opinions and stating these opinions clearly
 - Involves listening to all sides, searching for most creative solutions, that is acceptable to both sides
 - Should take place in face-to-face confrontation in an atmosphere of openness where questions and discussions are encouraged
- ✓ Debate - this is a more structured setting where two groups present their differing positions and a third party decides which alternative to adopt

- Generally becomes a competition of who best presents their positions – but does not necessarily result in acceptance of the best quality decision
- ✓ Concurrence Seeking - discussion is inhibited to avoid disagreement
 - A quick compromise is sought to avoid arguing
 - Looks initially like a win/win situation but some members may not be convinced of the quality of the decision and therefore may have trouble committing to the result
 - Most decision-making groups act in this manner because it is quick and gives the appearance of being democratic
- ✓ Individualistic - occurs when isolated individuals decide on a course of action without consultation with other group members
 - Little discussion, if any, takes place
 - Members have no opportunity to put their position forward for consideration and/or to listen to opposing positions
 - Often the decision is reached by a majority vote and by virtue of the number of people on one side – the decision is made
 - Result may not be the most effective; many people will be dissatisfied and uncommitted to the result
 - Often used because it can be quickly carried out and the results are definite

HOW TO USE CONTROVERSY CONSTRUCTIVELY

Co-operation enhances creative controversy, whereas competition promotes destructive controversy.

To be Constructive...

- ✓ Communication must be accurate and open
- ✓ A supportive climate where group members feel safe enough to challenge each other's ideas must exist
- ✓ It must be valued as a positive method of achieving goals
- ✓ Feelings as well as ideas, must be expressed, listened to and accepted by all concerned
- ✓ Controversies must be defined as problems to be solved rather than 'win/lose' situations
- ✓ Emphasis on similarities of the two sides rather than their differences will promote more constructive controversy

Skills Required for Managing Controversy Constructively...

- ✓ Confirming and supporting the personal competence of others
- ✓ Effective listening
- ✓ Clarity of expression
- ✓ Ability to examine differences and move toward methods of integrating of these when they have been fully explored

Controversy is not often used because...

- ✓ Too few people understand controversy to be able to use it effectively

- ✓ Many people lack organizational skill and competency needed to stimulate controversy and see that it is managed constructively
- ✓ People are unfamiliar or uncomfortable with controversy because it appears to most people that conflict is bad

Conflict is not something to be avoided, rather something to be managed constructively!

'Not all executives are afraid of controversy. Alfred Sloan, a former chairman of General Motors, once stated at an executive meeting in which a major decision was being considered: 'I take it that we are all in complete agreement on the decision here... then I propose we postpone further discussion until our next meeting to give ourselves time to develop disagreement and perhaps gain understanding of what the decision is all about.' (Johnson, 1987)

In his book, The Different Drum – Community-Making and Peace, Scott Peck, describes community as 'a group of individuals who have learned how to communicate honestly with each other, whose relationships go deeper than their masks of composure, and who have developed some significant commitment...' This appears to be the ultimate in a cohesive well functioning group, and Peck sees 'community' as the answer to making our world a better place for all. What better goal for any group!

The key concepts of acceptance of individual differences, open honest communication and creative handling of controversy are also the goals that we may have for the children in our care.

PARENT EDUCATION IN THE PARENT PARTICIPATING GROUP

(Recommended Reading: Parent Education for Early Childhood by Christine Cataldo, Columbia University Press, 1987)

(Recommended Reading: 'Organizing the Delivery of Parent Education' in Parenting in a Multicultural Society by David Weikart and edited by Mario and R. Carden, Johns Hopkins Press, 1972)

CONTENT OF PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAMS

'The unique value of co-operatives is the opportunity for the intensive parent learning they make possible.' (Whiteside Taylor, 1981)

At the turn of the century when the implementations of the Child Welfare laws were introduced, a trend towards the education of parents also began. The middle class parent became involved in their children's education and out of the Parent-Teacher Association came parent study groups – both formal and informal.

However, during the sixties, the focus of parent education turned away from the middle class parent and towards the deprived family. This was particularly true in the United States, where there were large areas of poor families. As the programs for children like 'Head Start' developed, it became clear that you could not educate a child in isolation, and therefore, a great deal of time and effort was put into developing parent education programs.

