



COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING

This written narrative is intended to serve several purposes for parents:

1. Encourage the expression of ideas for program development.
2. Expand on information about communication that is found in the Parent Handbook.
3. Describe mechanisms for resolution of problems, to maintain parent satisfaction, and prevent problems from reaching crisis proportions.
4. Share the responsibility amongst program participants for finding solutions to problems.

Background

As we hope you are aware, we maintain a commitment to fostering effective communication and problem solving on an ongoing basis for each person involved in the CEC community. This commitment is a natural outgrowth of the investment we all make in providing the best possible environment for children and in fostering healthy emotional development and social skills with them. Each group of people here - children, staff, parents, and Board members - has unique needs and characteristics. We have very well-defined methods and procedures developed for meeting the communication needs of each group.

For children, the entirety of their days is spent acting on the environment (which includes other children and teachers), communicating their needs, and resolving conflicts under the caring supervision and facilitation of staff. Staff are also in contact all day together, and both daily and weekly meetings are routinely conducted for discussion of topics of mutual interest. As you can probably imagine, a tremendous amount of problem-solving is needed and occurs in these meetings. Board members also have a schedule of routine meetings established for discussion and decision-making.

Opportunities for communication and problem-solving also exist for parents, but they may be less visible on a daily basis due to a number of factors. We recognize that at times, parents do have questions about how their concerns should be directed to achieve the desired result. In an effort to both serve you as best we can and to genuinely foster positive parent-staff-Board partnerships in the delivery of service to children, we have described the avenues for communication below that are established for your use. We hope you will take advantage of them as the need arises.

First, a few facts about the CEC program may be helpful in clarifying the context in which communication and problem solving take place.

Facts about the CEC program service:

- * Teachers and Directors wish to be of assistance and helpful to you as needed. We maintain a commitment to listen to concerns and ideas with respect and care.
- * Partnership with parents is a central aspect of our commitment to serve the needs of children.
- * No question or concern is too small to be worth taking the time to convey. Some parents have concern about being seen as complaining or picky and do not voice concerns that are meaningful to them. While we may not be able to satisfy all your needs (for instance, socks will still disappear), your smaller concerns are important to us just as are your bigger ones.
- * Some parents are concerned that if they "complain," it may reflect negatively on the way staff feel about their child. This is absolutely not the case. Staff have their own unique and independent experience with children. We maintain a commitment to truly respect the developmental process of each person here, whether it be a child, parent, or staff member.
- * In our efforts to maintain open and effective communication, we also respect the privacy and importance of confidentiality for parents in the discussion of topics of mutual interest and concern. We strive to respond to you with this in mind.
- * Board members serve in their capacity to serve the needs of the program. This commitment includes maintaining sensitivity to parent needs and input. In fact, the overwhelming number of Board members are or have been CEC parents like you. Individual members are interested in becoming acquainted with you and discussing topics of mutual interest.

Additional facts about the CEC:

- * Taking the time to get to know people in the CEC community builds rapport and understanding. Please talk to your child's teachers, Directors, office staff, Board members, and other parents on an ongoing basis. Attend parent meetings, work days, social events, etc.
- * Constructive participation is expected of everyone. If you have a concern, you will be expected to participate in the solution of it.
- * We recognize that a range of values is represented in the parent group at the CEC. We make an effort to respect differences in values and to adapt program delivery in response. At the same time, we maintain a commitment to presenting a program for the children that we feel best supports their development, based on widely-accepted child development theory and practice. Sometimes the balance is delicate, but of utmost importance, the integrity of the program philosophy is vital to its success.
- * While our commitment to one another's satisfaction is genuine, and while we devote a tremendous number of hours to discussion and problem-solving, the reality is that limitations

on program and parent resources do exist. We must continually prioritize needs in our effort to make the most effective use of resources. Our primary responsibility must always be the health and safety of the children, individually and collectively. We also recognize that parent resources are limited. We're all busy people, juggling a lot. This requires us to all be patient when circumstances require it. Some things take time.

AVENUES FOR COMMUNICATION AND PROBLEM-SOLVING FOR PARENTS

Whether you have questions, ideas for program development, or problems relating to program operation or work/family life, we want to ensure that you are familiar with all the avenues that exist for your use. Please keep this sheet handy for reference.

1. **Oftentimes, it will make most sense to talk to a Lead Teacher first, particularly if your question, idea, or problem relates to classroom operation.** Lead Teachers are also prepared to assist you in finding just the right person to see. If time does not permit at drop off or pick up for discussions with teachers (because of your schedule or teacher responsibilities in the supervision and care of children) or if the topic is not appropriate for discussion with children present, make arrangements to talk by phone or schedule another time when you can both be available. If the topic you wish to discuss is broader in nature, you are encouraged to talk to a Director. Remember, we're here to help you.
2. **Talk to a Director** if you have a question or idea that transcends classroom operation, if you simply wish an additional perspective, or if your question or problem concerns direct service to your child. Again, we're here to help you! You can phone us or stop by the office. Depending on the demands of the moment, we may need to schedule additional time with you.
3. **Talk to a parent who serves on the Board of Trustees.** Parents who are involved in this group are very well informed about and involved in a wide range of issues pertaining to the program, as well as having needs themselves, as a parent. Board members are interested and committed to listening to other parents. Approaching Board members as individuals can also be less intimidating than approaching the whole Board. If a Board member's child is in your child's group, that person's picture and name will be posted to assist you in making contact.
4. **Talk to a Room Parent.** Room Parents have volunteered to serve in this capacity to provide wide-ranging support for program activities. They are also available to assist you in any way possible. Each group generally has two parents who assume this role. Their pictures and names are posted in the classroom. They can also generally be found actively participating in program events, and they meet together regularly to coordinate program support.
5. **Give us written feedback about your ideas and concerns on the semi-annual Parent Questionnaire,** which we distribute mid-year and at the conclusion of the year. We use this information in evaluation and in effecting program change. The information is shared with the Board, staff, and any interested parents.

6. **Submit written ideas** at other times, too, if this is an easier way for you to communicate.
7. **Attend parent socials, meetings, discussion groups, and picnics.** We schedule them regularly throughout the year. We develop discussion topics based, in part, on items of interest to parents as indicated on sign-up sheets. In discussion groups particularly, a wide range of topics can be entertained, depending on what's important to people.
8. **Attend Board meetings** to become better informed and/or to express views. Time is scheduled at each meeting for oral communications from parents and staff.