

## **WELCOME TO THE COOPERATIVE PLAY GROUP**

A group of six families came together in the summer of 2004 with an idea for an early childhood program. Each family desired to play an active role in their child's early care. This program is based on a cooperative model, with emphasis on parental involvement, and importantly, the arts.

The parents involved are all able to give not only money, but time to insure the success of the program. Time commitments include but are not limited to one morning per week in the classroom, monthly (or as needed) meetings in the evening, and curriculum planning. This program is not daycare, it is a learning experience for both the children and their parents or legal guardians. The program is non-secular.

The purpose of the program is to encourage and facilitate child-play that emphasizes social, emotional, creative and intellectual development for our children. This is accomplished through concentrating on creative interaction: arts and crafts, movement and music, pretend and dress-up, as well as free play.

The Cooperative Play Group is a place for involvement in a variety of activities with many types of people. Play is the primary mode of learning. Through play, the endless energy and curiosity of children is channeled toward mastery of self.

The program operates five mornings per week, Monday – Friday from 9:00 – 1:00 in the children's areas of St. John's Episcopal Church. Snacks and lunch are served. Two "Parents of the Day" (PODs) and ten children are present at each session. Set-up and clean-up by the PODs occurs the half hour before the children arrive and the half hour after the children depart. PODs typically arrive at 8:30 and depart at 1:30.

The Cooperative Play Group is not for everyone. It should be noted that not all children respond well to two different parents every day. Please be aware that your child may need the security of at least one consistent caregiver. The Cooperative Play Group's greatest strength of ten different parents with creative ideas, as well as ten different ways of doing things may not be best for you or your child. It is also important that the parents involved all work well together as a team.

The Cooperative Play Group is operated solely by the parents of the children involved. The program exists solely to foster the development of these children, and for the education and support of parents involved. The parents are responsible for the funding, continued encouragement, and keeping the program moving forward and functioning at the highest possible level.

As an outreach program of St John's, the Steering Committee will maintain complete control over the membership, the application and selection process and the curriculum.

## **COOPERATIVE PLAY GROUP PROGRAM**

The Cooperative Play Group runs during the school year, loosely following Teton County School District's calendar. Parents may decide to operate during some school vacations, and to offer a summer program. The fall 2005 program will begin on Monday, September 12. Actual operating dates will be determined by the Steering Committee. The Cooperative Play Group will be in session except in cases of disaster, natural or otherwise.

A summer session is totally separate from the regular Cooperative Play Group organization. Membership, rules, regulations, and procedures are to be determined solely by those wishing to organize and participate in that program.

## **OBSERVATIONS AND REGISTRATION**

Once a session has begun, and prior to being placed on the waiting list, a parent and child are required to observe class for one full week. The “sponsor POD” (the person inviting the parent/child pair to observe) must inform the group that observers are coming at least 24 hours in advance. Observation forms should be turned in to the Parent of the Day on the day the first observation takes place. At this time the child’s name will be placed on the waiting list. No observation forms will be accepted prior to the child being 30 months of age.

Entry into the program does not depend solely on one’s position on the waiting list. The program tries to balance the class according to its needs. Any parent on the waiting list who is a former participant of the Cooperative Play Group program, and is in good standing, will have priority status.

Registration forms will be distributed and collected in the summer before the fall session begins. The steering committee will decide by November 2005 if they want to add more parents and children to the program in January of 2006.

