

# Watchung Cooperative Preschool Parent Handbook



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## ***ABOUT THE WATCHUNG CO-OP***

### ***Philosophy***

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

### ***How Our Co-op Works***

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

*In the classroom:* Each class is taught by a caring, experienced teacher certified in early childhood education, along with an experienced teacher's assistant. Parents take turns assisting, or co-oping, in their child's classroom. For more about co-oping, see **Pages 9 to 11**.

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

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

### ***Advantages of a Co-op Preschool Education***

Your regular participation in the classroom enables your child to make a more gradual transition from a home-centered life to a school-centered life, and may ease separation anxieties. Time spent in the classroom also gives you a natural opportunity to observe your child at school. You will understand what and how your child is learning, and will see first-hand how your child reaches out to classmates and adults.

Working side-by-side with the Co-op's experienced staff is also a very practical learning experience for you as a parent.

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

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

### ***History of the Watchung Co-op***

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

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

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

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

The way the Co-op was run then was similar to the way it's run today. An executive board of school parents administered the school. But the early board also included delegates selected by the church, because the school was then a branch of the Watchung Congregational Church's youth ministry. The school was financially self-supporting, however, and determined its own policies.

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

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

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

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

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

A fire at the church in the mid-'70s marked a turning point for the school. After a transitional period, the Watchung Congregational Church dissolved; many of its members joined the Union Congregational Church (where Betty Bailey later served as an associate pastor). Meanwhile, the nursery school found a new home a few miles

north at Mount Hebron and Valley Roads, in the Montclair Heights Reformed Church. The Watchung Cooperative Preschool ceased to have a church affiliation, and continues to be a nonsectarian institution.

Through the '80s, '90s and 2000's, the Co-op continued its mission of introducing young children to the school experience in a positive, nurturing way, with an emphasis on parental involvement. Our current director, Christi Porter-Johnson, in addition to being a certified early childhood teacher, is a former Co-op parent.

In the second decade of the new millennium, the Watchung Cooperative Preschool looks forward to helping more children see learning as a wonderful new adventure. In 2014, the Coop moved to its new home at the First United Methodist Church of Montclair, just off of Bloomfield Avenue on North Fullerton Avenue.

In the coming years, the Co-op will continue to evolve, because its identity remains intertwined with the goals and dreams of its families. "The school is not a finished product," wrote its governing board in the 1960s. "It grows and changes with each new group of children and parents who shape its present and build its future."

*DID YOU KNOW..*

*Today, the Watchung Coop is housed in the First United Methodist Church at 24 North Fullerton Avenue in downtown Montclair. The cornerstone of this church was laid in 1902 to replace a stately wooden structure, which had been the church's home since 1879. The new picturesque stone church was dedicated on October 23, 1903. The building was designed by the firm of Van Vleck & Goldsmith in the Late Gothic Revival style. This beautiful church was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.*

*The First United Methodist Church has a long and pivotal history in Montclair. Formerly known as the Montclair Methodist Episcopal Church, they erected the very first church building in Montclair, which was completed in November 1836 on a lot on Bloomfield Avenue east of the Erie-Lackawana Station.*

***SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROCEDURES***

***Behavior - Discipline Statement***

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

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

***Behavior - Disruptive Behavior Policy***

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

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

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

***Behavior - Expulsion Policy***

Unfortunately, there are sometimes reasons we have to expel a child from our program either on a short term or permanent basis. We want you to know we will do everything possible to work with the family of

the child(ren) in order to prevent this policy from being enforced. The following are reasons we may have to expel or suspend a child from this center:

Immediate Causes for Expulsion

- The child is at risk of causing serious injury to other children or himself/herself.
- Parent threatens physical or intimidating actions toward staff members.
- Parent exhibits verbal abuse to staff in front of enrolled children.

Parental Actions for Child's Expulsion

- Failure to pay/habitual lateness in payments
- Failure to complete required forms including child's immunization records.
- Habitual tardiness when picking up your child.
- Verbal abuse to staff.
- Other (at the Director's discretion)

Child's Actions for Expulsion

- Failure of child to adjust after a reasonable amount of time.
- Uncontrollable tantrums/angry outbursts.
- Ongoing physical or verbal abuse to staff or other children.
- Excessive biting.
- Other (at the Director's discretion)

Schedule of Expulsion

- If after the remedial actions above have not worked, the child's parent/guardian will be advised verbally and in writing about the child's or parent's behavior warranting an expulsion. An expulsion action is meant to be a period of time so that the parent/guardian may work on the child's behavior or to come to an agreement with the center.
- The parent/guardian will be informed regarding the length of the expulsion period.
- The parent/guardian will be informed about the expected behavioral changes required in order for the child or parent to return to the center.

