

Watchung Cooperative Preschool

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*A community learning through play:
connecting parents, teachers and children*

"A Committed Community"

Many of the great things that happen at the Co-op are attributed to our wonderful community. With each year comes a new group of families who bring their unique blend of skills and talents to our school and make it a better place. As a result, we are always growing and changing for the better.

This year, we have been fortunate to have several members of our community lend their abilities to help us improve our public image. Folks at the Co-op know what a special place it is, but that message needed to be spread. This fall, volunteers were busy finalizing new marketing materials, including a brochure and a postcard. Both highlight our school's philosophy of learning through play and convey the important role parents play in a child's Co-op experience. These ideas are captured in our new motto: *A community learning through play: connecting parents, teachers and children*. The content on our website has been updated to reflect this message, and a major re-design of the site is in the works—again, all thanks to the dedicated members of our Co-op community.

Support has been equally robust on the fundraising front. Participation in our ShopRite gift card fundraiser has been strong and many families took advantage of the Original Works art fundraiser to showcase their children's artwork on some unique items. Plans are underway, too, for our annual cocktail party and silent auction fundraiser. Our largest fundraiser of the year, the night is a fun time out for the grownups, so look for more details to come soon!

Several other Co-op events are also coming up. We will soon come together as a community for our annual holiday party on December 5. Planned and organized by our families, the event will feature fun crafts, entertainment and a community service tie-in. It's always a favorite of the children!

Lastly, our Co-op Board will be running four open houses to introduce our school to prospective families. They will be December 7 and 12, January 7 and 16. Be sure to tell your friends to come check us out!

During this season of giving, the Co-op is fortunate to have our amazing families, who give so much to our children, to our school and to each other.

Maria Conte - President



Upcoming Events

- Dec. 5 Holiday Party, 10:30 AM
- Dec. 7, 12 Open House for Prospective Families, 10 AM – 11:30 AM
- Dec. 22 DPK Winter Solstice Party
- Dec. 23 Early Dismissal: @ 10:30 AM for Creative; @ 12:15 PM for DPK (no lunch)
- Dec. 24- Jan. 3 Closed for Holiday Break
- Jan. 4 School Reopens
- Jan. 7 Open House for Prospective Families, 10 AM – 11:30 AM
- Jan. 9 Family Job Cleanup Weekend
- Jan. 12 - 14 In-House Registration for 2016-2017 School Year
- Jan. 13 Board Meeting, 7:30 PM
- Jan. 16 Open House for Prospective Families, 10 AM – 11:30 AM
- Jan. 18 Closed for MLK Jr. Day
- Feb. 1 Fourth Tuition Payment Due
- Feb. 15 - 17 Closed for President's Day
- Feb. 27 Family Job Cleanup Weekend
- March 2 School-Wide Green Eggs and Ham Celebration
- March 12 School Pizza Party
- March 16 Board Meeting, 7:30 PM
- March 25 School Closed: Good Friday

"An Abundant Autumn"

Our school year is in full swing inside and outside of the classroom with activities, events and new programs that have strengthened and diversified our curriculum and community. Our annual ice cream social at Edgemont Park kicked off the year, followed by our Halloween parades and Thanksgiving Feast. I am happy to see friendships being formed among the families through playdates being scheduled and the sharing of parental tips.

Our literacy pilot program and partnership with Vicki Fantozzi, a professor at Manhattanville College, has enabled us to support literacy in the classroom using iPads through an online portfolio application—Seesaw—in a play-based early childhood setting. If you have not met Vicki, she can be found in our DPK classroom on Mondays and Fridays. She is instrumental in enabling the children to capture their learning experiences—reading, telling and acting out stories and playing—that are shared with each other and their families. The feedback from parents and caregivers has been positive: the children love collecting the data on the iPad and viewing the result in the classroom. Parents enjoy seeing their children's work and having the ability to share it family members near and far.

On a sad note, we said goodbye to a dear furry friend: Carlos the bunny. Carlos lived a long life at the Co-op (12 years) and was loved by many Co-op families. I like to believe that his long life was due to the warmth and love he received from some many Co-op friends. While his memory will not be forgotten, Anneliese and I are actively searching for a new bunny, and hope to introduce it to the students soon.

We participated in the first "Cocktails and Conversations" event at Sidecar at Fitzgerald's 1928 in Glen Ridge. The evening showcased local preschools to prospective parents, and enabled us to spread the word about our cherished school to nearly 100 attendees. Thank you to everyone who participated in the Original Works fundraiser. Your orders should arrive by December 15.

I look forward to seeing many of our Co-op families at our holiday party on December 5!

**Christi Porter Johnson - Director/Lead Teacher,
Discovery Pre-K**

Congratulations to Elaine Paruta on becoming a grandmother! Best wishes on the upcoming birth of her second granddaughter in January.

