

Cooperatively Speaking

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What is the Fourth “R”?

*By Lois Todd, retired co-op Kindergarten teacher
and PCPI Honorary Life Member*

Reciting your ABCs and your 123s is becoming the shorthand for the educational level of achievement of young children. By using such a term, we narrow the scope of what is valued in answer to the question “What should young children be learning?”

I’d like to turn your attention to the fourth R in the “readin, ritin, rithmetic” realm – RELATIONSHIPS. It is the basis for the other three “Rs” and very seldom gets any press. As children make sense of their world, they start from the very beginning to notice how things are alike and how they are different, that is, classification.

It has been said that to be unable to classify things would be like a rich man having all his wealth in pennies – very cumbersome indeed. If a child didn’t notice that trees and dogs were different, he would not be sure that a tree would not chase him at any moment. Knowing what to expect creates a manageable existence – it’s what makes life livable.

The perfecting of the ability to classify things is a long process. You’ve all met a baby who calls all four-legged, furry animals “doggies.” The sophistication of knowing that there are many different names for these creatures comes with experience. However, you need to know that a child needs to be 6 years old or more to be able to see that an object can belong in a larger category as well as a more specific one.

For instance, if a preschool child is shown a group of plastic animals, 8 cows and 2 sheep, and asked “Are the cows animals?” he’ll say “Yes.” “Are the sheep animals?” “Yes.” If then asked “Are there more cows or more animals?” the usual answer is “Oh, there are more cows!” The child’s eyes have told him to compare the 8 cows with the 2 sheep. Of course he sees there are more cows. The larger category ‘animals’ is abstract and is

overshadowed by the visual image right there in front of him.

If you observe children at PLAY you will see that they are hard at WORK putting things into relationships, in this case practicing classification, just for the fun of it. As with all learning, it is a simple process in the beginning. Usually a very young child starts out putting all the red blocks in one pile, blues in another and so on, but may change over to sorting by shape before he finishes the self-imposed session. It will not be long before he will be able to stick to one rule. And the categories will become more and more complicated as the child finds more ways to see relationships between objects.

The preschool curriculum provides many opportunities for classifying; perhaps the most obvious are the marked shelves and areas for the equipment the children use – art materials, blocks, and dramatic play accessories – to make them easy to find and put away, bringing order to the classroom instead of a jumbled mess. When their play involves putting the animals into the stalls of the barn in the block area or stocking the shelves of their store, they are learning classification. Play that

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Train in a Tunnel, by Ben, age 5

Becky Allen Parent Education Award

The 2007 Becky Allen Fund recipient is Granville Parent Cooperative in Granville, Ohio. The Becky Allen Fund was established in memory of Rebecca Allen, a founding member of PCPI. The Fund provides mini-grants for parent education programs.

Granville is planning an ambitious series of parent education seminars focusing on practical skills for parenting young children and building an understanding of child development. Part of the program will feature *The Art of Positive Parenting* series which includes seminars focused on building children's self-esteem and confidence, positive communication skills and positive guidance techniques. The seminars will be taught by local experts of the various topics.

The grant review committee was impressed with the scope of the project and the fact that it will have impact over time and for many parents.

If you are a U.S. school and PCPI member please consider applying for next year's grant. Information will be available in the fall issue of *Cooperatively Speaking*.

PCPI Annual Meetings

The PCPI Annual Meetings will take place in Ann Arbor, Michigan from May 10 – 13. Please contact Meg Kennedy Shaw with any questions: meeting @ preschools.coop



By Josie, Age 4

Responsibilities of a Board Member

Edited from the Winter 2003 the Bulletin of the Organization for Parent Participation in Childcare & Education, Ontario (OPPCEO)

You are on the Board for your child's centre or preschool; you have a job description, but you are still not sure about your role. The Board Handbook stresses that you are legally responsible for the management of the affairs and business of the centre.

One key point to remember is that **you are part of a team elected by the membership**. By yourself, you cannot legally make the decisions to manage the centre. Each state and province has developed rules for the exact role of a non-profit board, including a minimum number of members. Therefore, you should be reminding yourself that the other members of the Board are there to work with you to achieve the goals of the centre.

The following list of questions will assist you in determining **how effective you are as a member of the Board**.

- Do you use the strategic plan, mission statement, or the vision for the future during the decision-making process?
- Is the financial reporting at each Board meeting up-to-date and clearly understood by each Board member? This is of extreme importance!!
- Is the Finance Committee reviewing the budget at least semi-annually or more frequently if necessary?
- Does the Finance Committee have a long term plan (about 3 years) to maintain the financial health of the centre?
- Are the Policies and Procedures up-to-date? Do they reflect the daily operation of the centre? Have there been legislation changes to address?
- Does the centre have a Marketing or Public Relations Plan? Do you know what future trends in your community will affect the operation or enrollment of your centre?

As a member of the Board of Directors, this is an opportunity for you to use your skills for the benefit of the centre and in the process, improve your skills. But most importantly, your child(ren) will benefit from being in a program operated by an efficient Board.

Regulation! Regulation! Regulation!