- The parent/guardian will be given a specific expulsion date that allows the parent sufficient time to seek alternate child care (approximately one to two weeks notice depending on risk to other children's welfare or safety).
- Failure of the child/parent to satisfy the terms of the plan may result in permanent expulsion from the center.

A Child Will Not Be Expelled

- If a child's parent(s):
  - Made a complaint to the Office of Licensing regarding a center's alleged violations of the licensing requirements.
  - Reported abuse or neglect occurring at the center.
  - Questioned the center regarding policies and procedures.
- Without giving the parent sufficient time to make other child care arrangements.

Proactive Actions That Can Be Taken in Order to Prevent Expulsion

- Staff will try to redirect child from negative behavior.
- Staff will reassess classroom environment, appropriate of activities, supervision.
- Staff will always use positive methods and language while disciplining children.
- Staff will praise appropriate behaviors.
- Staff will consistently apply consequences for rules.
- Child will be given verbal warnings.
- Child will be given time to regain control.
- Child's disruptive behavior will be documented and maintained in confidentiality.
- Parent/guardian will be notified verbally.
- Parent/guardian will be given written copies of the disruptive behaviors that might lead to expulsion.
- The director, classroom staff, and parent/guardian will have a conference(s) to discuss how to promote positive behaviors.
- The parent will be given literature or other resources regarding methods of improving behavior.
- Recommendation of evaluation by professional consultation on premises.

- Recommendation of evaluation by local school district child study team.

***Birthdays – Celebrating in the Classroom***

Birthdays may be celebrated at snack time. Many parents try to co-op the day that they will be celebrating their child's birthday. If that is not possible and you would like your child to celebrate in the classroom, contact the co-oping parent to coordinate. Parents may bring in a special snack such as cupcakes, ice cream, or cookies as well as birthday cups and napkins. It is not necessary to bring in balloons or favors.

***Birthdays – Tradition of Giving***

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

***Board Positions***

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

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

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

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

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

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

*Fundraising* – Coordinates and implements all fundraising events.

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

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

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

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

**Calendar**

Our school calendar will generally follow the calendar set by the Montclair public schools, with some exceptions made at the discretion of the Director and Executive Board. Please refer to the calendar included in the enrolment packet and/or the calendar posted on the school website.

**Child Abuse / Neglect Policy**

Special Requirements to Prevent Child Abuse and/or Neglect

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

Inappropriate Staff Behaviors Toward Children:

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

**Church Property**

Our school rents space from the First United Methodist Church of Montclair. (We have no religious affiliation with them.) We strive to be considerate of our landlord and respectful of our lease obligations.

Please:

- Keep the children out of the flower beds and trees at all times;
- Encourage children to enjoy the flowers, but never pick them;
- Do not enter non-school related spaces in the building.

**Classroom Cleaning**

Parents must clean the classroom on a daily basis. A cleaning services comes into the school twice a month to clean the school. When the water tables are in use, the co-oping parent must wipe down the water table prior to use and after emptying. A Clorox wipe must be used.

**Clothing**

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

***Clothing - continued***

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

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

***Confidentiality Policy***

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

***Diapering***

Diapering is only done in designated areas. Parents must provide their own supplies. Diapers will be changed by staff if they are soiled (bowel movement), if they are fully wet, or as otherwise directed by parents. Area must be cleaned before and after use with Clorox wipes. Used diapers must be bagged and disposed of in the proper garbage receptacle.

***Emergency Procedures – Accidents***

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

***Emergency Procedures – Unauthorized Persons in Building***

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

***Emergency Procedures - Failure to Pick up Child by School Closing/ Late Pick-up:***

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

1. The child shall be supervised at all times;
2. Every effort shall be made to contact persons authorized to pick child up;
3. If arrangement cannot be made to return child to parents or other authorized person, the staff shall seek assistance from the NJ Division of Child Protection and Permanency (DCPP formerly the Division of Youth and Family Services or DYFS) Child Abuse Hot Line at 1-877-NJ-ABUSE or 1-877-652-2873. Local police may also be called.

