

All Austin Cooperative Nursery School  
 2301 Hancock Drive  
 Austin, Texas 78756  
 Phone: (512) 454-5315  
 Fax: (512) 454-5316



2021–2022 HANDBOOK FOR MEMBERS

TABLE OF CONTENTS

HISTORY.....	2
SCHOOL ORGANIZATION.....	2
PHILOSOPHY & VALUES.....	2
PARENT INVOLVEMENT.....	3
STRATEGIC GOALS.....	3
A. Helping Parent Role.....	
B. Parent Education .....	5
C. Support Jobs.....	6
D. Financial Obligations.....	6
E. Workdays.....	7
F. Other Meetings.....	7
G. Notes.....	7
ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE.....	7
SPECIAL PROCEDURES.....	8
SNACK TIME.....	9
HEALTH POLICY.....	9
GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES.....	12
WITHDRAWAL.....	13
SPECIAL POLICIES.....	13
LIVINGTREE GUIDELINES.....	14
INTRODUCTION TO STAFF.....	15
APPENDIX: SUPPORT JOBS.....	17

**HISTORY**

In 1953, a group of parents founded the All Austin Cooperative Nursery School (the Co-op) to provide a racially integrated, educationally sound learning environment for their children. Over the years the Co-op grew into a family-centered school, continuing to maintain a policy of nondiscrimination with regard to race, religion, color, and national origin.

A central component of child's play is their environment, and the Co-op is in the rare and fortunate position of owning its own building. In 2002, on the eve of its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary, the Co-op was finally able to realize its dream of purchasing, renovating and moving into a building designed solely for the use of young children and their families. With an eye to the future, the Co-op purchased an adjacent property in 2009. The collective vision was to use this space to enhance outdoor learning experiences. Today it looks like it has always been part of our school.

The child-centered environment fostered by the Co-op builds community and attracts excellent teachers. We value our teachers, work to meet their needs, and have been rewarded with long term relationships— some of which have spanned more than 20 years!

Our 65-year history reflects our commitment to community and to meeting the intrinsic and universal needs of children.

## **SCHOOL ORGANIZATION**

The Board of Directors (consisting of elected parent members, teacher representatives, and the Director) is the governing body of the school and is responsible for making policy and conducting the routine business of the school. The Director serves in both administrative and advisory capacities. The structure of the Co-op allows parents several avenues for communicating their ideas or concerns: with their teacher, the Director, or the Board.

The cooperative structure of AACNS calls for special attention to the working relationship between parents and teachers. Consistent and constructive communication is essential. While the teacher's primary responsibility in the classroom is to the children, the teacher also has a role in guiding the helping parent to develop independence and confidence in working with the children. Periodic meetings of parents with the teacher further promote a continuing dialogue, which helps to effectively address the needs of the children.

## **PHILOSOPHY, PROMISE AND BELIEFS**

### ***OUR PHILOSOPHY***

- Young children learning through play
- Active exploration
- Problem solving
- Respect for other ideas and perspectives
- Learning in an inviting, relaxed, and accepting atmosphere
- Guiding children's physical, intellectual, emotional, and social development
- Encouraging active engagement with a variety of rich, diverse materials
- Risk taking and encouraging independence

### ***OUR PROMISE***

#### **To LISTEN to children**

Children have a way of defying even the broadest generalizations. They are steadfastly their own unique selves— complete with idiosyncrasies and anxieties, interests and intolerances, passions and whims. Rather than empty vessels waiting to be filled, children come to the Co-op with inestimable depths to share. Recognizing and drawing out their one-of-a-kind gifts requires of us a certain watchfulness—a laying aside of assumptions and a willingness to listen, observe, and learn. In a culture that values busyness over reflection, sometimes our biggest challenge is not one of action, but one of restraint. When we allow children to finish a thought, sketch out an idea, follow a musing, or weigh their options, we demonstrate our sincere interest and legitimize their priorities and perspective. That radical respect is a hallmark of the Co-op approach, and it makes for an environment of mutual trust and acceptance.

#### **To JOURNEY with them on paths they choose**

Who better to set a course for the discoveries of childhood than children themselves? They are uniquely qualified— equipped with boundless curiosity, imagination, initiative, and industry. Our exceptionally skilled teachers, having

thoughtfully designed their indoor and outdoor spaces, invite children to lead the way in deciding what and how to explore. Of course, that doesn't mean leaving them to their own devices. It means fueling their natural eagerness by offering support for problem solving, providing an abundance of carefully selected materials, allowing ample time for inquiry, and forgoing a rigid curriculum in favor of open-ended pursuits. The result is near-infinite experiential variety and it's the reason that no two days at the Co-op are ever alike.

**To CREATE COMMUNITY that supports children and their families**

The cooperative model requires genuine effort on the part of our families. We have seen through deliberate intention we become a community in both word and deed. As we shoulder our helping parent roles, support jobs and workday commitments, our sweat equity is transformed into a deeply felt sense of ownership and commitment. More often than not, enduring friendships are forged—not just among the children, but also among moms, dads, caretakers, and siblings. We share crises and triumphs, pitfalls and potlucks, and our families draw strength from these abiding connections. In a world that feels increasingly fractured and fragmented, this model of community is one of the most meaningful gifts we can give children.

**OUR BELIEFS**

- A. *Childhood unfolds***
- B. *Play ignites***
- C. *Nature inspires***
- D. *Community matters***
- E. *Cooperation works***

**STRATEGIC GOALS 2016-2021**

During the 2015-2016 school year, the Co-op Board and Staff established the following priorities for the strategic direction of the Co-op for the next five years:

1. Create and maintain a capital improvement plan for repairs and improvements.
2. Revise the Mission Statement and Guidelines.
3. Create a fundraising committee to evaluate our fundraising strategy.
4. Create a playground committee to consider possible additions to the outside space.
5. Consider teacher and staff succession planning and staff professional development opportunities annually.
6. Communicate with the alumni community more frequently.

**PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

**A. Helping Parent Role**

1. Parents from each family serve as assistants to the teacher in their child's classroom on a regularly scheduled basis. Those who perform this function must: be a parent or guardian of the child; be able to perform helping parent duties; complete orientation requirements (see below); be fully vaccinated against Covid-19; be available for one to two class sessions per month for each child enrolled; not be accompanied by the child's sibling(s) as state regulations preclude their presence; and refrain from smoking anywhere on the school premises.