In Canada, parent education is seen as a major component of any family agency. Most Children's Aid Societies, Children's Mental Health facilities and Boards of Education have very well developed parent education programs. In fact, the Boards of Education in Metro Toronto have large outreach departments that work towards forging a parent/teacher alliance.

Parent participating schools have always been a place that nurtures parents. However, it does not happen without a great deal of energy expended by the parents, teachers, and the Board. There must be a comprehensive program which determines:

- ✓ What parents need to know
- ✓ How to deliver the information
- ✓ An evaluation of the program to determine its success

A great deal of responsibility rests on the teacher to be open, supportive and to demonstrate to the parents in very concrete ways that they are valued and respected.

Parent Education in parent participating programs can take place in an ad hoc manner, the parent observing the teacher and other parents; or it can be a very formal process with study groups, speakers, etc.

The parent education program of the parent participation group must reflect the philosophy of the group and must be tailored to meet the needs of the parents who are currently enrolled in the centre. It is important to evaluate the parent education program. Communities change and the needs of parents change. The parent education program must respond to these changes.

Our first question with respect to organizing a parent education program would be – whose responsibility is it?

- ✓ In a parent participating group, the elected Board of Directors should set policy guidelines (for example, if the group has stated that it follows Adlerian principles, that the parent education program would reflect that policy)
- ✓ A committee of parents and staff should then use the policy guidelines to formulate a parent education program
- ✓ In deciding what should be the content of a parent education program, one should first examine what it is parents need to be educated about

There are six basic areas in which parents need skills (Cataldo, 1987)...

- ✓ Providing Basic Physical Care and Protection
 - This would include safety, nutrition, hygiene and proper supervision
- ✓ Modeling a Healthy Family Life
 - It is from parents that children develop their basic values and their self-esteem; this is done through family interactions and the role model that the parent presents
- ✓ Parental Management of Behaviour
 - Children need to learn socializing skills, self-control and self-discipline; the parents' interaction with the child must support the development of these skills
- ✓ Sensitive Attention to Emotional and Social Needs
 - This area includes:
 - The demonstration of affection
 - Supporting the development of problem solving and conflict resolution skills, helping the child make and keep friends and develop hobbies and interests
- ✓ Management of Activities and Education
 - The cognitive (intellectual development of children) will be determined by the informal and formal opportunities that the parents provide
- ✓ Family Use of Community Resources and Schools
 - In order for the child to benefit from all the resources available in the community, the parent must be aware of all the various community services; also the parent may have to act as an advocate if the resources are not available or if the resources are in short supply

WHAT PARENTS NEED TO KNOW IN GENERAL

- ✓ Nutrition and Safety
 - Often parents of young children need guidance around safety and health issues (for example, it is not enough to give information on proper restraining devices; but also what to do if your child refuses to buckle up; the same issue arises with

nutrition; not only must a parent be knowledgeable about health foods, but also about how to motivate a child to eat them)

- ✓ Communication and Building Relationships
 - Children learn about relationships by watching parents (and people outside the family) interact with one another; if a child witnesses their parent being caring and concerned about an elderly neighbour, the child will learn that caring for others is valued by the parent and will want to imitate this behaviour; parents need to know how their behaviour affects the development of their child's communication skills and values
- ✓ Integrating the Child into the Community
 - There are so many activities for young children - the parent participating program can provide the parent with information on the variety of activities that may be offered in the community; also, there should be guidelines on how to choose activities and how to match your child's needs with the activities
- ✓ When the Child Goes to School
 - If this is a first child, parents will want to know about what happens to their child after their current program is finished; introducing parents to the public school system and alternative educational systems should be a key component of the parent education program

HOW TO DETERMINE PARENT EDUCATION NEEDS

What Do The Parents of Your Centre Need to Know?

Our first assumption must be that parents do come with many skills. Parents have learned to parent from their own parents, from other family members and friends and acquaintances who have children. The goal of a good parent education program should be to provide assistance and opportunities for parents to achieve self-determined goals. (Weikart, 1972)

In order to know what these goals are, the committee must go to the parent members. Some will be group goals; for example, how to manage children's behaviour. Others may be individual goals such as how the parents can encourage the fine motor development of a four-year-old son.

