

The Cooperative Preschool: A Formula for Success in Kindergarten and Beyond!

By *Kate Fortier*

Parents of future preschoolers in our community have a number of preschool options available to them, and now is the time to be investigating those options carefully and beginning the registration process. One of the options available to families from Lebanon and its surrounding towns is a parent cooperative nursery school, a concept that may be foreign to newer parents. But, the unique opportunity this preschool format affords families to be hands-on participants in their preschoolers' educations merits a close look.

Lebanon Cooperative Nursery School (LCNS) was founded in 1973 by community parents determined to provide locally an affordable, quality preschool experience for their children. Still going strong today, the school operates out of the rear building of the First Congregational Church on the Lebanon Green and boasts two cheerful classrooms and an enclosed outdoor play area. The school's certified teacher and dedicated staff provide a nurturing environment where children are encouraged to explore, discover, and create through a developmentally appropriate, play-based curriculum designed to appreciate and enrich each child as an individual. The school offers a two-day/week program for three-year-olds and a three-day/week program for four-year-olds.

What sets the cooperative nursery school apart from other preschool formats is the high level of parent involvement the program affords. From regular participation in daily classroom activity as parent volunteers/aides to attendance at school events and field trips to seating on Parent Teacher Group (PTG) committees and the Board of Directors, parent contribution is enthusiastically sought and needed at every level. This setting provides several benefits:

Through parent volunteer/aide activities, parents are able to witness first-hand their children's interactions with their peers and other adults as well as their academic progress throughout the year. Children learn to share their parents with other children and also have the opportunity to interact with their peers' parents. Further, through side-by-side work with teachers, parents can more easily address concerns about their children with staff, and can also learn teaching techniques they see in class to use at home.

The cooperative experience also provides an unparalleled opportunity for parents to build relationships with each other. The strong sense of community that develops between families in the cooperative setting as parents work together to operate the school is a network of friendships that often lasts throughout the elementary school years and beyond. From carpooling and childcare help to play dates and parenting support and ideas, bonds of that strength cannot so easily be created by putting a child on a bus to an insular school experience.

Finally, because the parents run the cooperative, each family has a voice in its child's school experience. This kind of parent impact is truly unique to the cooperative setting.

Naturally, today's families have many more factors to consider when choosing a preschool than how good the quality of a program is. From scheduling challenges to family budgets to the personality and developmental needs of their child, parents need to make sure their preschool choice fits their family's particular circumstances. Many cooperatives, including LCNS, have some payment and scheduling options that provide flexibility to families who truly desire the benefits of the cooperative experience but may face some challenges. These options are worth inquiring about.

Staff and Board members at Lebanon Cooperative Nursery School are always available to answer any questions parents have. For more information and a registration packet, please contact Registrar Karen Pankowski at (860) 642-7789.

Lebanon Cooperative Nursery School



**Nurturing and enriching the
region's children since 1973!**

10 W. Town St., Lebanon
on the Lebanon Green

Programs for
3- and 4-year-olds.

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