2. Orientation

(a) Orientation serves two basic functions:

- (i) It provides the parent with information that will enable her/him to move more easily and confidently into classroom activities.
- (ii) It gives parents peace of mind in knowing that all adults in the classroom have a shared understanding of the principles behind our curriculum goals as well as a notion of appropriate ways

to interact with the children in the class.

(b) The format for orientation this year will be as follows:

- (i) All parents who will be participating as helping parent must attend the general Parent Orientation. If a parent has not attended the orientation meeting, he/she should consult the Director for additional information and permission to serve as helping parent.
- (ii) Home visits or a special school visit will be scheduled individually with each family prior to the first day of school. At these visits, the teacher will get acquainted with the child and the parent(s) and answer the parent's questions as time allows.
- (iii) The first class meeting of the year will be scheduled by your child's teacher in August or September. The purpose of the meeting is to discuss helping parent roles in the classroom and teachers' and parents' goals for the children.
- (iv) New Parent Orientation is held in the first weeks of school. Families who are new to the Co-op must attend this orientation prior to working in the classroom.

### 3. Parents' Classroom Responsibilities

- (a) Be prepared to work as helping parent one or two times per month. A calendar is maintained for each class by the room representative. If you cannot fulfill your responsibility as helping parent on a particular day you must make arrangements to trade with another parent. If you cannot arrange a trade, then you must contact your room rep. After arranging a trade, you should note the change on the class calendar and inform the room rep of the change. Repeated failure to fulfill scheduled helping parent duty may result in a request for withdrawal. See the withdrawal section of this handbook for more information on withdrawal policy.
- (b) On helping parent days arrive at school by 8:45 (8:15 for 4s/5s classes). **Cell phones should be turned off upon arrival at school and should only be used for emergencies.** Be prepared to stay at school until 12:30 (1:00 4/5s classes in the fall and 1:45 in the spring). The time before and after class is intended for preparation and cleanup. It also allows time for teacher and parent to talk about plans or special concerns. Please dress for active participation. Expect to get as dirty as the children. Per state licensing regulations, siblings may not join the class on these days. We encourage parents with infants and toddlers to "swap" childcare with other classroom parents in the same situation. If you would like some help linking up with another parent, please ask the Director or assistant to the Director.
- (c) Follow the teacher's guidance on participation in the classroom. The class notes section (at the end of this handbook) has specific information for each class on classroom routines and the next section contains suggestions for working with children. The curriculum goals, which are maintained in the Director's office, provide more detailed information on school philosophy.
- (d) The helping parent may be responsible for providing the snack (see the Snack Time section).
- (e) Parents are asked to sweep under snack and art tables according to teacher's directions and to clean snack tables, countertops, and classroom sinks. Once classroom surfaces are clean, please spray with sanitizing solution.
- (f) All art materials, as well as inside and outside toys, should be put away for the day.
- (g) Please check with your teacher to be sure all cleanup obligations have been met prior to leaving.

#### 4. Discipline policy and suggestions for working with children

Our discipline policy (adapted from the Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance):

- (i) Uses only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction. There must be no harsh, cruel or unusual treatment of any child.
- (ii) Individualized and consistent for each child
- (iii) Appropriate to the child's level of understanding
- (iv) Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control

In general, children will feel most comfortable if you can:

- (i) Use a low voice when conversing.
- (ii) Sit on the floor or a child-sized seat so that your physical size does not overwhelm.
- (iii) Listen carefully to what children say. This indicates adult respect of their ideas and models listening behavior that the children will eventually imitate.
- (iv) Be available but not intrusive. If children are productively engaged, it's okay to watch. Be aware that preschool-aged children learn more by doing than by talking (or listening to adults). Too much adult chatter is a distraction, and in the case of the youngest children it prevents them from practicing newfound vocabulary.

Classroom techniques that have met with success over the years include:

- (i) Telling children what to do rather than what not to do. For example, instead of, "We don't throw the toys," a more helpful comment might be "Balls are for throwing; blocks are for building."
- (ii) Giving choices when possible. Where compliance is necessary or expected (such as at clean-up time or at fire drills), use a matter-of-fact, no-nonsense tone. In some situations, a humorous approach works well.
- (iii) Giving children sincere approval when they accomplish a task that is difficult for them.
- (iv) Encouraging growth toward independence. Certainly, a child's request for help should be honored but in a way that leads him/her in the direction of self-reliance. Our goal is to help each child develop the self-esteem that comes with a sense of one's own competence.
- (v) Letting children know of changes in the routine. Giving notice near the end of an activity time gives children a chance to complete their projects.
- (vi) Verbally acknowledging children's feelings. Language can serve to moderate strong emotions. Assuring children that these emotions are universal helps them to feel they have an ally in the understanding adult. Anger, frustration, hunger, fatigue, sadness, and excitement can all be part of a young child's day.

#### B. Parent Education

Continuing education for Co-op members is an important part of participation in the Co-op. It allows us to gain a better understanding of children's development, to better equip us to work with children in groups, and to foster the parent-teacher relationship. Meeting these goals will improve the classroom experience for all—children, parents, and teachers.

A variety of opportunities for discussion and information gathering are offered during the school year. They include:

1. Class meetings, which are arranged by the room reps, in concert with the Director and teachers. These meetings are to discuss classroom procedures, child rearing concerns, and other Co-op business as needed. We urge one parent from each family to attend these meetings.
2. Parent seminars are scheduled periodically and provide Co-op wide discussion groups focusing on particular topics of interest. In the past, discussions about sibling relationships; discipline; the schools of Reggio Emilia, Italy; and kindergarten options have been offered. Attendance is optional.
3. The parent–teacher library (located on the shelves in the entryway) houses a variety of books and articles relating to early education and child development. Parents are encouraged to sign these out. Additional written information that may be of interest to parents can be found on school and classroom bulletin boards, and on our school website at [www.allaustincoop.org](http://www.allaustincoop.org).

#### C. Committee/Support Jobs

Committee/support jobs are essential to the smooth operation of the Co-op. Each family is responsible for either serving on the Board of Directors or filling one support job each year. Jobs are typically selected during the summer and are held until the end of the school year. While the basic framework for support jobs is consistent year to year, there may be specific jobs created or eliminated each year based on the needs of the school and the talents of the community. See the Appendix at the end of the handbook for a chart of this year’s Support Jobs.

