

Co-op Community News

From the North Seattle Cooperative Preschool Parent Advisory Council

January 2001

PAC: What and Why

by Tom Hobson, Co-op Parent

As we step into high gear with another annual raffle, we thought it might be a good time to take a look at the bigger picture of our North Seattle Community College - affiliated co-op system's Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and its activities. For most of us, our contact with PAC is this newsletter and the raffle -- PAC activities, indeed, but only two of the many benefits we receive through the work of this body.

Scholarships

The societal and individual benefits of preschool can hardly be overstated. Study after study demonstrates that quality early childhood education is a strong indicator of a child's future academic success. Many of these studies show that even as early as kindergarten, there is a marked difference between those who have had preschool experience and those who haven't. Unfortunately, our public schools don't provide this important opportunity, leaving many lower income children without access to preschool education, forcing individual families to do without. One of the primary functions of your Parent Advisory Council (PAC) is to make the cooperative preschool experience available to those not otherwise able to afford it. Nearly 90 percent of PAC's annual budget is distributed to needy families in the form of scholarships. Our Scholarship Committee has a difficult job determining who qualifies for financial aid. At some level everyone feels like they deserve assistance, but our committee, working with NSCC staff and members of the community, make sure that only those who would not otherwise be able to attend a co-op receive assistance. Qualifying families may receive scholarships equaling up to 50 percent of tuition costs.

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Event Calendar



- Jan 14 - PAC meeting
- Jan 21 - Martin Luther King Day
- Feb 1 - Day between semesters - not holiday or vacation
- Feb 11 - PAC meeting (raffle tickets due)
- Feb 18 - President's Day
- Feb 18-22 - Midwinter break
- Feb TBA - In-house registration
- Feb TBA - Treasurer's workshop
- March 2 - Open registration
- March 8 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation
- March 11 - PAC meeting (raffle drawing)
- March 15 - Professional development day - not holiday or vacation

WANTED

CHILDREN'S ARTWORK

for our newsletter

- * All drawings should be made in line art form meaning using a dark pen or marker- preferably black.
- * All artwork should be submitted to your PAC Rep's. folder.
- * All artwork should have your child's name, age, school, and name of drawing, if exists, written on back.
- * All artwork will be scanned and returned to you.

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Annually, around 75 families, or 10 percent of our co-op population, are assisted in this way.

Parent Education and Enrollment Support

With the other 10% of its budget, PAC provides a number of other important benefits to its member co-ops, including quarterly parent education seminars and lectures, featuring some of our area's leading experts on children and education. Past events have included such important topics as sibling rivalry, emotional intelligence, and the effects of television on our children's developing brains. Watch these pages for dates and subjects. PAC also supports co-ops by orchestrating the open registration to enroll new children, monitoring openings at individual co-ops and assisting those who need help to fill up those empty slots.

Kindergarten Preparation

As your child approaches the end to his or her preschool years, attention turns to the often complex and confusing world of kindergarten. PAC's Kindergarten Readiness Committee is responsible for producing comprehensive "Kindergarten Readiness" folders as well as generating kindergarten-related information for this newsletter. This information saves co-op parents an incredible amount of time and energy by providing data and advice about their options for kindergarten.

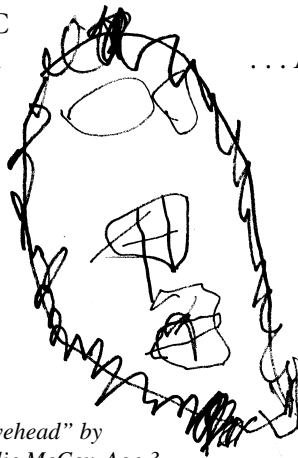
Politics and Communication

The pressures and demands of work and parenting often leave us time for little else, especially when it comes to keeping track of what those sneaky elected officials and policy-makers are up to. PAC's Political Action Committee keeps us informed of relevant political and social issues regarding children and education, letting us know about developments that will improve our kid's educational opportunities and

calling us to action when the best interests of our children are threatened.

The most elementary purpose of PAC, however, is to increase the quality of communication between all the NSCC co-ops. To that end, this newsletter and our web site (nscx.sccd.ctc.edu/~parented) exist to inform you about important dates (e.g., scholarship deadlines, upcoming seminars and lectures, raffle information), disseminate the reports for the various PAC committees, and serve as a clearinghouse for ideas, solutions and techniques from other preschools.

... And now back to resetting the alarm clock ...



"Olivehead" by Natalie McCoy, Age 3



Keys to Communication

By Mary Ann Abbott, Parent Educator

Effectively communicating with young children is an art, which demands special skills. Many times an adult feels as if he/she has communicated with a young child but, in essence, has really interfered with communication.

Every adult (both teacher and parent) brings a natural style to talking with children. The adult's established style of communication reflects his/her background, the style of the family

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Web Site: gonorth.org or

<http://nscx.sccd.ctc.edu/~parented/>

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of origin, and what has been learned from others. This style is usually well meaning but can lead to a dead end and sometimes provokes a negative response from the child. With some self-analysis of one's style and some conscious retraining of old patterns, the adult can more effectively connect with young children and thereby model techniques the child can imitate.

LISTENING

The most important part of communicating with young children is listening. Listening includes being attentive to both nonverbal and verbal cues, showing understanding of a situation with a response, and finally putting the message the adult receives into words. For the child who is still working on language skills, the adult supplies the words the child cannot yet articulate. "You're upset. It scared you when Kyle shoved you down." Such a response lets the child know you are listening and trying to understand. Communication has occurred!

