PARENT CHILD PRESCHOOLS ORGANIZATION

A PLACE FOR EVERYONE: HOW CO-OP PARENTS HELP BUILD INCLUSIVE CLASSROOMS

A Family Education Article - April 2026

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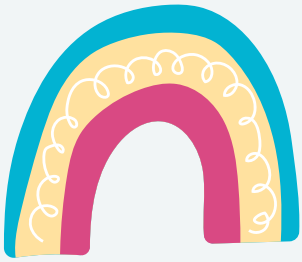
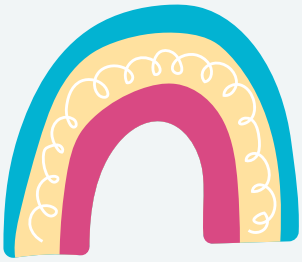
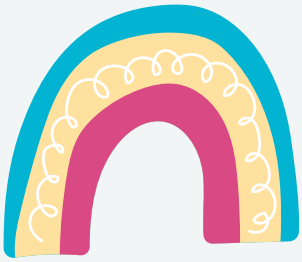
At our recent PCPO Teacher Education Workshop, co-op teachers came together to share ideas, swap stories, and learn from one another—something they love to do almost as much as they love your kids! This time, the conversation focused on how we can best support all learners, especially children with different needs, learning styles, or challenges.

One of the things that makes a co-op so special is you, the parents. Every day, parent helpers step into the classroom to model kindness, support children through big (and small!) moments, and help create a space where every child feels valued, seen, and loved.

Of course, being in a busy preschool classroom can sometimes feel a little overwhelming. You might wonder, "Am I doing this right?" or pause in the moment thinking, "What should I say here?" or "How can I best connect with this child?"

Here's the good news: those questions are completely normal—and you're not expected to have all the answers. Your teachers are there to support you just as much as they support the children. Below, you'll find a few simple, but practical tips shared during the workshop to help you feel more confident and comfortable when supporting children in the classroom.

Tips for Parent Helpers from the Experts-Teachers!

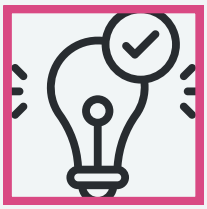
- Educate yourself! Picture books about inclusion and acceptance can be helpful for educating yourself as well as your own child about different needs and abilities.
- You come with your own unique abilities, don't be shy in letting your teacher know your strengths and what you feel comfortable doing. Teachers love learning from you too!
- Learn to notice the difference between a child's capabilities vs. the stated expectations. The expectation might be for everyone to sit quietly at the carpet, but that may be beyond a child's capability at the moment. This can help answer the question "why is one child not doing what the rest of the class is doing?
- Ask to debrief with the teacher after school to talk through your experience helping in the classroom and any questions that came up.
- Work with your school to create a "Clues for Connection" page for each child, which can give all parent helpers ideas or prompts for how to connect with each child or understand the challenges a specific child may have.
- Keep children's basic needs in mind, if a child's basic needs (hunger, bathroom, how clothing feels, body temperature) aren't being met, they will struggle to learn or follow classroom expectations.
- Be a "Behavior Detective". Help yourself and others in the classroom understand what the child is trying to communicate with their behavior. Staying curious and objective helps maintain child's dignity and models this for their peers.
- Use the prompt, "I'm wondering if..." when being a behavior detective. This helps honor the voice of the child.
- Keep the best intention of the child in mind, what is this child trying to communicate?
- Remember you can lean on your teacher in tricky situations. Asking for help is always okay.

Remember!

All of these tips are just one piece of the pie when it comes to creating classrooms of belonging. Building empathy and a sense of shared responsibility amongst you as parents is also vital in the work of helping all children feel seen and valued members of their community.







Resources to Learn More

Book List: Inclusion and Understanding Differences

Assisting in the Classroom - A resource article for Parents

Be A Behavior Detective: Understanding your Child's Actions

Reframe the Behavior visual