How Your Council Can Help

By Carol Brown and Kathy Ems

State councils play an important role in assisting co-operative preschools and childcare centers. Understanding and responding to legislation that impacts our schools is one of those major roles.

In Oregon, for example, specific mention of co-operative preschools in the childcare regulations was deleted one legislative year. This required a number of changes, including the inability to serve children under the age of 3 using the current structure. The board of the Oregon Council (PCPO) began contacting legislators and planning a response. Before they had gotten too far, however, the childcare agency itself proposed legislation to reinstate the co-operative preschool section in the regulations. Such are the strange happenings in government.

Carol Brown, Executive Director of OPPCEO in Ontario, Canada, faces a long-term challenge as the province develops rules for water safety.

Eleven childcare co-ops in Ontario, Canada, were faced with mandatory water testing as required by the provincial government in 2004. There were several challenges for these centers with Regulation 170. Water testing was to be done weekly, the sample sent to a laboratory approved and designated by provincial authorities, and the designated person to draw the sample had to take a special training course. In some cases the lab was at a considerable distance from the center and courier costs to deliver the samples within 24 hours were very high (over \$100 weekly).

Failure to meet the regulated standard for the water test would result in closure of the center. Water for personal consumption had to be purchased from approved sources – not just any bottled water would do and most bottled water did not meet the Regulation standard.

The burden for each co-op was the high cost associated with testing, the necessity of having a trained person pull the sample and assure delivery, and dealing with the government official for the reporting process. The training of someone and requiring him/her to be the contact involved a lot of hours to expect from a volunteer. This person may no longer have a

child in the co-op, but still does the testing. An additional problem was that the Ministry continued to bring in new regulations which altered the expectations. To add to the confusion, Ministry staff in regional offices were hired on short term contracts, so the contact person had to re-educate or re-establish connections at the regional office about every six months.

The role of OPPCEO became one of tracking the proposed changes in regulations, alerting the co-ops' boards, and most importantly, providing the link between provincial Ministry staff and the local child care center. OPPCEO's Executive Director alerted centers to provincial funding available to provide financial relief from the costs connected with sampling, and for most of the co-ops, the capital funding of installing new water systems – from drilling new wells to installing water purification systems. One center had to lay all new pipe in their building as well.

At present the co-ops do not have to test weekly, but do test on an approved schedule. Any changes in test results require returning to the weekly schedule if deemed necessary.

All levels of government were involved. The layers of government (3 in Ontario) complicated all processes. When renovations occurred, the building codes had to be followed, so local authorities had to be called. Currently one co-op has been closed because of the lack of pure water and the inability to come to a satisfactory resolution of the problem cost-wise.

The pressure and intensity that these regulations have placed on a Board of Directors in small rural communities is considerable. Without the assistance of local and provincial councils, all of the centers would probably be closed at this time. OPPCEO continues to monitor the regulations and speak to Ministry staff to stay current with the legislative environment. The situation is on-going and councils will need to monitor the situation for the foreseeable future.

If you are unable to print this newsletter from the website, contact the editor at [bulletin @ preschools.coop](mailto:bulletin@preschools.coop)

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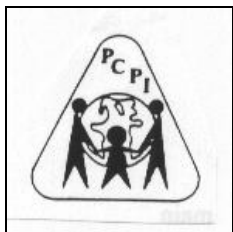
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Membership Year: January to December

Membership dues for **2007** are

Individual	\$40	Council	\$200
Schools/Groups	\$50	Libraries	\$ 40

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The Fourth "R"

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involves the child creating the categories rather than responding to predetermined sets on a worksheet is the most appropriate use of a child's time.

At home many natural avenues for sorting exist that don't require the purchase of flash cards, games or workbooks – items that are too limited in possibilities. One time-honored sorting tool was grandma's button box. The noted educator, Bev Bos, remembers fondly the hours she spent as a child separating buttons – 2 holes from 4 holes, metal from plastic, designs from plain – only to find them all mixed up again when she returned to grandma's the next week. Smart grandma!

If you are not a seamstress, you may not have buttons on hand, but your preschooler can be involved in such things as sorting laundry by color, heavy and light, and then re-sorting the same items to get the clothes to the right family members and further into the right drawers. There is real mental gymnastics in that process. (Do this early before somebody convinces them that it is work to be paid for!) It is an invaluable skill for anyone to learn – witness the college boy who comes home with pink underwear after putting it in the washer with the new red soccer shirt.

There are many home organizational necessities that involve classification so your child will gain experience without even realizing it. But if you'd like to be more playful, try a favorite kindergarten game that my class nicknamed "The Junk Game" because I told them I got the items out of my junk drawer. Gather items from all over the house: pencils, hairclips, rubber bands, plastic and metal forks, combs, anything and everything. When they are displayed on a table, take turns choosing two items. If you can explain why they go together you may keep them. The winner (if there needs to be one) is the last person to make a match, leaving all the rest as unmatchables. I was playing with one little boy who was determined to be the winner. He picked up the last two items, which I thought had absolutely nothing in common, saying "These match because they are both leftovers." Touché!