The parent education needs of the parents may be determined by:

- ✓ Formal survey
- ✓ Formal parent/teacher interview
- ✓ Day-to-day interaction during a session of the program between the teacher and parent

Formal Survey...

The formal parent education survey asks the parents what topics they would like to see addressed. A list of topics might be supplied for tick off, leaving space for the parent to write in their own topics. A possible list might include:

- ✓ Toilet training
- ✓ Safe toys and furniture
- ✓ Nutrition

- ✓ How to get your child to eat
- ✓ Behaviour guidance
- ✓ How to choose a good kindergarten program
- ✓ What to look for when selecting extracurricular activities
- ✓ The Sandwich Generation – how to cope with young children and aging parents

The survey should ask how the parent would like to get this information.

Examples...

- ✓ Information Boards and Newsletters
- ✓ Parent Library
- ✓ Parent Study Groups
- ✓ A Formal Program done by a local Family Services Agency

Parent/Teacher Interview...

Preparation...

The premise of the parent/teacher interview should be the exchange of information on an equal basis. The teacher shares their experience about the child in the program and also their general knowledge and expertise about children in general. The parent brings the specific information about the child's family.

Both the teacher and the parent should prepare for the interview. The teacher should have notes on observations that they or a colleague have made on the child. If the teacher has concerns about the child's development, they should have a plan that has been developed by them or a colleague on how they are going to remediate the concern within the program. For example, if a child demonstrated a fine motor development delay, the teacher may have an individual program plan that defines goals for the child, the activities to meet the goal and a time frame. 'We will be able to cut corners of a 3" square of construction paper, by December 15th.' The teacher would also have some activities that the parent could do at home with the child.

The parent should also prepare for the interview by making a list of concerns about the program or their child's development.

- ✓ The teacher must maintain an open, accepting, and non-judgmental attitude; parents want their child to do well; the teacher must be sensitive to cultural diversity
- ✓ The teacher needs to provide a private setting
- ✓ If there is more than one teacher involved, they must be careful not to create a 'we' – 'they' atmosphere; instead, they should sit in an open posture facing the parents
- ✓ The teacher needs to actively listen and allow the parents to express their concerns and fears
- ✓ The teacher should maintain eye contact and give body cues that they are listening

- ✓ If the teacher is unsure about what the parent is saying; the parent should be asked for clarification
- ✓ If the teacher is not sure the parent understands, they should do a perception check by asking the parent to interpret the teacher's comments
- ✓ If a parent is angry about something, the teacher needs to listen to the feelings as well as the words; the teacher should not take a defensive attitude, but rather, paraphrase the parent's feelings and discuss what might be causing them
- ✓ Teachers and parents should look at problem solving as a joint activity; the teacher should avoid giving advice; the result should be a discussion of how the teacher and parents can work together to help the child
- ✓ The teacher should state the concerns in simple, direct language, using prepared notes; the teacher needs to share their plans to help the child in school; parents need to be asked if they have any suggestions that might improve the plan – the parent is an expert on their child; the teacher needs to ask and give practical suggestions on how parents might carry through those plans at home
- ✓ The teacher needs to avoid generalizations and comparisons - comments about other children should not slip into the conversation; there should not be comparisons with siblings or classmates
- ✓ The interview should end on a positive note - every child has abilities and strengths; the parents should leave with the impression that the teacher really cares about them and their child
- ✓ Communicating with parents whose first language is not English can be especially challenging
- ✓ The parents need to be reminded that if they want to talk again you will arrange another interview
- ✓ Teachers need to follow up on any decision (i.e. referrals) and get back to the parents as soon as possible

Often, after the completion of the centre's interviews, the teacher discovers a common concern among the parents, for example, language development. This information could be used for the parent education program.