## **MEMBERSHIP**

1. New children entering the program must be at least 3 years old, and no older than 5 by the end of December. Possible exceptions may be made by the Steering Committee. The parent must have signed all liability waivers and registration forms before the child’s first day of attendance. Children entering the program should have been at least introduced to the concept of toilet training.
2. One parent or legal guardian will be responsible for fulfilling his or her weekly work obligation, and attending monthly General Meetings. This obligation is one morning per week per child and does not depend on how many days during the week a child or children attend. The participating parent is responsible for reading and explaining to his or her child all rules and regulations of the Cooperative Play Group program and keeping abreast of all bulletins and minutes of meetings.
3. In addition to the weekly work obligation, the participating parent will be responsible for one assignment per child in the Cooperative Play Group program. These assignments include both Steering Committee and non-Steering Committee duties.
4. When deciding on issues, participating parents are entitled to one vote per child. Thus, if you have two children in the Cooperative Play Group program and are working twice a week, you will be allowed two votes.
5. Membership may be terminated at any time as outlined in the RULES FOR PARENTS section, or by majority vote of the group. All members should make an effort to resolve

problems on an individual basis before they need to be addressed by the chairperson or the group.

## **RULES FOR PARENTS**

1. Cooperative Play Group hours are 9:00 AM – 1:00 PM. There will be NO early drop-offs, except with prior approval from the PODs. Pickups must be made by 1:00 PM. There is a 5-minute grace period. Late pickups will be noted in the journal. Three late pickups by any one family will result in a \$10 fee being administered. Subsequent late pickups will be dealt with by following the DISMISSAL PROCEEDURE.
2. Parents of children in the program are welcome to drop in at any time.
3. For reasons of child safety, if parents wish to have someone other than another playgroup parent pick up their child, arrangements must be made ahead of time with the PODs, and noted in the child's Play Group Registration Form.
4. Participating parents are to plan, organize, and execute daily lessons. In every way possible, each parent will assist with the functioning of the total group, must be on time, and be fully prepared. Lead PODs should use the lesson planning form, and file this form in the notebook at the end of the day. It is helpful to other parents to make notes on what worked well, and things you would change. This will also aid in creating future curriculum.
5. PODs will arrive as early as necessary to start the program on time each morning. This usually means arriving 20-30 minutes before the start of the program. PODs also need to stay after until all children have been picked up and the room is cleaned.
6. There is no vacation or maternity leave. You must have arranged for substitutes for every day you will be gone or dismissal from the Cooperative Play Group program may occur. In an emergency, the Steering Committee may be petitioned for exemptions on a case-by-case basis.
7. At least two weeks notice must be given if you are leaving the Cooperative Play Group program in mid-session; this will allow time to find a suitable replacement.
8. Substitutions are not to be done on a regular basis. The maximum amount of consecutive substitutions is two weeks. Steering Committee approval is necessary for substitutions of more than two weeks.
9. If you know you will be unable to work on your assigned day, you are responsible for finding a substitute. Any parent who fails to come on his/her day and does not arrange for a substitute may be dropped from the program. Substitutes must be another parent in the program, the spouse of a parent, or a Steering Committee approved substitute. All substitutes will be informed of their expected duties, and will participate fully. When you substitute, the POD for whom you are filling in must compensate by working for you one day within the next calendar month.
10. In the event both PODs unable to work (due to a last minute illness of POD or child), Playgroup will be cancelled for the day. It is the responsibility of the PODs of that day to

contact all other members before 8:00 AM. In the event of a cancellation day, the PODs of that day will each pay a “cancellation fee” of \$10, which will be put into the Play Group general fund. This is not intended to be a punishment, but rather a way to allow everyone to contribute equally to the group.

