



Coop Scoop

• September 2009 •

Newsletter for the Cooperative Playschool • 611 East Prospect Avenue • State College, PA 16801 • 238-3922

Welcome to The School Year!

The Coop Scoop is our school's monthly newsletter, designed to keep parents informed, entertained, and involved in all things Co-op. Please let us know if you have any suggestions on how to make the Scoop better, including story ideas, news, recipes, etc. that you would like included. Contact the Communications and Publicity committee at communications@cooperativeplayschool.com with questions, comments, or suggestions.

This year, the Coop Scoop will be distributed to families electronically, by email. *If you would prefer a paper copy of the newsletter, email communications@cooperativeplayschool.com to let us know, and we'll be happy to oblige.* The newsletter will also be available on our website (with last names removed for our privacy), and in paper form on the bulletin board at the school.



Welcome Ms. Mindy!

Please join us in welcoming the new teacher for the Green Team this year—Mrs. Mindy! Many thanks to our hiring committee for their hard work in selecting the best candidate for our school. We're glad the search is over!

A Note from Ms. Mindy

I have lived in State College for the past 4 years with my two wonderful children. My son, Devin, is thirteen and my daughter, Kinzley, just turned three. I graduated from Penn State in May 2007 with a B.S.

in Elementary and Kindergarten Education. I have been working with children for the past six years in every age group and in all different settings. I am also an experienced school bus driver and have volunteered time in the Big Brothers/Big Sisters program, as well as many special education classrooms across Mifflin and Centre Counties.

During my years in college I worked in the infant through preschool rooms at Nittany Christian School. After graduation I began substituting at Nittany Christian, as well as State College & Bellefonte Area School Districts. I also spent a year employed as a long term substitute for the Central Intermediate Unit #10. I was a preschool developmental teacher working with children on the Autism spectrum.

I can be reached at 814-777-8596 or mindyrenett@gmail.com for any questions, comments, or concerns that you may have. I look forward to getting to know you and your child this year!

September at a Glance

- 8** Fall Parent Meeting**
- 10-11 Get Acquainted Days
- 14-18 Modified School Schedule
- 21 Coop T-shirt Sale Begins
- 21 Begin Regular Schedule and Hours (9-11:30 a.m.)
- 26 Welcome Picnic 3-6pm: Mrs. Kat's
- 29-30 Field trip to Way Fruit Farm

September Birthdays

- 24 Grayson

** this symbol indicates mandatory events

From the Teachers:

We extend a warm welcome to all the new faces at Coop including two on our teaching staff. Miss Mindy, our Green Team Teacher is excited to begin teaching children who share her love of playing and learning. Miss Mindy has been busy getting the classroom ready with her own special touches. I expect her enthusiasm will be contagious and we will have a great year ahead of us. In addition to Brittany, America Reads has found us an education major who will work with us Mon-Weds-Friday. Sarah Kerr is a junior at PSU and very happy to join us.

This year we will be posting our general themes in the Coop Scoop every month. In addition, we will be sending out information about our upcoming activities via email weekly. You can help us get the correct information out by taking the time to touch base with the greeting teacher (the teacher at the door shaking the children's hands) for activities and snack *the following week*. We plan on sending out a preview of the week ahead over the week-end. Look there for reminders to bring bikes to school, fieldtrip information and our butterfly activities in September. Working parents can view their assigned days and get a look at what the teacher's have in store for you and the children that week. We hope to brainstorm snack ideas with the snack parent when appropriate the week before they work. While not all parents who sign up for snack will be preparing food with the children in the morning, we hope many of you will be willing chefs. Our snack preparation table is placed close to the dress up and role playing area where we hope modeling is inspirational.

Some of our ideas for September snacks are:

Husk sweet corn with the kids and serve it with butter and salt

Prepare vegetables (wash, cut, peel) and make a hummus dip in a food processor.

Make "butterfly" snacks using bread slices cut in half and decorated with olives, cream cheese, celery and carrot slices.

Prepare a batter of carrot or zucchini muffins.