Additionally, at the discretion of the School Board, caregivers who are habitually late picking up their child will be charged a late fee. A fee of \$10.00 will be charged for the first 10 minutes and \$1.00 per minute will be charged for every minute thereafter. The time will be determined by the clock in the classroom. The Board may also suspend families for late pick-up.

***Emergencies – Fire/Emergency Exit Plan***

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

- children will be led from the classroom in an orderly fashion with one adult at the head of the group and one adult at the rear;
- the teacher will take a class roster with emergency telephone numbers to check that all children are accounted for and to call parents/guardians in the event that the group will not be returning to the classroom;
- the group will gather at the designated meeting area: the far (northwest) corner of North Fullerton Avenue and Munn Street;
- the last adult out of each classroom will turn off lights and close doors;
- the group will remain in the designated meeting place and await further instructions from the fire marshal or other authority;
- one adult will call 911 from a phone outside the school building (by cellular phone)

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



***Enrollment Policies***

Statement of Inclusion

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

Special Needs Policy

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

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

***Field Trips and In-Class Presentations***

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

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

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

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

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

***Handwashing***

Parents must wash hands before entering the class and before serving snacks and after having contact with any bodily fluids and after having any contact with animals.

***Health: Illnesses, Contagious Diseases, Other Considerations***

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

**Health: Illnesses, Contagious Diseases, Other Considerations - Continued**

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

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

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

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

- |                              |                   |
|------------------------------|-------------------|
| - chicken pox                | - hepatitis A     |
| - diphtheria                 | - impetigo        |
| - German measles (rubella)   | - influenza (flu) |
| - giardia lamblia (parasite) | - lice            |
| - haemophilus influenza      | - measles         |

**Contagious Diseases - Continued:**

- |                              |   |
|------------------------------|---|
| - meningococcal meningitis   | - small pox                               |
| - mumps                      | - staphylococcal disease                  |
| - pink eye (conjunctivitis)  | - strep throat (streptococcal infections) |
| - polio (poliomyelitis)      | - typhoid                                 |
| - ringworm                   | - tuberculosis                            |
| - salmonella                 | - whooping cough (pertussis)              |
| - scabies                    |   |
| - shigella (gastroenteritis) |   |

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

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

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

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

**Health: Medical Records**

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

***Holiday Celebrations***

Under the guidance of the teachers, holidays will be considered in non-sectarian terms, emphasizing cultural awareness, family customs, and respect and appreciation for diversity. Families are encouraged to speak to their child's teacher about sharing cultural celebrations and traditions with the class.

***Insurance***

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

***Lunch Boxes***

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

***Meetings – Parent Conferences***

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

***Meetings – School-wide Parent Orientation Workshop***

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

***Meetings – School-wide Board Meetings***

Co-op Board meeting notices are posted regularly on the main bulletin board and outside classrooms. Parents are invited to attend some or all of the monthly board meetings to be informed, get involved, and/or voice any concerns. The Co-op's Executive Board, consisting of the

President, Vice President, Treasurer, Secretary and School Director, may meet as needed to address matters that arise between Board Meetings. Executive meetings are called at the discretion of the President.

***Parking***

Please do not park in the church parking lot. There is metered parking along North Fullerton in front of the church and in the municipal lot next door to the church (Between Fullerton and Park streets). There is free two-hour parking around the corner on Munn Street.

***Phone System***

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

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

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

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

1. ***Assist in the Classroom.*** Parents sign up to assist in their child's classroom on a rotating basis. Frequency of co-oping varies by class and enrollment, but generally: Creative Play - once every 5 or 6 weeks; Discovery /Pre-K - once per month.

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

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

Typically, the sign up schedule is prepared using an electronic sign-up application. The schedule is then printed and hung in the classrooms.

Class Delegates will prepare a co-oping schedule two to three times per year and the schedule will cover the upcoming months. Delegates will provide the number of co-oping days required for each family for each period. Once the schedule is finalized, as determined at the Delegate's discretion, it will be posted in the classroom.

Once the schedule is finalized, *a family may not drop a co-oping date without finding a replacement or swapping days.* (i.e. a family may not go into the application and delete a day which they had earlier signed up for with).

If at the last minute, a family is unable to make its co-oping day, it is that family's responsibility, *not the responsibility of the class delegate*, to find a substitute co-oping parent and trade for another day.