Guidelines for Orienting 'English as a Second Language' Families to the E.C.E. Setting

- ✓ Know the parents; do some research on the culture and religion

- ✓ If English skills are limited, try to find interpreters for the initial meeting (often a relative will have a good command of the language); if there are large numbers of families from a particular language group, have written material translated
- ✓ Take the initiative to start the conversation – a parent may be afraid to ask questions
- ✓ Remember, the parent may view your role differently and feel intimidated
- ✓ The parent may feel uneasy about sending the child to your centre
- ✓ Take things slowly; don't make assumptions based on stereotypes
- ✓ Help parents get to know others in the program; remember, this parent may feel very isolated due to language barriers

WAYS TO PROMOTE PARENT EDUCATION

- ✓ *Newsletters...*
Every parent participating group should publish a newsletter giving information about the program. This could also be used to give parents some basic information about safety or new recipes promoting good nutrition; also age-appropriate activities that parents can do with their children.

The newsletters should have a 'short and snappy' style that allows readers to get information quickly. Contributions could come from a wide-range of people: the parent themselves, the parent Board, local experts and the teacher.

- ✓ *Parent Library...*
The parent education committee can purchase books that are relevant to parents and families and that are available to members to borrow. Journal and magazine articles can be put in folders for parents to read. The library should be handy to the drop off/pick up area for easy access. Parent's recommendations for new books should be encouraged.

There could be a book review study group where interested parents could read and discuss parent education books.

- ✓ *Parent Bulletin Boards...*
Parents with young children often have their time broken into small segments. A parent bulletin board with short articles for quick reading, can be placed near the pick up/drop off area and in other parts of the room; allowing the parents to read while waiting for the water table to empty, for example.

- ✓ *Speaker Nights...*
Every community has people who are experts in particular areas of family life. Many family service agencies will offer people to give presentations at little or no cost. If you base your speaker nights on the results of your survey, you should have reasonable attendance. Former parents and prospective parents could be invited to parent education

evenings. From time to time, the parent group may open their evenings to the community at large.

✓ *Parent Discussion Group...*

Parent discussion groups are a useful way to share the many talents and skills of the parents. These discussions could be held in the evening or during the day taking on a 'parent drop-in' style. Local libraries often have excellent parent education movies that could be used as a focal point for discussion.

✓ *Don't Forget Dad...*

A special effort should be made to include both parents in parent education activities and to plan special days for Dads.

One way of encouraging couples' participation is to offer reduced fees when both parents register for a parent education session. Father's Day could be held on a Saturday morning so that the child can show Dad the centre. This also provides the teacher with an informal opportunity to meet Dad.

✓ *Structured Classroom Observations...*

When parents are participating in the program, they are often absorbed with their role as duty parent and may miss some of the subtleties of their children's activities. In order to help point out the goals of the activity, perhaps a 'what to look for' could be clipped to the duty card. For example, if the parent is watching the dramatic play area, they could be instructed to watch for – parallel vs. co-operative play, problem solving, role play, etc.

FORMAL PARENTING PROGRAMS

As parent education became popular, so did the development of 'packaged parent education programs'. Often, local children's services or mutual health centres will offer to do a parent program for little or no cost, if you can guarantee them a certain number of participants. Current programs (Fine, 1980) for consideration are:

✓ *Haim Ginott's Caring, Communicating and Being Real*

This program is based on Ginott's books Between Parent and Child, and Between Parent and Teenager. The heart of Ginott's belief is that we must accept our feelings as parents. Also, that we must listen to our children and help them express their feelings. Ginott believes that children gain self-esteem through parents accepting their children as who they really are, rather than who they think they would like them to be.

✓ *Behaviour Modification*

Behaviour modification techniques are popular in clinical and educational settings. The basic principle is to identify behaviour and modify it by giving or not giving reinforcement. The most popular is the chart system. If a child is able to participate in an activity without bothering other children, the teacher or parent puts a star on the child's chart. The emphasis of the program is to get parents to notice acceptable behaviour and not focus on 'bad' behaviour with negative response.

Behaviour modification is often called civilized because it does not deal with feelings or what may be behind the behaviour. There is concern that the demands on parents to observe, record and reward children may be difficult for many parents.

✓ *Parent Effectiveness Training: P.E.T.*

The author of P.E.T. – Parent Effectiveness Training, Tom Gordon, believes that communication is the building block of a child/parent relationship and that parents block communication through non-productive verbal responses such as commanding, lecturing, blaming, etc. - P.E.T. is a very popular program.