Special thanks to the following individuals for their hard work:

- ❖ Kornelija Jurishikj (Ines' mom) for single handedly cleaning our entire school during clean-up weekend.
- ❖ The Regal family: Firefighter Russ Regal (GiGi's dad) taught our students so much about fire safety.
- ❖ Payal and Nilesh Kansagra (Zain's parents) for talking to the DPK children about staying healthy.
- ❖ Tricia Perez, Maria Conte and Allyssa Tzavlakis for representing Watchung Co-op among prospective parents at the Conversations and Cocktails event.
- ❖ Rob and Maria Conte for designing and printing the new brochure and postcard.
- ❖ Joanne Gallucci Horowitz for our brochure and postcard copy and project management.
- ❖ Sandy Cangemi (former Co-op parent) for working on the design of the brochure and postcard.

Discovery Pre-K (DPK)

“Pretending + exploring + playing = learning!”

“Logic will get you from A to Z; imagination will get you everywhere.”

— Albert Einstein

In the DPK classroom, imaginations are in high gear, fueling play-based scenarios and helping the children re-create real scenarios. A trip to Brookhollow Farm transformed the dramatic play kitchen into a farm stand and hayride, complete with child-created rules. One rule: “Do not go on the hayride without a ticket!”

After a visit from dentist Dr. Jessica Joseph, the farm quickly changed into a dentist office. The children gleefully counted, checked and cleaned the dolls’ teeth. But they gravely reported that those dolls also had “a lot of blood” and broken bones, so the dentist office became a doctor’s office. Luckily, Zain’s parents Payal (a pediatrician) and Nilesh (an emergency doctor) talked to the class about visiting the doctor and staying healthy.

We’re anticipating another makeover in the dramatic play center soon after Gigi’s parents, Russ & Ava, talked to the children about fire safety and Russ, a firefighter, revealed his firefighter gear.

From pretend to reality, the children are exploring, creating and learning something new every day. Our participation in the literacy research project with Manhattanville College professor Vicki Fantozzi, has enabled us to “explore the ways children can use an iPad to expand and practice their early literacy skills” in our play-based program. They have been able to document their classroom-created work, create stories and recipes, retell picture book stories and act out their own and others’ stories. The students are closely involved in the process, from selecting the colors of the text, to taking photos of their work, to creating their own language-rich recordings, which we have shared online with DPK parents. This work continues to evolve along with the students. And for that we are thankful!

Anneliese Scherfen - Discovery Pre-K AM/PM Teacher





Creative Play

“Making strides...step by step”

What great strides we've made in the Creative Class! The children now walk into class, hang up their coats and get straight to work. Play, that is! We had a few rocky weeks in the beginning, but they've made the transition to school and have separated from their grownups. As Devon told me, "It's okay to cry", and it is. Thank you to our staff and parents for their patience and their caring gestures which helped the children. A hug goes a long way in this class!

Now that we've adjusted to our class routine we will be working on impulse control. While standing in line and sitting for short periods of time can be a challenge, we have no issues with creating art and learning new songs. The students were the most attentive during our visit from Fireman Russ. They listened intently throughout the entire presentation, especially when he put on his gear. So, if you happen to hear Charlie shout, "It's an emergency!" don't be alarmed. Either we are reading *Firehouse!*, by Mark Teague, or the children are working together to put out a pretend fire!

We look forward to observing the continued growth and development of your children for the remainder of the year!

Marianne Robertson, Creative Play Teacher



“Co-oping Corner”



Joanne Horowitz and Sienna

“Are you the Co-op Mom today?”

“No, not today.” “Awe!” “Who is it?”

“I don’t know. You’ll find out when we get to school.”

This is a recent conversation between my daughter, Sienna, and me. At three and a half years old, she is keenly aware of the value of having her mom in her classroom. Why wouldn’t she? There’s the excitement leading up to me being there. She chooses the snack. She tells Dad the night before. “Guess what, Dad?” “Mom is going to be the Co-op Mom tomorrow.” She picks out an extra special outfit to wear. Sometimes she brings along a book or CD to share. And while we’re in the car, she tells me she wants to sit on my lap during circle time.

Once we’re in the classroom, we both find it hard to contain our enthusiasm of playing and learning together. She directs me to a variety of activities—from attending to the patients in the doctor’s office to helping her with needlepoint. At circle time I say good morning to the child sitting next to me; sometimes in another language.

After Ms. Anneliese reads “Leonardo, the Terrible Monster” we share what makes us scared. I don’t like slimy, gooey things. We talk about what friends do and what makes a good friend. Jude thinks “monsters” make good friends. Sophia’s friends “give hugs.” Sienna said they “kiss and hug each other.” The children think they’re singing, playing games and having fun. I know there’s lots of learning being had.

Every time I marvel at how the children explore, create, participate and follow instructions all with the guidance and support of their teachers and assistants. Most recently I enjoyed watching them use Seesaw as a tool to tell a story, create art or interact with their classmates. And I saw a surge in confidence when they watched their creations come to life on the iPad. Zachary shared his Seesaw story with me with such pride: “by Zachary!”

The co-oping experience. It’s a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity. I’m grateful for the educators at the Watchung Co-op for enabling Sienna and me to benefit from it.