Alternatively the family may pay a fee of \$45, so that an additional (paid) assistant may be brought in for the day. When a family is unable to co-op, email notification must be sent to the teacher, the School Director and the Delegate

If a family fails to fulfill their co-oping duties without finding a replacement for more than three times in a school year, the fee will be increased to \$75 per missed co-oping session. Alternatively, the family may opt to buy-out of co-oping duties for the year for a \$250 fee.

2. ***Family Job.*** Parents choose from a variety of administrative, maintenance and/or fundraising tasks required to help run the school and make it a fun, well-informed, and functional community. There is likely to be a job that meets every family's time and schedule preferences, as the assignments are so varied.

The Family Job sign-up process is explained in the packet each enrolled family receives in late summer; families who enroll after September will be given a choice of remaining jobs. Families unable to meet their job requirement agree to pay a fee.

3. ***End-of-Year Cleanup.*** At least one adult from each family completes 2 ½ hours of cleaning at the end of the school year. This cleanup is scheduled over several days, including a weekend. In the event that a family cannot meet their end-of-year cleaning responsibility, they agree to pay a cleaning fee.

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

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

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

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

- Bring snack, water, and one roll of paper towels;
- Arrive a few minutes early to help prepare the room for the day's activities
- During free play, play/read with the children or assist teacher as requested with craft, etc.
- As children wash hands for snack, wash tables and distribute snack
- Participate with teachers and children during "circle time" activities
- While the children are outside under the supervision of both the teacher and assistant, clean tables, sweep, vacuum, clean materials as necessary. *It is important to note that the end-of-day cleaning responsibility is the parent's-- not the teacher's or assistant's-- and you need to stay until its completion.*
- At lunchtime in the DPK classroom, the co-op parent waits at the sink while children enter the classroom from the playground. Typically, the children will enter the classroom, get their lunchboxes, place them on the lunch table and come to the sink.

***Responsibilities of Co-op Families: On Your Co-op Day -- Continued***

- Once children are seated, the co-op parent should assist in opening lunch boxes and lunch containers and then be at or near the lunch table at all times for the duration of lunch for safety purposes. assist in clean up of table and floors.
- Only a teacher or assistant may take a child to the bathroom,
- The classroom assistant (not the co-oping parent) is responsible for disposing of garbage at the end of the school day. **While fulfilling classroom responsibilities such as snack and clearing up are important, don't forget that experiencing the classroom with your child is one of the most rewarding aspects of enrolling at the Co-op. So make sure you take the opportunity to interact with the children, or simply enjoy them!**

Additional notes about your co-op day responsibilities:

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

***Release Policy***

The Watchung Cooperative Preschool shall maintain on file and follow a written policy on the release of children, which shall include:

1. The provision that each child may be released only to the child's parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified in N.J.A.C. 10:122-6.8(a)3, to take the child from the center and to assume responsibility for the child in an emergency if the parent(s) cannot be reached;
2. The provision that, if a particular non-custodial parent has been denied access, or granted limited access, to the child by a court order, the Watchung Cooperative Preschool shall secure documentation to this effect, maintain a copy on file, and comply with the terms of the court order;

3. Written procedures to be followed by staff member(s) if the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified by 1 above, fails to pick up a child at the time of school's daily closing. The procedures shall require that:
  - a. The child is supervised at all times;
  - b. Staff members attempt to contact the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parents; and
  - c. An hour or more after closing time, and provided that other arrangements for releasing the child to his or her parent(s) or authorized person(s) have failed and the staff member(s) cannot continue to supervise the child at the center, the staff member shall call the Division's 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline to seek assistance in caring for the child until the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the child's parent(s) is able to pick up the child; and
4. Written procedures to be followed by a staff member(s) if the parent(s) or person(s) authorized by the parent(s), as specified by 1 above, appear to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual. The procedures shall require that:
  - a. The child shall not be released to such an impaired individual;
  - b. Staff members attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person(s) authorized by the parent(s); and
  - c. If the center is unable to make alternative arrangements, as noted in 3b above, a staff member shall call the Division's 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline to seek assistance in caring for the child.

***Safety Procedures: Fingerprinting and Background Check***

To ensure the safety of children, the state of New Jersey implements some of the strictest policies for childcare facilities. Among these, all regularly scheduled classroom volunteers must be fingerprinted and have a background check. In the case of the Co-op, this means that the caregiver doing the majority of co-oping duties must undergo the checks.