#### D. Financial Obligations

1. Registration Fees – Families pay a nonrefundable building fee of \$350 for the first child and \$200 for concurrently enrolled siblings to help the school meet the increased costs that have come with owning our own building. The first tuition installment is due on May 1st to hold a place in classes starting in the fall.
2. Tuition-

(a) Tuition rates and class sizes are as follows:

<u>Schedule</u>	<u>Tuition Rate</u>
2 days/week	\$280/month
3 days/week	\$350/month
5 days/week	\$650/month

- (b) Tuition-rates are divided into 10 equal installments, with the first payment be made during the registration process and then monthly, September-May. Tuition is due on the first school day of each month. A late fee of \$15.00 will be charged after the tenth day of the month. These late fees are currently being directed to the scholarship fund. If your financial situation causes you to fall behind in tuition payments, please consult the Director about a payment plan. The late fee will be levied if the Director is not consulted before the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month. Failure to meet required financial obligations may result in a request for withdrawal from AACNS. See the Withdrawal section of this handbook for more information on withdrawal policy.
- (c) Scholarships and loans are provided on an as-needed basis. In general, applications are submitted and approved in the spring of the previous school year. Should financial need arise during the school year, application can be made for funds that may still be available. Please see the Director.
- (d) Tuition checks made out to “All Austin Cooperative Nursery School” or “AACNS” (no cash please) may be mailed or placed in the wooden mailbox in the Director’s office. Families may contribute to the financial aid program by increasing the amount of the tuition check, and the surplus will automatically go to fund financial aid. This is an easy way for those who can afford it to give the Co-op extra support.

### 3. Fundraising

Various fundraising projects throughout the year provide the resources necessary for the continued financial stability and growth of the Co-op. A portion of these funds is earmarked for operating expenses. This practice allows tuition rates to stay competitive while maintaining a level of staff salary commensurate with the high quality, experience, and commitment of our staff. Extra income also allows us to offer financial aid to families in need, make improvements on classroom and playground equipment, and meet unexpected needs as they arise.

Because income from yearly fundraising events is vital to the Co-op, all families are required to participate in the Co-op's two major fundraisers. In addition to raising needed revenue, they also give us the opportunity to work (and sometimes play) together for the benefit of our school and children, give back to the community, publicize the Co-op, and demonstrate cooperative behavior to our children. In the past, our primary fundraiser is a silent auction held the first Saturday of December. In the spring we will have our traditional school-wide fair. Raising funds are more important than ever, and our fundraising activities may be adjusted in response to group gatherings and Covid. Be on the lookout for creative endeavors ahead!

### E. Workdays

The workdays are occasions for us to work together to clean, renovate, repair, and tackle special school projects. Workdays are scheduled once a month. Each family must attend one workday each year. Children are not allowed to attend due to safety concerns.

### F. Other Meetings

The Board of Directors meets monthly. An email notification will be sent out for dates and times. Policy changes will be communicated to Co-op members through e-mail messages, bulletin board announcements, or official notifications placed in Co-op members' mail tubes. (All Co-op members are welcome to attend Board meetings.)

### G. Notes

1. Parents are welcome to visit the school at all times.
2. Information regarding state minimum standards for child-care centers, the results of our school's most recent inspection, how to contact the local DFPS licensing office (908-9650, ext. 590), DFPS child abuse hotline (1-800-252-5400), and the DFPS website ([www.tdprs.state.tx.us](http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us)) are available in the Director's office.
3. Smoking is not allowed in the building or on the playground.
4. A certified organic pest control company is used as needed to control pests.
5. Birthdays and some holidays are observed in the classroom with appropriate ceremony. However, this does not include big cakes, gifts, or party favors. Your teacher can tell you what is customary in your class and provide guidance on any ideas you may have. One option many families have chosen is to bring a small gift for the classroom (such as a book or puzzle) on the child's birthday. If you would like to do this, consider consulting your teacher to ask if there are particular items on a wish list.
6. The Co-op supports the right of mothers to breastfeed. If a private location is desired, please speak with the Director.
7. AACNS is a gang-free zone.

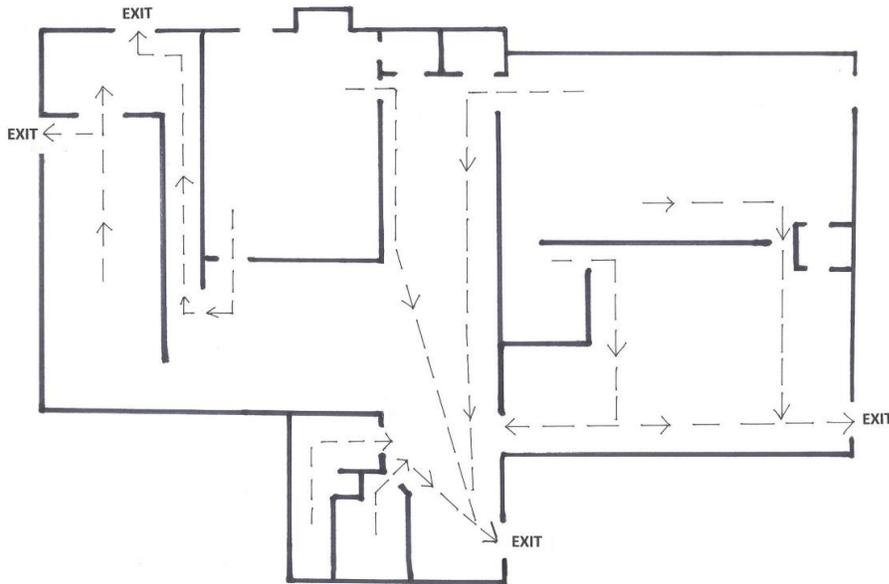
## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

