

# 1. Introduction

## Welcome to the Cordova Bay Preschool

The Executive members of the Cordova Bay Preschool extend a special welcome to your family. Now that you have joined a co-operative preschool you may find that there is so much information presented in such a short time it is hard to absorb it all at once. This portfolio is designed to make your initiation into the Cordova Bay Preschool as comfortable as possible by acquainting you with the many aspects of our preschool and your role in it.

It may seem like there are a lot of rules for something as simple as a preschool but many of the rules are made by the Provincial Government and we must follow them if we are to retain our license. Others pertain to standards set by the Vancouver Island Co-operative Preschool Association (VICPA), our umbrella organization, and we must follow those to retain our membership in that association. Just remember that there is a reason for everything and no rule is too hard to live with.

In choosing a co-operative preschool, you have chosen to become involved in your child's first school experience. Our preschool provides children with the opportunity to develop social, emotional, physical and intellectual skills. At the same time it gives parents access to other families with children of the same age for friendship and mutual support and it can offer the opportunity to grow as a parent through contact with our highly qualified, experienced E.C.E

The Cordova Bay Preschool is a good preschool because of our E.C.E. and the fact that it is parent owned. The co-operative philosophy is its foundation. We are all responsible for the effective running of the preschool by participating as parent helpers in the classroom, attending monthly general meetings and by taking on a specific volunteer job. As a parent participation preschool, we ask for a commitment from parents in terms of time, initiative and responsibility but each family's contribution enriches the environment for both children and parents.

We hope that your time here will be as beneficial for you as it is for your child. Please refer to this portfolio as often as required throughout the year.

## History of Co-operative Preschools

The first co-operative nursery school in the United States was started in Chicago in 1916, by a group of 12 faculty wives at the University of Chicago. These women wanted a secure social education for their children, parent education for themselves and a little free time for Red Cross work during World War I.

This first parent co-operative was followed in the 1920s by five others. One of those was in Berkeley, California where, assisted by the University of California, the parent co-operatives got their first real foothold. Here in California, Dr. Katherine Whiteside Taylor became teacher and later matriarch of the Co-op concept. Dr. Whiteside Taylor was an expert on preschoolers, co-operative preschools and a sought-after lecturer before her death in 1989.

The co-op movement expanded to Canada over 50 years ago. Here in Victoria in the early 1940s, Mrs. W.W. McGill started reading books to the neighborhood children in her own home on Tattersall. "The Garden Library" quickly became so popular that when 200 children wanted to participate in 1944, she founded the first co-operative playgroup in the Gonzales area. By this time the Seattle public school system had begun training parents to operate co-operative playgroups under the direction of Dr. Katherine Whiteside Taylor, and Mrs. McGill spent some time there learning to establish such schools in British Columbia. By 1949, 50 parents were members of eight playgroups which joined together to form the Vancouver Island Co-op Playgroup Association. Today, through the association's membership in Parent Co-operative Preschools International (PCPI), we share common goals with over 100,000 families in over 130,000 preschools around the world.

## **Learning Through Play**

The "learning through play" philosophy is the most current and accepted philosophy of early childhood. This philosophy was first used by a man by the name of Froebel. Froebel believed that "Play is the Child's Work." This is also my personal philosophy and the philosophy of all the co-operative preschools.

Children learn as they manipulate their environment. Play is the fundamental, natural, universal activity of children. Play is what children do, what they have always done and what they must continue to do. Play is intrinsically motivated for personal satisfaction. The child learns through the process of play because of his inner drive to explore, experiment and discover. It is the way they orientate themselves to their environment.

There are a number of different forms of play. When looking at the different types, you will notice a difference in how the child orients himself in the situation and how he will react depends on what he/she is learning. It is one of the great delusions of education that what is being taught is what is being learned and that this will somehow pay off in money. Let's look at some different forms of play.

- **Unoccupied Behavior.** To an observer, the child does not appear to be playing at all but is occupied with watching anything that happens to be of momentary interest.

- **Solitary Play.** The child plays alone and independently. Interest is centered on his/her activity without reference to what others are doing.
- **Onlooker Behavior.** The child watches others play, talks to them, asks questions and makes suggestions but does not enter into play.
- **Parallel Play.** The child plays with other children and uses similar materials to them but not necessarily in the same way. The children are not playing with each other.
- **Associative Play.** The child plays with other children and shares materials in similar activity.
- **Co-operative or Organized Supplementary Play.** The child plays in a group that is organized for the purpose of making something, attaining a goal, dramatizing a situation or playing a formal game. There is a marked sense of either belonging or not belonging to the group.

It is important to understand that these types of play are not stages and that the child will select the type of play that meets their needs.

Preschool provides an environment where children are permitted to explore different types of play and materials spontaneously. All the play and materials are meaningless without the magic ingredient of other children. The children become socialized in their work place. They are learning the rules they will need to survive in a very socialized society. They are putting the “human” in human being. The E.C.E’s job is to prepare a safe and stimulating environment for them to explore, guiding them through until they can function independently in it. The feeling of functioning independently with control in an environment builds a very positive self-concept. This is what we want for our children.

This is done at school through learning centers. Learning centers allow the children to pursue the learning of a variety of concepts and skills at their own rates. The environment is adapted to their stage of development and is success oriented. Each task can be pursued according to the individual child’s ability. Because preschool reflects the child’s integrated way of learning, the physical space, equipment and materials are organized so that children can learn while pursuing activities of interest to them. The differing needs of all children can be met when a variety of experiences and activities are provided. Each child will have a personalized experience. Through first-hand experiences, children accommodate new information and assimilate it to their present way of thinking about themselves and the world, thereby forming a new way of perceiving reality. Some centers (such as sand, water, modeling, music, art, construction, manipulation and dramatic play) remain in use throughout the year, but the materials at these centers are changed to provide for a variety of learning experiences.

Although the E.C.E. may not be able to alter the facility, preschool supplies and equipment are arranged to provide for individual, small group and large group activities. Furniture and equipment are placed to provide a safe and attractive environment. Children can move about the space without bothering others. A variety of equipment is readily available. Tools, equipment and resources are suitable for this age group and the best possible quality. Things that stimulate discussion and exploration are included in the environment.