Gordon believes that the key to communication is ‘active listening’, or listening to the non-verbal as well as the verbal message. In order to demonstrate to the child that you are listening, the parent must respond with understanding rather than being judgmental or giving advice.

Gordon also believes that parents should express their feelings and personal concerns in the situation. For example, if a child is jumping on the bed, the parent might say: ‘I get nervous when you jump off the bed’. Gordon believes that through ‘active listening’ and ‘I messages’ parents and children can understand each other’s point of view and together work out a solution.

✓ *Transactional Analysis – Promoting ‘OK-ness’*

This theory is based on the work of Eric Berne (his books include: I’m OK – You’re OK (Harris, 1969); Raising Kids OK (Barock and Keepers, 1976) and T.A. for Tots).

Basic Tenets of Transactional Analysis are:

- All personas are born ‘OK’ but may learn to feel ‘not OK’
- Each person has three parts to their personality: the parent, adult and child ego states
- The development process that people go through can lead to healthy or unhealthy personality organization
- People become self-aware and actively participate in facilitating their own personality development
- Children make decisions about themselves early in life (before age six) that influence their perceptions, beliefs and behaviours
- The giving and receiving of positive strokes (touching, caring, listening, complimenting, loving, etc.) is crucial for healthy personality development

✓ *Rudolph Dreikurs: Democracy and Adequacy*

Dreikurs is considered one of the pioneers of parent education (his theories are outlined in Children: The Challenge, Dreikurs and Soltz, 1964). He bases his theories on the work of Alfred Adler. Dreikurs stresses democracy in the home; that children are social equals. Dreikurs believes that parents can learn from one another by discussing problems with one another. The leader of the parent group acts as a facilitator and the leadership of the group is shared by the parent members. He believes that all behaviour has a goal and that misbehaviour is due to a misdirected goal. He believes in the concepts of natural and

logical consequences, avoiding power struggles, and using encouragement to build a child's self-esteem.

✓ *Systematic Training for Effective Parenting: S.T.E.P.*

This program, by Donald Dinkmeyer, is based on the work of his colleague Rudolph Dreikurs. It also incorporates some of Gordon's ideas on 'active listening' and sending 'I messages'

PREPARING THE PARENT FOR LIFE AFTER THE PARTICIPATING PROGRAM

Often, in a parent participating centre, parents can become so involved that they develop a very strong attachment to other parents and the teacher. A very important component of a parent education program should be to empower the parents to seek out and get other resources that their family may need.

The needs of the family will change as their children grow up, and it is important that parents recognize that they are their child's advocate. If their child is not getting proper help at school, it is the parent who must prepare the case and present it to the school. The parent participating group will teach them these skills, if they are encouraged to participate and their ideas and concerns are respected and acted upon.

A comprehensive parent education program will assist parents to gain confidence and to be less intimidated by professionals.

EVALUATING YOUR PARENT EDUCATION PROGRAM

In order to have confidence in your parent education program, it is important to evaluate it on a regular basis...

- ✓ In order to evaluate your parent education program, it is important to review your parent education goals
- ✓ Once the evaluation is completed, new goals should be set up for the following year
- ✓ Remember that parent turnover allows for the repetition of successful ideas

It is important to ask parents if they feel that their knowledge about parenting has increased due to the parent education program. If parents are asked to be specific, it will enable the successful ideas to be repeated and the unsuccessful ones to be removed.

GETTING IT ALL TOGETHER (AND KEEPING IT THAT WAY!) – AN OVERVIEW (Recommended Reading: Growing Co-operatively by M. Brachi, Toronto and District Parent Co-operative Preschool Corporation, Toronto, 1986)

THE IMPORTANCE OF ON-GOING EVALUATION

Getting It All Together...

What are the ‘secrets’ that imbue the parent participating movement with continuing success?

- ✓ There must be a basic believe in the value of a good early childhood group experience for children and,
- ✓ A conviction that it can be achieved though democratic process of co-operation, the sharing of resources and the purposeful efforts of parents, teachers and others participating
- ✓ Each must have faith in the other participants; have respect for their capabilities, and for their right to be heard
- ✓ There must be a willingness to learn and a desire to use that learning
- ✓ There must be open communication and a recognized system for addressing administrative and operational concerns

It is impossible to emphasize too much the importance of a good foundation, beginning with the formulation of agreed-upon, stated goals. These represent the ‘touchstone’ from which the group can ‘set its sights’ and to which it must return from time to time to assure that:

- ✓ The goals are valid for the changing needs of the members
- ✓ The goals are visible, used in decision making, adhered to, or changed as approved by the members
- ✓ There is an understanding of the goals and a re-affirmation of the commitment of the members

EVALUATION

‘How are we doing?’ ‘How can we improve?’