- A. Each parent is responsible for the safe arrival of his/her child at AACNS. You and your child will follow the drop off and pick up procedure specified by your child's class. Please do not leave siblings in the car during this time.
- B. The front doors will be locked during the school day. Please ring the doorbell and someone will let you in.
- C. Since outside play is a vital part of the class routine, children should be dressed for active participation and in clothing appropriate for the weather each class day. Shoes with non-skid soles are necessary for outdoor play. Jackets, hats, gloves, etc., will be needed for the colder days.
- D. In accordance with current medical recommendations on protecting children's skin from exposure to the sun, parents should consider applying sunscreen and bug spray to their child at drop off. Parents must give permission to teachers/helping parent to apply products with DEET.
- E. If you are the helping parent, please arrive 15 minutes early. If you are not helping parent, but have arrived at school before class begins, please stay outside until it's time to drop your child off at the designated location. The teacher and the helping parent will appreciate the uninterrupted preparation time.
- F. Please be prompt in coming to pick up your child at the end of the class period. Keep in mind that the teacher and helping parent need to be relieved so that they can clean the classroom and discuss the day's events. From past experience, we know that close supervision is essential at this time, as the children are often tired and more likely to have accidents.
- G. After school, do not stay and play. Please be respectful and allow teachers to prepare for the next day.
- H. While visiting with other Co-op parents is encouraged, we ask that this take place out of the classroom so as not to interfere with your child's special school time.
- I. Check the classroom and your child's cubby for artwork or projects ready to take home.
- J. Please do not allow any child to exit the front door without a designated Guardian.
- K. School parking lot spaces are available to teachers, helping parents and those needing special assistance. All other Co-operators are asked to park across Hancock (at Pat's Games), or on Shoalwood or on Woodview streets. Special care must be made to leave driveways clear. In addition, Fridays are neighborhood garbage pick-up days and it is important to our neighbors that we do not block the trash cans. Please park respectfully and walk your child safely to school each day.

## **SPECIAL PROCEDURES**

- A. Field Trips are not allowed at AACNS. Family fun trips may be suggested by the teacher.
- B. Emergency Evacuation and Drills
  1. Routine fire drills are held in accordance with DFPS and National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) guidelines. Follow the evacuation route posted in the classroom and included on the map below. Classes should gather in the playground, with adults remembering to count all the children in the class. Return to the classroom as directed by the Director or teacher in charge.
  2. Tornado drills must be held. Children should be gathered away from the windows, low to the floor, in areas shown on the map below. Follow directions of the Director or teacher in charge.

3. In the event of an actual emergency, the fire alarm will be activated. Everyone should exit the building as quickly and safely as possible. Please note the back yard has 4 gates to facilitate vacating the playground if needed. Evacuation of the building will follow the route of the fire drill – i.e., proceed to the Southern Hospitality Home at 5000 Shoalwood Ave, 78756 or the neighborhood fire station.
4. When information needs to be distributed to parents immediately we will send group texts through each classes room representative.
5. The Emergency Preparedness Plan is located in each classroom



### **SNACK TIME**

Snack time is an enjoyable time providing opportunities for children to learn about food, develop new motor skills, increase dexterity, and develop language and social skills through conversation. They learn about counting, colors, shapes, amounts, smells, temperatures, and tastes. While feeding themselves, children use fine motor skills and learn self-help strategies. It is typically the helping parent’s responsibility to provide snack and assist the teacher while following these guidelines:

- A. Snack should support the healthy learning environment of AACNS. Snack should consist of two to three choices from the snack list. Snack should be nutritious and low in sugar, salt, and other additives. No meat is allowed. Please read the list of snack suggestions for more information, ideas, and inspiration. The children only drink water with snack.
- B. The helping parent must record snack on the sign in sheet. At the end of the month these sheets are filed in the office and available for inspection during the annual Texas Department of Family and Protective Services visit.
- C. This year, AACNS will not provide washable cups, plates, utensils, water pitchers. Children will be served food on cloth napkins, and drink from their water bottle. Helping Parents need to provide utensils or dishes if needed, and take them home for sanitization at the end of the day. Please do what you can to reduce waste, and compost left over food.
- D. AACNS must have written approval from a physician or a registered or licensed dietitian in the child’s record if the child is on a therapeutic or special diet defined by the Minimum Standards Section 746.3311a. Parents of children who have therapeutic or special diets will provide snack for their child.

- E. At the start of the school year, the names of any children with allergies and the nature of the allergy will be posted in each classroom.
- F. Birthdays and holidays are special days in the classroom. The helping parent may wish to provide a special snack. However, the same guidelines need to be followed. See list of snack suggestions for special snack ideas.
- G. Licensing regulations require that the Co-op inform all enrolled families that because parents will be providing snack for each class, the school “is not responsible for its nutritional value or meeting the child’s daily food needs.” (Standard 746.3309)

## **HEALTH POLICY**

The purpose of the health policy is to promote a healthy and safe environment for everyone who enters the Co-op including Co-op families, staff, and members of the greater Austin community who may visit our school.

### **A. Immunizations:**

1. The Co-op’s Immunization Policy was crafted to demonstrate special sensitivity to the health and safety needs of the many pregnant women, infants, and young children who are in contact, and a part of, the Co-op community.
2. With few, specific exceptions (see below), all enrolled children must meet the current Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements set by the Department of State Health Services. Current requirements can be found on the Department of State Health Services website and will be posted each year on the bulletin board in the lobby.
3. A complete immunization record from a physician’s office must be on file by the beginning of the school year and updated, as applicable, throughout the year.
4. A child will not be allowed to attend class if his/her immunization record is incomplete.
5. The Co-op does not accept exemptions from immunizations for reasons of conscience.
6. All adults must have proof of being fully vaccinated against Covid -19 to be able to work in the classroom.

### **Limited Exceptions:**

1. Rarely, exclusions from immunizations may occur due to medical contraindication. Therefore, it is possible that a non-immunized child may attend the Co-op. Medical contraindication to vaccination must be documented by the child’s physician, in writing, and submitted to the Co-op at the beginning of the school year to be kept on file as part of the child’s health record.
2. Under limited circumstances, the Co-op will accept a vaccination schedule that is delayed from the Texas Minimum State Vaccine Requirements. Therefore, it is possible that a child who is not fully immunized may attend the Co-op. For a delayed schedule to comply with the Co-op policy there must be a written note from the child’s physician stating their approval of the delayed schedule. The note from the physician must also include pre-planned appointment dates on which the delayed vaccine(s) will be administered, with the goal of “catching up” to meet the Texas Minimum Vaccine Requirements. Documentation of the administration of the delayed vaccines will be due to the Co-op immediately following the appointment date.
3. In an effort to accommodate a parent who aren’t able to get vaccinated before their workday we may approve another family member (i.e., grandparent) to work in their place as long as they have gone through the orientation process.

Note: In the event of a community outbreak of a disease for which immunizations are required (e.g., measles or whooping cough), an unvaccinated child would not be able to attend school, as required by the health department.

B. Hearing/Vision Screening:

In compliance with The State of Texas requirement, children ages 4 years and older must have, on file, written documentation of a vision/hearing screening with results. For children already over the age of 4, documentation is due at the beginning of the school year. For children with birthdays during the school year, documentation is due immediately following the child's 4<sup>th</sup> birthday.