***Safety Procedures: Fingerprinting and Background Check - Continued***

Both the background check and the fingerprinting are relatively simple to complete. However, they must be done in accordance with state requirements and procedures. The Co-op will provide further information to all families about how to complete these processes.

Please note that fingerprinting done for any other purpose (including for other schools) **cannot** be re-used for the Co-op. However, checks done for the Co-op from a previous year may remain valid. Please see the School Director for more information.

***School Closing/Delayed Opening/Early Closing Notification Policy***

When Montclair public schools close for a snow day or other emergency reasons, the Co-op will also close for the day. However, at the discretion of the School Director and/or the Co-op's Executive Board, the school may also close even if Montclair schools remain open. In the event of any schedule changes, the Co-op will also make every effort to notify families as follows:

- The School Director will notify every family of school closure or delayed opening. *Please do not call the teachers.*
- The School Director will send an email out to all families using the email address(es) of the parent(s)/(guardian(s) as provided on the Emergency Reference form from the enrollment packet. ***We ask that if inclement weather is expected, families be certain to check their emails for notification.***
- Each family should reply to the email as acknowledgement that it was received. Should a family fail to acknowledge the email by 8 a.m. on the morning of a school closure or delayed start, the School Director will attempt to contact the family by telephone. This is done to ensure that every family receives timely notification of a closure or delay.

In the event of a delayed opening for the Montclair public schools, all of the Co-op's morning classes will begin at 10 a.m. and end at their regular times. Lunch will be held as usual. All afternoon classes will start at 12:30. Afternoon dismissal will be at the usual time.

In the event an early dismissal is warranted once school is already in session for the day, families will be notified by telephone. Should the

school be unable to reach a child's parent or guardian, the backup contact persons listed on the child's Emergency Reference Form in the enrollment packet will notified.

In addition to receiving a call from the School Director, there are several other ways to determine if the Montclair Public Schools (and consequently the Co-op) are closed or delayed:

- Check the Montclair Board of Education website at <http://www.montclair.k12.nj.us/> for information on closings or delays.
- Watching — or logging on to — New Jersey News12/Channel 62; WABC-TV/Channel 7; WNBC-TV/Channel 4; and WCBS-TV/Channel 2. Radio reports can be found at 1010 WINS and WOR 710AM.
- Calling the main number at Montclair Public Schools Central Office: (973) 509-4000 - *School closures and delayed openings*
- Listen for five 5-second blasts of Civil Defense Sirens with five 5-second, no-sound intervals between blasts at 6:30 am and again at 7 am

***Snack***

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

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

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

- Raisins and fresh fruits;
- Vegetables such as carrots, celery
- Banana bread, carrot muffins, etc.
- Cheese and crackers
- Hummus or cream cheese on bread, whole-grain crackers, or celery
- Yogurt or frozen yogurt
- Mini-bagels, mini-sandwiches, pizza morsels
- Snack mix containing raisins, cereals, pretzels
- Water or 100% fruit juices are preferred

\*\* Please be reminded that the Co-op is a ***Nut Free School***\*\*

***Toilet Training/Bathroom***

A child does **not** have to be toilet trained to enroll in any Watchung Cooperative Preschool program.

When your child is ready for potty training we ask that you begin teaching at home during a weekend or vacation. **Please note: we will only assist your child in potty training if you have successfully begun training at home for two weeks prior.** A child should be at least two years old and show the signs of readiness (see attachment for a list of readiness signs) before training begins.

Once potty training has begun at home, we will follow through with your training approach and encourage your child while in school. Potty training will be done in a relaxed manner with the cooperation of the family. Please note: The Watchung Co-op does not use small plastic potties (i.e. Baby Bjorn), however, seat rings are available and the Co-op is equipped with child-height toilets.

Until he/she is consistently toilet trained, your child must be kept in pull-ups or diapers. Please keep in mind that the activity level at the school can distract your child from responding to an urge to use the bathroom, more so than at your home. Therefore, we will use diapers until your child can and will announce that he/she must use the bathroom and can control his/her bladder and bowels for a few minutes beyond that announcement. It is required that parents provide pull-ups, diapers (until the child is ready for pull-ups) and few extra changes of clothing.

Diapers will be changed by staff if they are soiled (bowel movement), if they are fully wet, or as otherwise directed by parents.

During potty training your child needs to be dressed in “user friendly” clothing as much as possible. The best items are shorts or pants with elastic waist.