LOOKING FOR THE GOOD

A popular phrase, "Catch them being good" is an excellent guide for interacting with young children. This means acknowledging desirable behavior in an intentional way by addressing a behavior you like with one's eyes, one's total body language, a gesture, a secret code, words, or the like. "You were kind to your sister when you shared your cookie." "Thank you for remembering the rule about not asking for a toy in the store." The important part of this technique is to be specific about the **behavior**, avoid "good job" which is not specific and phrases such as "good boy" which are attached to personhood. An adult can use an "I" statement such as "I like your building," which is also a general statement. A better approach, which encourages creativity and experimentation, is "Look at all the different ways you've stacked the blocks on each other. You are working hard balancing each block." This adult response is not hollow praise; instead, it conveys the adult's specific observation of the child's activities.

TALKING DOWN

Young children, especially older preschoolers, do not like to be "talked down to." An adult insults a child when he/she asks a question he/she knows the answer to. For example, in

an effort to start a conversation with a 4 year-old, the adult says, "Hi, Jenny! So, what color is your dress today?" Jenny's response is slightly disgusted, "Well, don't you know?" The child is not fooled; the child knows when he/she is being talked down to - in words or tone - and, like an adult, doesn't like it.

CONFUSING QUESTION: "Why did you do that?"

In a redirection or disciplining situation, an adult may ask of a young child: "Why did you do that?" Some may go on to say: "Don't you know better?" or "What am I going to do with you?" or "I thought we talked about this."



"Miranda listening to the radio with Bandages" by Miranda LaFond, Age 3

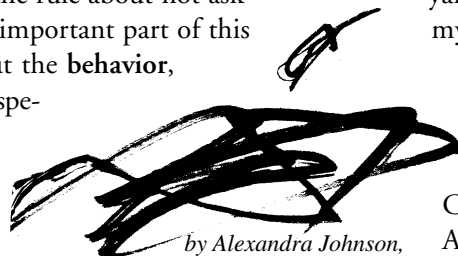
None of these questions promote communication. Usually the young child cannot articulate "why" - it just happened, most likely, because young children are explorers and interact with the environment. The adult can state the obvious and apply some problem-solving techniques. A mother has her knitting yarn balls in a basket in the family room. When the mother was not around, her children, ages 3 and 4, began playing "ball" with the yarn balls. Mother came upon the scene with disgust and sorrow. None of the above responses will help. Mother states the obvious, "Oh, no, the yarn balls are all tangled up! This yarn is not for playing. They are not toys. They're for my knitting. I'm going to need help fixing them."

Mother then tries to connect the desire to throw with an acceptable activity and **does not leave here yarn out again.**

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CONFUSING QUESTION: "Do you want to ...?"

Another common question often sends a mixed message. A parent is leaving preschool with her child. The parent says, "Do you want to put your coat on?" This sounds like the child has a choice, when, in fact, the child does not have a choice. The child is going to wear the coat. Rather, the parent should say exactly what she wants: "It's time to get your coat on." or "If you'll get your coat on, we'll go to Bonnie's house." Avoid: "Do you want to get your pajamas on?" "Do you want to pick up those toys before we go?" Most of the time the child will say "no" to these requests and start a power struggle. A lot of energy is



by Alexandra Johnson, Age 21 month

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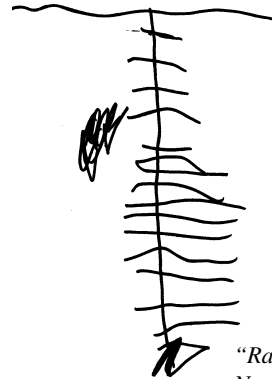
saved by making a clear statement such as "It's time to get those pajamas on."

VALIDATING FEELINGS

The validation of feelings is another important aspect of communication. An adult is tempted to try to change a child's feelings: Child: "The soup's hot." Adult: "It's barely warm." The adult is attempting to control the child's impressions. Child: (sobbing) "I want my mommy." Adult: "Your mommy had to go to work. She'll be back later." (This is factual, but validating feelings says more.) "You're really upset about your mommy leaving." What the child really needs is for the adult to listen to him/her and acknowledge his/her distress. An adult often tries to relieve the pain and distress quickly so the child will not "suffer" or pretend the pain doesn't exist. Validating a child's feelings helps the child have a sense of reality and gives the child the coping skills needed for the upset. Entering the world of young children brings new challenges each day. An adult who listens to a child, takes care with questions, reinforces desired behaviors, respects, encourages, and validates feelings begins to unlock the treasures in that child.



"Crying whale in a sea cave" by Sam Stanmour, Age 3



"Rainbow" by Natalie McCoy, Age 3

Co-op Openings

These co-ops had openings as of December 5. There may be some changes. The PAC website has full listings: <http://nscctx.sccd.ctc.edu/~parented/>

Toddlers

- Northgate p.m.....3
524-6736 - Jill Colley
- Olympic Toddler.....1
527-8087 - Amy Kelsey

Pre-3's

- Crown Hill.....1
783-3916 - Charlotte Hollebeke
- Northgate (2-5's).....7
782-9591 - Joan Leppek
- Wedgwood.....2
523-5261 - Cindy Winemiller

3 to 5's

- Ingraham.....6
363-6816 - Carolyn Foster
- Wallingfor p.m..... ..6
366-0806 - Ingrid Falip
- Crown Hill PM.....1
784-4501 - Amy Gannar
- Meadowbrook 5s.....1
523-6064 - Dennis Bateman
- Sandhurst.....2
368-8777 - Lorinda Strellnavar-Gadwill

Scholarships are available through the Parent Advisory Council .