11. NO PHYSICAL PUNISHMENT is to be administered. Verbal abuse is also not allowed. Don't discipline your child in front of the other children. Take your child out of the sight and hearing of all other children and parents. If having trouble with your own child, ask another parent for help. In addition, abusive behavior toward children or other parents will not be permitted. Disregarding these rules may be cause for dismissal from the Cooperative Play Group program.
12. SMOKING IS PROHIBITED.
13. Each POD pair will be responsible for providing or purchasing any activity supplies they need for their day (that are not currently in the supply box). This should not exceed \$10 per week. Excess supplies can be placed into a box for future use by any of the PODs.
14. Snacks and lunches will be purchased in bulk at the beginning of the session, and replenished as necessary. A daily snack and lunch menu will be developed. We will strive to have healthy, well-balanced snacks and lunches. PODs are encouraged to involve the children in food preparation and clean up. PODs are also encouraged to utilize the kitchen facilities to supplement the snack and lunch menus.
15. General clean up of the classrooms and kitchen are to be done on a daily basis, following guidelines set out by St. John's.
16. As a special privilege, one sibling is allowed to attend Cooperative Play Group on the day his or her parent participates. If the sibling is disruptive or if the parent is unable to fully participate in EVERY aspect of the program on his or her workday, the parent will be asked to make other arrangements for the sibling.
17. Suggestions or complaints about the Play Group as a whole should be addressed in writing or email to the chairperson who will evaluate the issue and put it on a meeting agenda if they deem it necessary.
18. No parent may initiate voting or petitioning without prior notice to the Chairperson and Steering Committee. Insubordination may be cause for dismissal from the program. If you have something you would like the group to vote on, it must be put on the agenda.
19. All participating parents shall be certified in infant/child CPR.
20. Parents will come on time and prepared to all meetings, with agendas, minutes and other necessary materials printed out.
21. Failure to come in on a workday and/or the administration of physical punishment to a child are grounds for immediate dismissal. Every other infraction of written rules will be dealt with by following the DISMISSAL PROCEDURE:
  - a. Verbal warning by another parent in the group.
  - b. Written warning by the Chairperson.

- c. Permanent dismissal from the Cooperative Play Group program.
22. The Parent Volunteers will be responsible for recording circumstances of dismissal. Parent Volunteer members will sign the document which will then be placed in the permanent Cooperative Play Group' files, maintained by the Secretary.

### **RULES FOR CHILDREN**

1. You may not hurt yourself or others.
2. Be helpful, courteous & kind.
3. Listen to and follow parents' instructions.

### **DISCIPLINE**

1. As we are ten different families with ten different discipline styles, we have decided to not offer one "solution" to discipline issues. I.e. we do not all use "time outs" so we do not use that one method with the children at Play Group. Discipline of your own children should follow the guidelines outlined in the RULES FOR PARENTS section of the handbook.
2. Make every effort to support and redirect a child when they appear frustrated.
3. Let the child know that you understand they are frustrated and that it is difficult to share, etc.
4. Use age appropriate methods to discover the root of the problem and help the child move on.
5. PODs should make an effort to notice and comment on good behavior.
6. Parents should be notified at pick up time if there were concerns about their child's behavior that day. This should be done discretely between the parent of the child and one of the PODs. Matters of safety (i.e. hitting, biting, etc.) should be noted in the journal.

### **HEALTH AND SAFETY**

1. If there are any questions regarding a contagious health matter you should contact your physician. If there is still a question in your mind as to how contagious your child might be, please be prudent, keep your child home.
2. Each parent is responsible for checking on the health of his/her own child, as well as their own health before coming to Play Group. A child or parent who is ill, has a fever, is lethargic, has infected sores, and/or any contagious disease should not attend Play Group. A child or parent should be fever, eye/ear-discharge, vomiting free for 24 hours before coming to Cooperative Play Group.