C. Illness: **Please see additional information in the Covid Addendum**

1. Please post on LivingTree or call the Co-op at (512) 454-5315 if your child will be absent from school for any reason, including illness.
2. A child should be kept home for the following reasons:
  - (a) Fever, diarrhea, vomiting, chicken pox, head lice, bacterial conjunctivitis, constant nasal congestion, sore throat, contagious skin conditions.
  - (b) A contagious illness, or a possibility of contagious illness, not listed above.
  - (c) Symptoms that require the quiet and comfort of home.
  - (d) Symptoms that prevent participation in school activities.
3. If a child becomes ill at school, a parent will be called to take the child home.
4. The Co-op is required by DFPS, the State licensing authority, to report certain communicable diseases. These are: all of the diseases that require vaccines, and influenza, salmonellosis, shigellosis, meningitis, and pulmonary tuberculosis. If your child or a member of your household is diagnosed with one of these illnesses please inform the Director.
5. Co-op members may be notified that illness was reported to the school. This will happen when (1) exposure to the disease might require medical intervention, and/or when (2) the knowledge of exposure would be helpful in taking precautions, making a diagnosis, or preventing further spread of the disease. Please inform the Co-op community if your child develops a contagious illness so that others may be informed and watch for symptoms in their own children.
6. A child may return to school when he/she has been free of all symptoms (including fever) for a minimum of 72 hours, or with written consent from a physician.

D. Medication:

No medication will be administered during school hours without written permission from the child's parent.

1. All prescription medication must be in the original container and labeled with the child's name, the name of the medication, prescription date, and dosage instructions.
2. Over-the-counter medications cannot be administered in contraindication to the instructions on the label unless there is written authorization from a physician.

E. Infection Control:

1. Hand washing:

The Co-op endorses thorough and frequent hand washing to limit the spread of infection. The CDC recommends this technique for proper hand washing:

- (a) Wet your hands with clean, running water (warm or cold), turn off the tap, and apply soap.
- (b) Lather your hands by rubbing them together with the soap. Be sure to lather the backs of your hands, between your fingers, and under your nails.
- (c) Scrub your hands for at least 20 seconds. Need a timer? Hum the "Happy Birthday" song from beginning to end twice.
- (d) Rinse your hands well under clean, running water.
- (e) Dry your hands using a clean towel or air dry them.

Helping parents and teachers are required to wash their hands when they enter the classroom at the beginning of the day. Additionally, adults must wash their hands (1) before food preparation (including cooking projects), (2) after toileting, (3) after changing a diaper, (4) after wiping a child's nose, (5) after handling an animal. Please use single use towels after toileting and diapering, and dispose of towels carefully in the trashcan.

#### 2. Diapering Procedure:

Wash hands before each diaper is changed. Glove hands. Place the child on his/her own changing pad, or a disposable changing pad. Place the used diaper, wipes, gloves, and disposable pads in a tightly tied plastic bag and dispose into the trash can with lid in the changing area or bathroom. Spray the changing pad with the sanitizing solution provided and dry with a disposable towel. Wash hands after diaper change. Wash the child's hands before returning to class.

#### 3. Cleaning Classroom Surfaces:

Classroom surfaces must be cleaned with a sanitizing solution before and after use.

#### 4. Procedure for Wound Care with Exposure to Blood:

In the event of any injury/wound resulting in loss of blood, no matter how small, the teacher will put on disposable gloves prior to contact with the wound. A bandage will be applied to the wound to cover any blood, to limit the spread of blood-borne pathogens.

### F. Accidents Involving Injury/Emergencies

- 1. All teachers are required to be certified in Infant/Child CPR and First Aid.
- 2. All allergies (food, drug, insect bites, or other) must be listed on your child's yellow medical card on file in the office.
- 3. If the event is not life threatening, the child's parent(s) will be called and notified.
- 4. Procedure for life-threatening medical emergencies:
  - (a) Immediate CPR and/or First Aid.
  - (b) Call EMS (911). If more than one adult is present, the call to EMS will be made by one adult while the other adult administers CPR/First Aid.
  - (c) Notify child's parent(s) and child's doctor.
  - (d) An adult (the teacher, unless the child's parent is present) will accompany the child to the hospital in the ambulance, taking along the child's yellow medical card.

### G. Suspected Child Abuse/Neglect

- 1. Staff members are required to receive annual training on the prevention, recognition, and reporting of child abuse and neglect. All members of the childcare staff are required by Texas state law to report any suspected child abuse/neglect to The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) and any applicable law enforcement, without prior consultation with the child's family.
- 2. Awareness of signs and symptoms of child abuse/neglect, including warning signs that a child might become a victim, and child abuse/neglect prevention techniques, is vital to the health of our community. Information

on these subjects is available in the Director's office, or by contacting Texas Child Care Licensing at (512)908-9650 or [www.tdfps.state.tx.us/child\\_care](http://www.tdfps.state.tx.us/child_care). The Texas child abuse hotline phone number is: 1-800-252-5400.

### **GRIEVANCE PROCEDURES**

- A. In the spirit of a cooperative, the first step toward the solution to a problem should be the prompt discussion of the problem between the parties involved. Participants should strive to see all sides of the issue. Remember, it will be easier to solve any problem if the confidentiality of all concerned is respected and if a solution is sought quickly before the problem has a chance to grow.
- B. The first step for any concern about a classroom situation should be a discussion with the teacher.
- C. If the initial discussion does not resolve the issue to everyone's satisfaction, the Director will act as a mediator. For circumstances in which this would not be appropriate, the Board President will serve as a mediator. The mediator will try to create a constructive environment in which both parties can be heard and have a part in finding solutions.
- D. Further grievance procedures for personnel matters are described in the Personnel Policies.
- E. For grievances not involving personnel policies, if the initial mediation is not sufficient, the President will appoint a committee to make recommendations to the parties involved. The Board will become involved as a final attempt to solve the problem.

### **WITHDRAWAL**

- A. Possible reasons for withdrawal:
  - 1. Serious or prolonged illness.
  - 2. Permanent move of family out of the community.
  - 3. Mutual agreement among member, teacher, Director, and President (or presiding officer) if there is an unsatisfactory adjustment of the child to the school or of the parent as a participating parent.
  - 4. Failure to meet financial, helping parent, support job, workday, or fundraising responsibilities.
  - 5. Inability to communicate with staff and/or community in a respectful manner.
  - 6. The Director, room rep, or any concerned teacher or parent may request the Board to consider the withdrawal of a family or child from the Co-op.
- B. Voluntary Withdrawal Procedure – Thirty (30) days written notice of withdrawal must be given to the Director.
- C. Involuntary Withdrawal Procedure - This shall be a Board decision. The family shall have an opportunity to have their position heard. The family's position may be presented in person, in writing, or by a representative of their selection.
- D. Financial Obligations
  - 1. A full month's tuition is required for any month only partially attended.
  - 2. Deposits, registration fees, and building fees are not refundable regardless of the reason for withdrawal.