Our first weeks will be a time of settling in and learning who our new playmates are. Modified schedule is a time to get to know **new faces and new places**. We will have butterflies hatching by our first regular week of school. It is also the Autumnal Equinox that week so our theme will be **summer goodbye**. We will release the hatched butterflies to make their long trek south for winter. Both groups have some fun butterfly related activities planned that week. Our **fieldtrip to Way Fruit Farm** will end the

month Tuesday and Wednesday the 29th and 30th. **Bring your bikes to school** Thursday and Friday October 1st and 2nd for some riding fun. We will close off the parking lot and have the kids ride during our morning. Snack parents can expect to be making dried apple and applesauce those days.

Please don't hesitate to ask questions. The teacher's are available after pick-up time or while greeting children in the mornings. Many of our 'veteran' parents are happy to guide you these first few weeks and our co-chairs will take the time to discuss any issues that come up. We are all looking forward to a very wonderful year together- welcome back/aboard!

Communications News

Each of you has received notice of a new email address for your family. This "@cooperativeplayschool.com" account can be used for families to easily communicate with one another without having to look up addresses. It will also be used by the school to send weekly event reminders, the monthly newsletter, and other communications from the board of directors. **If you have not received your account, or have trouble accessing it or setting up a forwarding address, please contact Kate Sanfilippo.**

Here are some other easy-to-remember email addresses for your use:

- *Parents2009@cooperativeplayschool.com*: sends to all current parents.
- *teachers@cooperativeplayschool.com*: sends to our teachers
- *cochair@cooperativeplayschool.com*: sends to Maggie and Elizabeth, or Chairpersons of the Board of Directors for the school
- *board2009@cooperativeplayschool.com*: sends to the entire board of directors, including the cochairs.

Welcome Picnic

You are invited to an "enchanted walk" and potluck picnic at Mrs. Kat's spectacular property in Spring Mills. This is a special opportunity to meet and socialize with other Co-op families outside of the school environment. Children (and parents!) search for gnomes in the woods participate in enchanting activities and everybody enjoys a delicious dinner.



- Sunday, September 26, 3-6pm
- Potluck supper at 5pm
- Each family should bring a potluck dish to share,

their own plates, silverware and a blanket or lawn chairs. Cups, napkins and drinks will be provided. Driving directions will be provided. There is a full kitchen available if dishes need to be chilled/warmed for serving.

- Please dress yourselves and your family for a rural setting and a walk in the woods. Sturdy shoes, sunscreen, etc...
- Questions? Please contact Dayna, our Social Chairperson.

Allergy Alert

If your child has any food allergies, please alert the registrar immediately. Additionally, all families have received a copy of the school's allergy policy. Please sign the last sheet of the policy and return it to the registrar, Michelle, as soon as possible. *Reminder: We are a nut-free school.*

The Daily Routine

Arrival

- Our security measures include locking the doors until 9:00am. Please play on the playground if you arrive early. Working parents and teachers will greet you as soon as they have set up the activities for the day. *We will not unlock the doors until all teachers and working parents have arrived. When you are a working parent, please arrive by 8:45 am!*
- Look for the coat hook marked with your child's name. Store his/her personal belongings here, and perhaps a bag containing an extra set of clothing in case of a spill or accident.
- Your child will find a name card lying on the bench near the door. Place this card on the check-in board so that teachers know who has arrived at school. Soon there will be photographs and names for check-in.



Snack Time

In an attempt to make snack time more meaningful for the children, Snack Parents are encouraged to prepare snacks with the children as an activity. Recipes that encourage child involvement are posted on the bulletin board. Some ingredients will be provided. Please check with teachers prior to your workday as snack parent.

- Check our calendar for bread baking days (Tuesdays and Wednesdays) and sign up to bake with the kids! Please bring a complimentary item such as butter, cream cheese, regular cheese or fruit spread. The Coop will provide the bread baking supplies.

- Please avoid sweets and chocolate (most chocolate is processed in facilities that also use nuts) except for birthdays.

At the Fall Parent's Meeting, please announce any food allergies that your child has. Please tell teachers also.