3. If you or your child is exposed to a communicable disease, you will be responsible for informing Cooperative Play Group immediately, so that incubation and isolation dates can be verified and the health needs of all children protected.
4. If any child at any time is found to have any contagious disease such as chicken pox, a highly contagious nuisance such as lice, or if a child becomes ill, the child will be kept in an area of the classroom away from the other children, accompanied by one of the parents. The child will be kept apart, in this area, until a parent or authorized person can pick them up.
5. Remember, Cooperative Play Group parents are not professionals, so please, don't be offended if your child is sent home or if there is an error in judgment. We are dealing with children who constantly place things in their mouths, enabling them to catch viruses, infections, and diseases easily.
6. No medicine will be administered by any Cooperative Play Group parent, unless it is for your own child, or as decided by the Steering Committee on a case-by-case basis to meet the specific needs of a specific child.
7. Diapers must be changed on the child's own changing pad. Children may not be changed directly on tables, eating mats, or carpets. Please wash your hands after changing diapers.
8. For health reasons, all children must wear underwear to Play Group.
9. For safety reasons, all children must wear footwear to Play Group. During snow/mud boot season, children should bring a pair of indoor shoes/slippers to wear while inside.
10. Every day, each child should bring a change of clothes and underwear labeled with their name and in a bag, as well as their own sippy cup with their name on it. Water is the only beverage we will have at Play Group, and the only beverage children should bring with them.
11. Parents, be cautious, use good judgment about washing your hands after helping any child to blow his or her nose, wiping a bottom, etc.
12. Children's hands should always be washed prior to eating their snack, and after they use the toilet.
13. The safety of every child is paramount. NEVER LEAVE A CHILD UNATTENDED.
14. The parents or other authorized persons will sign the child in or out. Notify the parents on duty, verbally, and by writing on the sign-out sheet if someone else will be picking up your child. If possible leave a phone number where you can be reached during the morning.
15. The Cooperative Play Group assumes no liability for any car-pooling arrangements made between parents.
16. A list will be posted of any medical condition or allergies a Cooperative Play Group child has to a particular food, insect bite, medication, etc. Everyone must be familiar with this list and act accordingly. If your child develops a medical condition or allergy during the year, please inform the chairperson immediately.

## **MONTHLY RESPONSIBILITIES**

Rotating monthly responsibilities will be assigned on an as-needed basis.

## **MEETINGS**

Meetings are an important part of our program to insure good communication. There are three types:

- A. Steering Committee Meetings
- B. General Meetings
- C. Committee Meetings

## **STEERING COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The Steering Committee consists of the Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, Secretary, Treasurer, and the Education Committee Chairperson. The Steering Committee will hold meetings as needed.

## **GENERAL MEETINGS**

General meetings are for passing on information and attendance by all members is MANDATORY.

1. During the summer, there will be a meeting between the Chairperson, Co-Chairperson, and the Secretary with the “new” parents. This meeting is to review the Handbook, distribute paperwork, and assign jobs.
2. In August, there will be a General Meeting prior to the beginning of the fall session.
3. During the “school year” General Meetings will be held monthly. The dates and times for these meetings will be issued at the beginning of each session, but are typically the third Wednesday of every month. If an emergency arises, and you are unable to attend, you must notify the Chairperson. Your reason for not attending will be reported at the meeting. A task will be assigned to any parent missing a meeting for any reason. This task is not a punishment, but is designed as a way to allow the parent to contribute an equal amount of time to the program. The task should be completed within one week of the missed meeting. Disciplinary action may be taken for habitual offenders who do not attend meetings. Exceptions may be given, by the Steering Committee, on a case-by-case basis.
4. In order to get the most accomplished at the meetings, only one person at a time will have the floor.
5. Once an issue has been voted on, the vote stands until that issue is again raised at a General Meeting and another vote is taken.

6. All votes are passed by majority.
7. An agenda sign-up is required to be emailed for all General Meetings, one week in advance, enabling all interested parents to present issues for the agenda, and allowing everyone the opportunity to make an informed vote.
8. It is requested that parents do not bring their children to the meetings, unless babysitting arrangements have been made beforehand. If you have to bring your children, you will bring activities to occupy them and clean up after them when the meeting is over.

### **TYPICAL AGENDA FOR NEW PARENTS MEETING**

1. Welcome
2. Introduction – Get into groups: days you will be working on. Have all parents introduce themselves and tell a little about themselves and their families
3. Review Cooperative Play Group Handbook and answer any questions. Make sure everyone knows what his or her responsibilities are.