## **SPECIAL POLICIES**

- A. Videotape/Photography Policy - The goal of the videotape/photography policy is to protect the privacy of children in classes while outlining conditions under which recording might be allowed by persons other than Co-op members.
1. Parents have the right to record the activities of their child's class for their own personal use. If members subsequently wish to make some other use of the material, they must seek permission from AACNS.
  2. Examples of other instances in which recording might be allowed are (a) teacher self-evaluation, (b) publicity for the school, including the school's website, blog, etc. (c) class projects by university students, (d) demonstration of AACNS classroom methods to other teachers, and (e) collection of material for use in fundraising proposals.
  3. Requests for recording by outside individuals or groups will proceed through an approval process determined by the Board. Such recording will not proceed without signed permission forms from the parents of the children involved.
  4. Recording in the classroom will be conducted with minimal disruption to the children's activities and at the discretion of the teacher.
- B. Divorce and Family Issues - It is the school's policy that school members, teachers, and administrators will not give out information to attorneys regarding other school members unless they are subpoenaed for such information.
- C. Early Identification of Children Requiring Specialized Attention - Our Preschool strives to integrate children with disabilities into our program. We are unable to do so in situations which would require a fundamental alteration to the program, or would pose a direct threat to the health or safety of our students or staff. Our Preschool is staffed at child/adult ratios below the state maximum, but not small enough to allow for individual attention for any one student throughout the entire school morning. Our teachers are well qualified, either holding degrees or having specialized training in early childhood education. However, there is not a professional special education educator on staff. We are obligated to make reasonable accommodations for all of our enrolled children, their families and our employees.

The Co-op has a referral system in place for the identification of children who require program modifications, or auxiliary aids or services during the school day. The Co-op considers each child's situation on an individual basis. Children are identified through a collaborative, yet confidential review process. In making a determination, the situation is discussed with the child's teacher, the child is observed within the classroom setting, and, where appropriate, initial classroom interventions are implemented. The Director and child's teacher will conference with the child's parents for their input as well.

At the conclusion of the review portion of the referral process, the Director shall communicate the results and recommendations to the parents. If a child needs more than reasonable modification to daily activities or requires additional staff to meet the child's needs, and the parents determine they would like the child to continue to attend the Co-op, it then becomes the parent's responsibility and expense to act upon the recommendations in a timely manner. For example, if an independent educational consultant or therapist is recommended, it is at the parent's expense. In the event additional services or expenses (including added staff salaries) are incurred on behalf of the child, the parents are responsible for payment of services.

If the recommended accommodations fail to secure an educational and safe environment for the student, classmates or staff, or if there is a lack of parent cooperation in providing the recommended support, the school reserves the right to require the immediate withdrawal of a child. If the school recommends dismissal, the Director will, to the best of her ability, assist the family in finding appropriate placement/services. No tuition refunds will be made.

## **AACNS LIVINGTREE GUIDELINES**

### **A. Membership**

All families are expected to join the LivingTree community. In addition to being used as a tool for communication with regards to general Co-op news and information, it will assist in Helping Parent calendars, support job management, sign-ups for special events and private photo-sharing and notes from the classroom parents and teachers.

New parents will receive information from their room representatives regarding joining our Co-op community on LivingTree. Support is available from the LivingTree staff and from the Co-op community.

### **B. Usage Guidelines**

1. Messages posted to the 'feed' should contain news and information related to the AACNS or other items of interest to parents of preschool age children.
2. Please refrain from commercial use of the list for promoting businesses.
3. It's OK to post announcements for garage sale type items that could be of interest to co-op members. For example "I have a child's bicycle for sale."
4. Please be polite and make sure postings are appropriate for all ages.
5. Our 501(c)(3) non-profit status prohibits the posting of messages that cross the line from issue advocacy to political activity intended to influence the selection of candidates for public office.

## **INTRODUCTION TO STAFF**

### **Pat Sefton, Director**

Pat joined the Co-op in 2007 after a devoted 22-year stint as Director at University United Methodist's Early Childhood Center. She is a recipient of AAIEYC's Mabel Pitts Award in recognition of her contributions to the lives of young children and families. Pat received a Bachelor of Science in Education at University of Texas Youth and Family Services. She is the mother of two adult sons, enjoys gardening with her husband and hikes with her dog. Pat radiates patience, dedication, openness, joy, humor, and a leadership style that fits the Co-op.

### **Kerry Drake, Atelierista, and Director's Assistant**

We are happy to have Kerry return in her dual role as Assistant to the Director and school Atelierista. In our adaptation of the Reggio approach, Kerry works with small groups of children from each class in the studio, using a variety of materials to help them express their ideas. Collaborating with teachers, observing and documenting the children's learning process, and sharing with parents informs Kerry's work. In addition, you will find Kerry in the office continuing to support parents, teachers, and the director. Kerry and her woodworking husband, Mike, are parents to two Co-op alum children: Willis (24) and daughter Piper (20). Kerry has been a dedicated staff member since 2001.

### **Kelly Savedra, Teacher**

We are pleased to welcome Kelly back for another exciting year as the teacher of the young 2s on Tuesdays and Thursdays, and the teacher of the young 3's on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. She has two children who attended the Co-op, Brendan (14) and Cricket (10). She graduated with a Bachelor of Fine Arts from The University of Texas, concentrating in painting and photography. Kelly feels like the Co-op philosophy mirrors her own. In prior years Kelly has truly enjoyed working with all of the teachers on a regular basis, and her patient, intuitive nature has been appreciated by the teachers as well. In addition to working with children Kelly loves to be outdoors and in nature. She enjoys hiking in Big Bend, gardening at home or at her children's elementary school, and admiring animals on land and at sea. She is looking forward to another wonderful year of discovery at the Co-op, full of adventures with her classes.