Dismissal



- We will end each school day with a short closing circle. Parents should join in, as children will be dismissed directly from the circle. Children are dismissed one by one to a parent or guardian at 11:30 AM after shaking hands with their teacher.
- The handshake ensures that every child is accounted for at the end of the day.
- Arrive a few minutes early to gather artwork, check the bulletin board, etc.
- If someone other than a parent or legal guardian is picking up a child, please let his/her teacher know.
- *Please, be prompt.* Children get worried and sad when they see their friends leaving and their parents are not at school yet. This is important for teachers and working parents as well because they need to complete clean up in a timely manner and can not supervise them. Thank you!

Working Parent Requirements

- Parents' participation on workdays is essential and appreciated! *We will not open our doors to the children until we have the required working parents for the day.* Please, arrive at 8:45 so you have time to set up your activity and talk to the teachers.
- Feel free to limit the number of kids at your activity if you are too busy, or conversely to leave your table and play with the kids in your room if there is little interest.
- Your attention needs to be on the children, helping in the bathroom, redirecting, intervening in conflict and enjoying paying attention to the children. Please refrain from social time with other adults.
- Teachers will help provide working parents with an activity to supervise, such as working in the gardens, playing with clay, acting out stories, music and motion, etc. **Parents are also welcome and encouraged to prepare their own activities—just check in with the teachers at least a week ahead, so that they can prepare accordingly.**
- During circle time, join the group on the rug to share stories, songs, and discussion. Your interest in the activities sets an example for the children. Redirect children as necessary.

- Working parents join teachers and children on the playground each day to ensure a safer environment. Please do not talk with other parents at this time, but focus on the children.
- Upon entering the building, the teachers will lead the children to the closing circle. Working parents should help guide the children. Working parents should make sure everyone is accounted for by checking the head count. Please get permission to leave from the teachers before beginning clean-up.
- In the event of a playground dismissal, teachers will let parents know when to begin clean-up.
- Clean-up: please check the clipboard in the kitchen for jobs that need to be completed and use this as a guideline to divide chores. Check them off as they are done.
- “Wrap-up” will occur at noon (any remaining cleaning will resume afterwards). This is a short meeting with the teachers to determine how the day went from the parents’ perspective, and is an important tool to continuously improving our school.
- Please be courteous and refrain from socializing until clean up is complete. This ensures that all working parents are sharing the work, and will (hopefully) be able to leave around Noon. Working parents must stay until the clean-up is done, however.

Nursing Infants at Work

Co-op mothers are allowed to bring their nursing infants with them on workdays (until the child begins to crawl) and if desired, bring along a caregiver for their infant. We encourage parents to fulfill workdays before a birth when possible. If bringing a nursing infant, a mother should work with the Scheduler to ensure only one infant is present each day.

Explore “The Closet”

The Parent Resource Closet, accessed through the Co-op kitchen, contains a wealth of materials (e.g., art supplies, musical instruments) that are available for parents to use when doing activities or projects with the children. Please feel free to browse and explore the many items that are just waiting for a myriad of creative uses.

Enrollment Openings

We still have several openings at the Co-op for this year. Most openings are in the older group, but some spots are available for the younger group on certain days. Remember, the Co-op depends on word-of-mouth for much of its publicity!

Our 60th Anniversary Continues

2009 marks the 60th Anniversary of the Cooperative Playschool. In celebration of this achievement, we would like to plan a celebratory fundraising dinner. If you are interested in helping develop and coordinate events for the 60th Anniversary, please contact our fundraising chair, Kelly.

Come to the Board Meeting!

Yes, we really are a parent-run cooperative and that includes you! We encourage everyone to attend at least one board meeting this year. It really is inspiring to see a group of parents and teachers working together in the best interest of play-based education for our children! The next two meetings are:

**September 28 and October 26, 7 – 9pm
at the State College Borough Building
room 112**

Helping Your Child Adjust

Both new and returning families may find that their child needs help adjusting to a new school year. Please review the handout on *Adjusting to the Playschool Environment* in your packet. If there are language difficulties, anxiety is often intensified. Parents are welcome to stay at the Co-op until the child is comfortable with the separation. Our teachers are very supportive of parents and children during tearful times. Please discuss any separation issues carefully with your child’s teacher.