Evaluation is the process through which a group can obtain the answers to these important questions. It is not a static process but rather a system of ‘reading the signals’ as the day-to-day operation evolves. The informal comments of children, parent participants and teachers have important messages about the well-being of the group and the program.

An alert and sensitive Board member assigned to the role of communications chairperson, can keep a gentle finger on the pulse of the organization. This person may also be officially designated as the appropriate person through whom to broach matters of concern before frustrations become the subject of gossip or open conflict surfaces.

From time to time, it is prudent to undertake a more formal approach to evaluation. Four major areas where this should be considered are:

- ✓ The children’s program
- ✓ The parents’ program
- ✓ The administrative process
- ✓ The teacher’s performance

There are three key elements whenever evaluation is undertaken:

- ✓ The standard or established base against which the measurement is taken
- ✓ The process for gathering the facts
- ✓ The judgment that must be made

It is often the implication of the latter, the judgment aspect, that may deter a group from undertaking what may become a thorny issue. Anytime there is a measure of performance, the performers may feel threatened, their capabilities challenged. Evaluators are in a position of power. They need to have a positive approach, avoiding the adversarial context. All must see this as a practical approach to finding out how well the group is succeeding in reaching its goals. Evaluation should never be used to justify a pre-determined decision to sever a member, teacher or Board member.

When is this done?

- ✓ Whenever the group is initiated
- ✓ At least annually at the conclusion of the Board year, or at the start of a new Board
- ✓ Possibly more often if shorter term objectives have been established for a specific purpose (for example, implementing a plan for integration by a certain date)
- ✓ Whenever an evaluation process is involved
 - Teacher hiring/contract renewal
 - Children's program review
 - Administration review

How is this process achieved?

- ✓ In a new group organizers will need to:
 - Study the characteristics of the community and its activities
 - Hold discussions regarding the needs and desires of the potential members or client group
 - Assign a committee to formulate written goals to be presented to the group and ratified by the Board at its first official meeting
- ✓ In a continuing group, there should be a review of the goals as may be stated in the constitution
 - The Board reviews the goals in light of any current concerns or events impacting on the group's operation
 - The Board recommends any proposed changes to the membership for their discussion and approval
 - These changes are subject to any requirements under the group's incorporation papers
- ✓ Open communication is essential in this process and can be promoted through:
 - Questionnaires
 - Informal feedback through designated liaison persons
 - Meetings of committees or membership to initiate agenda items

EVALUATING THE CHILDREN'S PROGRAM

The Children's Program committee appointed by the Board is a logical facilitator for this process. Facilities and equipment as well as all aspects of the program content should be the subject of study beginning with a review of the goals and objectives of the program.

Information may be gathered from:

- ✓ Parents - verbal feedback; questionnaire
- ✓ Teachers - written report; discussion with the committee
- ✓ Consultant - a qualified, objective outsider to observe and report findings

The study may be general or focused on a particular area. Parents will need guidance in observational reporting and a well-planned questionnaire.

The committee should review all information obtained and make recommendations to the Board. When approved by the Board, these will be presented to the parent members for acceptance. The Board sees to the implementation of the recommendations and establishes a date for review of progress.

EVALUATING THE PARENT'S PROGRAM

Although many groups invest time and effort in the planning and implementation of their parent program, too few undertake the task of evaluating this aspect of their operation. Those that do often find their parent participation and parent learning have been greater than anticipated. On the other hand, any disappointed members need to have an outlet for their opinions, too.

All aspects of participation should be assessed: in class, on the Board or committees, fundraising, creating handbooks, driving in carpools, attending meetings, conferences, etc.

In addition, feedback is needed regarding planned education sessions: speakers, films, observation and discussion, etc. The assessment of the value of the parents' program may come as an overview of the activities of the year or at the conclusion of a session or series of sessions for specific learning experiences.