**Nadia Traietti, Teacher**

Nadia has been with the Co-op since 2005. She teaches one of our 4/5-year-old classes. Nadia grew up in Massachusetts. Upon graduating high school she worked in the Boston area with neglected or abused children who had been placed in residential care. Nadia specialized in Early Childhood Development for her undergraduate degree. She also holds a Master's in Elementary Education from Texas State University. Before coming to the Co-op Nadia taught at Child's Day, the ACC lab school, Habibi's Hutch Preschool and third grade in AISD. Nadia enjoys cooking, gardening, hiking, camping, listening to and participating in music making.

**Claire Traganos, Teacher**

Claire is excited to be starting her fourth year at the Co-op. Claire grew up in Atlanta, Georgia but moved to Boston during high school and later graduated from Boston College with a degree in Elementary Education. She taught Kindergarten for several years and then became mama to Meredith (11) and soon after Mattias (9). She loves the Co-op's emphasis on outdoor play and play as learning. Claire loves running, baking, going on adventures with her husband and two kids, finding all the fun swimming holes in and around Austin and camping when it's cool enough. Claire is excited to explore, learn and create alongside the older 3s this year.

**Stephanie Tickle, Teacher**

Stephanie Tickle will be teaching the older 2s on Tuesdays and Thursdays. Stephanie is a former Co-op parent and the last 4 years has been our support teacher working with all classes and ages. She went to East Carolina University majoring in Communications. After moving to San Francisco she rediscovered her love of working with children and went back to school for credits at San Francisco State. Stephanie was a preschool teacher and director at Richmond YMCA in San Francisco. When Stephanie discovered the Co-op for her daughters she was drawn to the comfortable feel, the friendliness of staff and parents, and the attention to the child as a whole person. Stephanie loves spending time with her family-hiking, traveling and reading on the beach.

**Melissa Waelchli, Support Specialist**

We are excited to welcome Melissa as the Co-op's support specialist. She will provide direct support to the teachers in the classrooms by helping facilitate small groups, offering one-on-one support when needed, and collaborating with teachers and parents to assess needs and adjusts her role when necessary. She grew up on Long Island, NY, has a B.A. in Psychology (child development) from Boston University and moved to Austin in 2000. She joined the Co-op family in 2013 when her youngest, Kaylee (11) enrolled in the Young 3s class and has enjoyed many roles at the Co-op since. She lives in Austin with her husband Victor, older daughter Al (14), Kaylee, and their two dogs, Indy and Moxxi.

APPENDIX – COMMITTEE/SUPPORT JOBS 2021-2022

<b>BOARD OF DIRECTORS</b>	
*Board Members are expected to attend scheduled Board meetings (typically once a month). As stated in the bylaws of the AACNS, a Board member may be removed after two absences.	
<b>PRESIDENT</b>	<p>Fosters a sense of community for membership. Gathers committee reports; composes and posts agenda one week prior to Board meetings. Serves on Finance Committee. Delegates and appoints Board committee members. Presides at Board meetings and meetings of general membership, including orientation. In conjunction with Director, the President acts as a spokesperson and representative of the school to the larger community.</p> <p>*One-year Board position as President; one-year Board position as Past President and one-year Board position as President-Elect.</p>
<b>PAST PRESIDENT</b>	<p>Works closely with the President on school business. Participates on special committees as needed. Takes an active role in special projects. Advises President and Board and provides continuity.</p> <p>*One-year Board position. (see above)</p>
<b>PRESIDENT-ELECT</b>	<p>Works closely with President on school business. Chairs Board meetings in President's absence and participates on various committees as needed and deemed appropriate.</p> <p>*One-year Board position as President-Elect; three-year commitment to the Board.</p>
<b>V.P. ADMINISTRATION</b>	<p>Plans and coordinates fall school orientation in conjunction with the Director. During the summer, updates members' handbook, communicating with the office and staff. Administers and analyzes parent surveys in coordination with office and Board President. With Director, coordinates school's Emergency Plan.</p> <p>*Two-year Board position.</p>
<b>SECRETARY</b>	<p>Takes minutes at Board meetings and distributes copies to Board members, advisory council, and trustees. Posts dates of upcoming Board meetings and current minutes for Co-op membership and Board members. Updates Living Tree calendar with Co-op community events. Organizes gifts for staff. Each Spring, Secretary alerts the Board that a review of the Co-op's Guidelines is required pursuant to the Guidelines Section XV.</p> <p>*One-year Board position.</p>
<b>SUPPORT JOB COORDINATOR</b>	<p>Assigns and coordinates Co-op support jobs in conjunction with Director and President-Elect. Works with office to orient members to their support jobs. Acts as a facilitator and troubleshooter for the membership in regard to support jobs to ensure the smooth running of the Co-op.</p> <p>*Two-year Board position.</p>
<b>PR/OUTREACH CHAIR</b>	<p>Produces and manages social media presence, including regular Facebook and Instagram posts. Organizes and manages content from the Co-op community to post on the Co-op's blog. Manages Co-op outreach to educate prospective families about our school.</p> <p>*Two-year Board position.</p>

<b>FUNDRAISING CHAIR</b>	Takes an active role in brainstorming, planning, and advertising fundraising events. Updates and coordinates with the office regarding fundraising ideas, events, and dates. Consults with Finance Chair. Coordinates, attends, and facilitates the work of the fundraising committees (e.g., Silent Auction, Spring Fair, Events Coordinator, T-shirts) and reports back to the office and the Board.  *Two-year Board position.
<b>FINANCE CHAIR</b>	Serves as leader of Finance Committee. Schedules committee meetings and oversees the functioning of the committee. Provides leadership regarding strategic financial planning initiatives and improvement of financial reporting systems. Maintains communication with the Director. Provides leadership of AACNS Foundation. Manages the Foundation investment account to maintain the targeted distribution of investment funds. Works with the finance committee, board, and the office to designate fund money for Co-op use.  *Two-year Board position.
<b>ADMINISTRATION</b>	
<b>ROOM REPRESENTATIVES (6)</b>	In coordination with the teacher, organizes helping parent calendar and schedules room meetings. Is available or arranges for a substitute teacher when necessary. Sets up system of class communications through Living Tree. Serves as the class liaison for sharing information about Silent Auction, Spring Fair, and other school-wide events. Helps organize class booth for Spring Fair. Helps arrange summer playgroups for families to meet each other and/or stay in touch. Organizes birthday, holiday, and end-of-year gifts for teacher.
<b>V.P. ADMINISTRATION ASSISTANT</b>	This support job is only available when the current VP of Administration is in their final year. Assists the VP Administration in coordinating the fall school orientation and end-of-year surveys. Takes over as VP Administration at end of current VP Administration's term.
<b>HEALTH OFFICER</b>	Collects and files student health forms and immunization records. Ensures that student folders are current before the school year begins. Maintains first aid kits. Medical background or knowledge is desired.
<b>OFFICE ASSISTANT</b>	Assists Director in tasks as needed such as inputting data for criminal background checks, filing, etc. Assists in compiling children's files. Helps with proofreading and editing of directory. Completes filing and other tasks as requested by Director. Works with Director to create or update procedural list of Director's duties for future use by new incoming Director.
<b>INTERNAL COMMUNICATIONS</b>	Considers the tactical communications needs for the Co-op including overseeing Living Tree. Works closely with various committees and the office to strengthen the sense of community and increase awareness of events, policies and community expectations. Works to ensure strategic vision and mission of Co-op is communicated internally.
<b>COMPUTER AND TECHNOLOGY SPECIALIST</b>	Serves as technical support for the Co-op and works with the Director in updating and maintaining software, operating systems, anti-virus software, and other technology for the administration of the school.
<b>FINANCE ASSISTANT</b>	Sits on the finance committee and assists the Finance Chair in anticipation of assuming role as Finance Chair.
<b>PARENT EDUCATION COORDINATOR</b>	Fosters connection in the community and promotes parent education and a community of learners. Activities include identifying parent education events in Austin for parents in the Co-op community to attend, organizing Co-op community parent education events, and working with the teachers to engage parents in learning.