### **TYPICAL AGENDA FOR FIRST GENERAL MEETING**

1. Welcome
2. Introductions – Have all parents introduce themselves and tell a little bit about themselves and their families.
3. Distribute roster and yearly calendar with monthly responsibility reminders.
4. Future meetings:
  - a. Decide if General Meetings will be on one set day or rotating days.
  - b. Small groups – Each day is responsible to meet and plan out their days following the Weekly Themes.
  - c. Set dates for any additional work parties needed.
  - d. Optional workshops
    - i. Inventory of the supply cabinet to assist new parents in knowing what supplies, games, papers, etc. are available.
    - ii. Guest Speakers
5. Education Committee Report
6. Treasury Report
  - a. Budget for the session
  - b. Supplies
7. New Business

- a. Dinner get together/mixer
- b. Red Cross – Organize a class for new members.

## **COMMITTEE MEETINGS**

The entire membership must be notified, by telephone or email, of the dates of all Education and Party Committee Meetings. This notification will be done at least one week in advance. Any parent may attend and vote during these meetings regardless of committee membership. If a parent is interested in a committee, but is unable to attend the meeting, that person should get in touch with one of the members of that committee for input.

1. POD pair Meetings: The PODs are required to meet together to plan their first few days at least one week prior to the beginning of each Session. PODs pairs will then meet as necessary for future planning.
2. Education Committee: The Education Committee will meet at least 4 weeks prior to each Session meet to plan the weekly themes for each Session.
3. Party Committee: The Party Committee will meet to plan the following (all optional) parties: Halloween, Winter Holiday, Easter, and End of Session parties.

## **DUTIES OF THE STEERING COMMITTEE**

### **CHAIRPERSON**

The Chairperson will be responsible for the following:

1. Securing any required permits/contracts for the Cooperative Play Group St. John.s.
2. Organizing dates, times and locations for Steering Committee Meetings.
3. Calling and presiding over all Steering Committee and General Membership Meetings.
4. preparing and e-mailing an agenda for meetings at least one week prior to meeting date.
5. Deciding votes will be cast by the Chairperson in case of a tie at Steering Committee Meetings, General Meetings, or any other voting of the general membership.
6. Arbitrating disagreements, when necessary.
7. Initiating Steering Committee action regarding any unresolved problems as reported by any of the PODs. It will be the Steering Committee as a group, not the chairperson individually, who makes non-policy decisions, i.e. exemptions, etc. Policy decisions are voted on by the entire membership.
8. Creating the Cooperative Play Group yearly calendar and reminders of monthly responsibilities and distributing it at the August General Meeting.
9. Arranging the Parent Work Schedule as needed.
10. Keeping informed of issues discussed at various committee meetings.

## **CO-CHAIRPERSON**

The Co-Chairperson has the same responsibilities as the Chairperson. The Co-Chairperson is responsible for the duties of the Chairperson when he/she cannot be present or needs assistance. Additionally, the Co-Chairperson is responsible for distributing and updating all handbooks.

## **SECRETARY**

The Secretary will be responsible for the following:

1. Keeping a roster of all members. Providing a typed roster of members to be given out at the beginning of each session. Roster should include: parents' names, addresses, emails and phone numbers, Cooperative Play Group children's birthdays, and siblings' names.
2. Making and reproducing daily journal sheets. This sheet should have a space for parents' initials, date of Play Group, notes on each child, late pick up, and room for any extra instructions the parent may need to give regarding his/her child. A home or work phone number should also be printed on the form with space to alter the number as necessary.
3. Updating, reproducing, and keeping /storing all Registration/Health Information forms, Liability Waivers, other daily working forms and a list of people authorized to pick up each child. Liability Waivers will be kept at St. John's.
4. Keeping all parent/child dismissal and exemption records, correspondence, purchase records, minutes of all committee meetings, etc. in the Secretary's box. These records will be kept for 3 years. The Secretary's box is kept with class materials.
5. New Applications - Make sure that an interested parent observe with their child for five full days (9:00 to 1:00 before an application is given out. Keep and update a waiting list of interested parents.
6. Taking the minutes at all Steering Committee and General meetings and distributing copies to all the Cooperative Play Group members within a week after the meeting.