Requiring a written response to questions will prompt the participants to think seriously about the influence of speakers, discussions, films or guided observations organized on their behalf.

- ✓ Did they learn anything new?
- ✓ How well did the content and format hold their interest?
- ✓ What did they enjoy most in the program?
- ✓ What aspects left them dissatisfied?
- ✓ Would this program be of interest to future parent members?

A Parent Program committee appointed by the Board can function productively to honestly assess the value of participation policies and parent education projects.

Information may be obtained through:

- ✓ Parents
 - Evaluation forms
 - Informal discussion or telephone interview
- ✓ Teachers
 - Discussion with the committee
 - Written report

The committee reviews the facts obtained and reports with any recommendations to the Board. When approved, these are shared with the parent members. The Board oversees any new steps to be implemented and sets a date for review.

EVALUATING THE ADMINISTRATION

Any forthright Board should be ready to examine its own competence in order to re-affirm that appropriate attention is being paid to the business requirements of the operation and to meet the policies stated in their bylaws regarding evaluation.

There should be an initial review of the constitution, goals, policies and procedures. The membership should be polled for their response to the effectiveness of the business operation (for example, fees and fees collection, membership qualifications, performance of Board and committees, orientation of parents, publicity, fundraising, etc.).

Information may be gained through:

- ✓ Questionnaire
- ✓ Discussion at a business meeting
- ✓ Person-to-person

The Board then reviews the facts and with membership approval, introduces recommended changes.

EVALUATING THE TEACHER'S PERFORMANCE

It is recognized that teachers are the most significant factor in determining the quality of experiences that a child will have in any educational program. The effectiveness of a teacher's performance should be evaluated because:

- ✓ Parents need to know that the desired program is being accomplished under this teacher leadership
- ✓ Teachers need to be assisted in their efforts at professional development within their current employment
- ✓ It is essential to clarify the expectations of both parents and teachers
- ✓ Ways must be found to facilitate improvements or to accept limitations and set new objectives
- ✓ The job description may need to be revised to reflect the changing needs of the program
- ✓ There must be a basis for honouring pay increases and recognition of merit
- ✓ A basis is needed for decisions regarding re-hiring
- ✓ It makes it easier to negotiate in the event of complaints against the teacher
- ✓ There must be a clear basis for judgment to avoid potential charges of wrongful dismissal

How does the Board go about finding out whether the teacher is helping the group reach its goals? Because of the short-term involvement of parents on Boards, it is very important to have recorded statements regarding evaluations. Often teachers are the main continuing link between one year's operation and the next. Evaluations can be retained in confidential files and may be used by the incoming executive in working with a continuing staff.

In teacher evaluation, it is essential the process include not only an evaluation compiled by representatives of the Board, but also a self-evaluation by the teacher, using a common base for discussion. For the purpose of re-hiring (or dismissal), the base is the job description established at the time of hiring. If a more focused study is entailed (for example, looking at skills in a specialized program area), other information may also be pertinent.

Feedback from the parents can be obtained from questionnaires, open discussion sessions or direct communication with the teacher (as in parent-teacher interviews).

Feedback from the teacher could be on paper and/or in discussion with a teacher liaison Board member or committee. In these sessions, the parents or staff should each address the teacher's strengths and perceived weaknesses. Consideration must always be given to prevailing conditions that affect the program and teacher's performance. Recommendations for improvement or development flow from these discussions the mutual satisfaction of parents and teachers. Where agreement on how to proceed is not immediately forthcoming, the introduction of an expert, outside opinion may be useful. This usually entails an observational visit to the classroom and consultation with both teacher and Board representatives.

As non-profit, parent participating groups proceed through each year of operation, situations will arise that require a response if the group is to flourish and see its goals achieved. This response must respect and reflect the combined wishes of all the participants weighed in the light of prevailing conditions and pressures for change.

Whatever the area being evaluated, the facts gathered must be weighed and a decision agreed upon so that any action for improvement can be planned and implemented. When the problems are serious, it can be a time-consuming, soul-searching process that will test the best of Boards. On the average, established policies and procedures implemented by people dedicated to a fair, productive operation will carry the day.

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