<b>COMMUNITY BUILDING COMMITTEE</b>	Fosters connection in community. Responsible for organizing a fall picnic, monthly coffees/socials during the school day, and several evening socials. Coordinates volunteer assistance for these events. Consults with office/Director regarding dates and ideas. Coordinates with PR/Outreach Chair on all community-building events.
<b>DIRECTORY</b>	Compiles and prints annual staff and family directory prior to the school year. Solicits and compiles advertising for the directory. Proofreads and edits directory. Assists in maintaining school databases. <i>Software required.</i>
<b>HOSPITALITY COORDINATOR</b>	The Hospitality Committee Coordinator will notify the committee and delegate responsibilities for Orientation in addition to calling meetings to set the menu and delegate responsibilities for the Silent Auction. Coordinates the food and beverages for Co-op events. Works with Event Planners to coordinate the Silent Auction environment and food. Does set up, clean up, and serving for orientation and Silent Auction.
<b>HOSPITALITY ASSISTANTS (4)</b>	Coordinates the food and beverages for Co-op events. Works with Event Planners to coordinate the Silent Auction environment and food. Does set up, clean up, and serving for orientation and Silent Auction.
<b>FUNDRAISING</b>	
<b>SILENT AUCTION EVENT CHAIR</b>	Works closely with Hospitality Committee and donation procurement committee to plan and prepare Silent Auction event. Responsible for set up of event. Communicate with Co-op community regarding the event and ways to help. In addition, Silent Auction Event Chair maintains connection with Donation Chair to ensure smooth transition from donation gathering to auction. Works closely with and reports to the Donation Chair and office to establish timelines, communications, ideas, and progress.
<b>SILENT AUCTION DONATION CHAIR</b>	Works closely and alongside the Silent Auction Event Chair, office, and Fundraising Chair to send out solicitation emails, establish procurement meetings, auction timelines, and communications to the broader Co-op.
<b>SILENT AUCTION PROCUREMENT COMMITTEE (7)</b>	Work with the Donation Chair in securing donations for the Silent Auction. Submits auction item information into database which produce accurate bid sheets. Must attend regularly scheduled committee meetings. Requires work commitment the weekend of the Silent Auction for set up.
<b>SILENT AUCTION EVENT PLANNING COMMITTEE (5)</b>	Works closely with Silent Auction Event Chair and rest of planning team to prepare the Silent Auction event. Responsibilities include planning the event, communicating event information to AACNS community (including invitations), and set up of event. Requires work commitment the weekend of the Silent Auction for set up.
<b>SPRING FAIR COMMITTEE CHAIR</b>	Coordinates Spring Fair. Responsibilities include food coordination, class booth coordination, entertainment and vendor coordination, and ticket and volunteer coordination. Reports to Fundraising Chair and office regarding ideas and progress. Coordinates with PR/Outreach Chair to publicize event.
<b>SPRING FAIR COMMITTEE (3)</b>	Works with the Spring Fair Chair. Responsibilities include food coordination, class booth coordination, entertainment and vendor coordination, and ticket and volunteer coordination.
<b>T-SHIRTS/KIDZ CREATIONS COORDINATOR</b>	Coordinates distribution and sale of T-shirts and other logo items – once in the fall and once in the spring. Communicates times and ideas with the office and Fundraising Chair. Coordinates student art fundraiser in the fall.
<b>BUILDING/OPERATIONS</b>	
<b>BUILDING &amp; OPERATIONS COORDINATOR</b>	In consultation with Director, coordinates playground and classroom safety and repair; work days; and grounds and fence maintenance. Responsible for supervising 3 monthly scheduled work days each school year. These are normally held on a Saturday from 8 a.m. until noon. Supervises landscape and playground coordinators.

<b>PLAYGROUND COORDINATOR</b>	Communicates with and coordinates Playground Committee members regarding daily playground checks. Also on the playground committee. See below.
<b>PLAYGROUND COMMITTEE (4)</b>	Works under direction of Playground Coordinator. Keeps playground clean/orderly on a regular basis. Once per week, conducts daily safety check of playground and logs results. Preferred parents of older classes (start at 8:00 A.M. Monday-Friday).
<b>LANDSCAPE COORDINATOR</b>	Coordinates new landscaping installation and communicates with and schedules committee members for landscape maintenance. Also on landscape committee.
<b>LANDSCAPE ASSISTANTS (4)</b>	Works with Landscape Coordinator to implement and maintain installations and ideas. Includes weeding, mowing, watering, leaf raking and bagging as needed. There will be 3 landscape-only work days scheduled in the fall and 3 in the spring.
<b>WORK DAY ASSISTANTS (2)</b>	Assists Building and Operations Coordinator in planning and coordinating monthly work days. Each assistant is responsible for supervising 3 monthly scheduled work days each school year. These are normally held on a Saturday from 8 a.m. until noon.
<b>HOUSEKEEPING (3)</b>	Responsible for laundry duty (wash, fold and put away) napkins and towels daily. Develop schedule with housekeeping support team member to ensure clean laundry is available each morning. Make sure kitchen and common area are tidy.