Co-op T-Shirts and More!

The Co-op’s “T-Shirts and More!” sale begins in September. Buy a diverse selection of clothing and other useful items and gifts printed with the NEW Co-op logo. Proceeds help support the school financially and the items worn spread awareness about our wonderful school.



This yearly fundraiser is an important one for our school. Remember, a small selection of Coop apparel, etc. is available through our website all the time, but during the “official” fundraiser dates, a better selection and better prices are available.

Fundraising through Groceries

One of our biggest fundraisers each year is as easy as shopping at Giant and/or Weis grocery stores. In fact, by shopping at these two stores you can help raise \$5 for the Co-op for every \$100 you spend. For example, if every family commits to spending \$200 each month at Giant and/or Weis, the Co-op can raise \$2,000. Just by grocery shopping!

Please see the sign-up sheet on the bulletin board at the Co-op to indicate how much you'd like to spend each month at Giant and/or Weis. The Co-op will purchase gift cards in that amount. Use your gift card for your regular grocery shopping and 5% of the money will go to the Co-op. Leave payment in the envelope provided next to the sign-up sheet. Please make checks out to the Co-op. The cards will be delivered to everyone at school the first week of each month. Friends and relatives are welcome to participate as well!

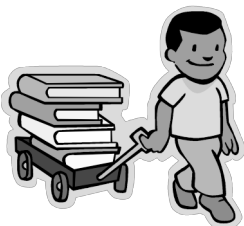
Cup Half Full Festival

The Co-op's Cup Half Full Festival will be held in November. While the festival does raise funds for the Co-op, its primary purpose is to be a fun event for the school and our community!

- Working with a local business, 2000 Degrees, we offer participants a chance to design and paint their own coffee cups and other items, and then have them professionally finished at a very competitive price, often a savings of 50%!
- We hope to see co-op families, alumni families, and your neighbors and friends, enjoying this fun activity!

Usborne Books

As a fundraiser this year, we will be offering families the opportunity to order from Usborne Books. These books are educational and multicultural, and most are hardback! Look for more information soon, including catalogs and a special party to see the books for yourself. Books will be delivered in time for Holiday gift-giving, and will earn the school money as well as free books. See Kelly with any questions.



Creating Meaningful Experiences for Our Children

by Mary Macalus (former coop teacher)

As parents and teachers of pre-school age children, we have all had the opportunity to witness our children meaningfully engaged in an activity. Whether it be dropping stones into a mud puddle to watch what happens, or squashing a ball of dough between their fingers again and again, children are learning by exploring the world around them. Our goal here at Coop is to create such experiences for our children without focusing on a finished product or outcome. By this we mean engaging children in play, giving them a variety of new materials to explore, and allowing them to do so on their own terms.

Imagine a child has just been asked to sit and create the same little white snowman she just saw her friend creating. This experience is not meaningful to her, but simply providing various art materials and allowing children to explore them is much more valuable to a child. That is not to say that a child should never create little white snowmen, but if she is left to do so in her own creative way, then she will be gaining much more from such an activity.

Consider the child who has been actively engaged in building with blocks for most of the morning. Although he has created nothing to take home, he has created his very own masterpiece again and again. For him it has been about the experience and not the finished product. He has been learning pre-math skills such as weight distribution, and has been working on social skills such as discovering the boundaries of others, compromise and working together.

Children learn best in an environment where they feel safe and secure. Part of feeling safe and secure is feeling as though you have ownership over your surroundings. Here at Coop the environment belongs to the children. We want children to feel free to explore what is here by setting boundaries, but not strict limits. We want to encourage our children to engage in play with others, but must respect the choices they make. We want to facilitate play experiences, but not dominate them. Flexibility is important when it comes to making changes in a planned activity. Observe what excites children and go with it.

The primary focus of each day should be to create meaningful experiences for the children you encounter. We can achieve such experiences by following the lead of our children. Children are experts at having fun and learning while doing so.