## **TREASURER**

The treasurer will be responsible for the following:

1. Collecting all fees and place in the Cooperative Play Group bank account.
2. Advising the Chairperson of any excess money 2 weeks prior to the close of each session. The Steering Committee will then decide on dispersal of said excess funds. Any money not spent will be carried over to the next session.
3. Setting up a budget for Steering Committee approval.
4. Compiling a Treasurer's Report for each Steering Committee and General Meeting and giving it to the Secretary.
5. Balancing the Treasurer's Book.

6. Collecting any late fees.
7. Reimbursing members for purchases within one week of receiving receipt.

## **EDUCATION COMMITTEE**

The Education Committee, consisting of the Education Chairperson and one person representing each day will be responsible for the following:

1. Determining the Weekly Topics, and suggesting possible theme activities for each day using available resources.
2. Discussing with the Education Committee Chairperson any problems that arise on their day regarding education.

## **COOPERATIVE PLAY GROUP DAILY PLAN EXPLANATION**

### **9:00 – 10:30**

#### **Drop off, free play, snack available**

Have a snack table set up where kids can sit 2-4 at a time and have the snack of the day when they want it. Children clean up when they are done. Use “dots” to show if they can only have one muffin or cheese stick or whatever. Water is the drink offered.

“Centers” are available and set up by PODs before the start of the day. PODs can have a center or two that focus on the weekly/monthly theme, but this is not a requirement. Other centers include dress up, dolls, drawing, water play, housekeeping, books, etc., enough choices so that if we have 10 kids, we have 6 (or so) options. This hour and a half is true free play, where PODs provide opportunities, but not activities in which everyone would have to participate.

### **10:30 – 11:00**

#### **Circle time – everyone participates**

Introduce the theme of the week – the theme might have already been introduced with one of the morning centers. The theme is something we talk about, but not necessarily the *main* focus of circle time. If we decide to do a letter of the week, it’s also introduced here.

Have a song we sing every day (Birch is wearing her green dress...Mila has her uncle in town...etc, each child is included), in addition to our good morning song.

Also include the song, nursery rhyme/poem, number and letter of the week during circle time.

Show and tell once in a while (kids can bring anything but toys).

**11:00 – 11:45**

**Lunch**

Kids help prepare this and help clean up afterwards.

**11:45 – 1:00**

**Activity available, more free play, pickup, closing song**

Have either a motor skill (dancing, etc) or an art project planned, but kids who want to do more free play can do that. The focus on the art project is on process NOT product. We will sing our goodbye song close to 1:00.

During this time there may be parents coming into the classroom. Remember to say goodbye to the children, sign them out, and assist them in gathering their personal items and any projects they may have created during the day.

At the end of the day the support POD will be standing at the door. They will aid in collecting all personal items in the child's bag and have his/her parent sign them out. The support POD is responsible for insuring that only authorized persons are signing children out. If there are any questions, check the files! No child is to leave without a Cooperative Play Group parent or pre-authorized person.

During this time, PODs will clean up, and be available to speak, in confidence, with parents whose children had behavior issues that day. If unable to do so in person, the Lead POD should contact the parent later by telephone. The Journal will be available for parents look through if they arrive early for pick up. The Journal will have children's files w/ notes from previous days.

**CLOSING CHECKLIST (PODs begin this at 1:00)**

1. Note – the journal should be kept in the room during the day so PODs are able to make comments in it throughout the day, if time allows (a PODs first priority is always with the children). If the day has been too hectic to accomplish this, PODs are responsible for making notes in the Journal once kids have all been picked up. Observations on cooperative play, behavior, new skills, etc. may all be noted.
2. The journal is stored nightly with our supplies.
3. Put away all supplies and clean and secure classroom as directed by St. John's.