Please do NOT dress you child in the following:

- Tight clothing
- Pants with snaps and zippers
- Overalls or bib type clothing
- Belts
- One piece outfits

The clothing listed above can make it difficult for your child to reach the potty in time. Your child also needs to be able to pull his/her pants up, and the above items will hinder you child’s ability to do so.

Soiled clothing will be returned in a plastic bag at the end of the day. Please have your child bring at least 2 changes of clothing, *including socks and an extra pair of shoes* if available.

For the first week of training your child will be scheduled to use the potty at consistent times of the day regardless of whether he/she indicated the need to use the toilet.

The scheduled bathroom times will be:

- Shortly after arrival to school
- Before and after snack and lunch
- Before going and after going outside

Older children who consistently use the toilet independently will be taken to the bathroom once per session, before snack time. Additionally, children are always free to use the bathroom as needed.

We will assist a child with wiping *only with the child’s permission*. If a child declines assistance with wiping, we believe it is important to respect the child’s wishes. However, if a parent has any concerns about this or any of our bathroom procedures, please feel free to discuss them with the teacher.

***Toys from Home***

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

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

***Tuition Policy***

*Payment Schedule:*

Prompt payment of tuition installments is a core responsibility for each and every family, and is vital to ensuring the smooth operation of the school. Tuition is paid in four quarterly payments, as stated on the tuition schedule included in each student's orientation packet. In addition, the tuition invoices mailed or emailed to families include the date upon which each payment is due. All tuition checks should be made out to Watchung Cooperative Preschool and placed in the treasurer's cubby located in the office.

Tuition is due on the day as stated on the payment schedule and will be considered late after 10th of the month. It is the responsibility of the family to contact the treasurer should alternate payment schedules need to be arranged. **Tuition will not be refunded if a child withdraws from the Co-op.**

A non-refundable deposit is due upon enrollment that includes a \$100 registration fee and half of 1st quarter's tuition. Note that if you are enrolling as second child, the registration fee for that child is \$50. A 10% discount will apply for families with more than one child enrolled at the Coop. The discount will be applied to the lowest tuition class. For children entering the Coop after the first day of school, tuition will be prorated accordingly. ***Registration fees, deposits and tuition are non-refundable.***

Monthly payment schedules can be accommodated but must be approved by treasurer upon registration. With a monthly payment schedule, a non-refundable deposit of full first quarter's tuition plus \$100 registration fee is still required prior to the start of school. The remaining balance will be split up into ten monthly payments. The first monthly payment is also due prior to the start of school and all subsequent payments must be paid on 20th day of the month, beginning in September (i.e. the first quarter plus the first monthly installment must be paid before school begins, with the second monthly installment due by September 20). Payments will be considered late after the 30th of the month.

The deposit will be held in the Watchung Co-op checking account and will be applied to the last two monthly payments due at the end of the school year. If you withdraw your child during the school year, your

deposit will be forfeited. A \$10.00 per month service fee will be applied to all monthly invoices.

*Late Payments:*

- A \$30 late fee will be charged for any payments received after the 10 day grace period.
- If tuition remains unpaid after 45 days, and no payment arrangement has been made with the treasurer, the child may be expelled from the Co-op and legal action may be taken. The family will be responsible for 6% interest, attorney fees and court costs.
- Re-admission for the student or enrollment of a sibling will not be permitted until the tuition account is made current.
- A minimum charge of \$25.00 is due for each returned check but this fee will be increased if necessary, to cover any bank fees charged to the school.
- The Watchung Cooperative Preschool reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of a child due to non-payment of tuition.

*Refunds/Program Withdrawals:*

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

In the event it is determined that a child should be withdrawn from our program for developmental reasons or reasons relating to the health of the child, any tuition paid will be reimbursed to the family on a prorated basis. See Enrollment Policy, Page 7.

In the event that it becomes necessary to dismiss a child from the program due to disruptive behavior, any tuition paid will be reimbursed to the family on a prorated basis. See Behavior Policy, Pages 3 and 4.

***Website: [www.watchungco-op.org](http://www.watchungco-op.org)***

The website is a helpful resource for currently enrolled families, with information on upcoming school events; the year's school calendar; profiles of Co-op teachers and classes; and much more. Please be sure to check it out. Also, if you know anyone who is looking for a preschool, please encourage them to check out our website as well!