



CPPPBC FACT SHEET #1

Parent Education: What and Why

While our children have fun playing and learning in parent participation preschools, parents also have the opportunity to learn and grow. One lasting benefit comes through regular parent education events. Each month, parents receive 90 minutes of quality parent education through workshops, talks, and discussions.

One parent at the preschool takes on the responsibility of finding and arranging appropriate speakers, with the help of our parent education speaker list. Discuss possible topics with current parents, so that the schedule can be tailored to the group's interests. The talks are typically held the same evenings as monthly general meetings, although this varies with preschool preferences. A wide range of topics fit the overall criteria: being relevant and useful to parents of preschoolers. Child development is always popular, focusing on aspects such as the importance of play, making friends, brain development, emotional growth, and behaviour challenges. Other issues may include first aid, positive discipline techniques, anger management, sibling rivalry, nurturing imagination and learning, supporting literacy, health and nutrition, etc.

Why Do We Have Parent Education?

There are several reasons to have ongoing parent education. The 90-minute monthly requirement comes from our arrangement with Licensing, allowing parents to act as assistants in the classroom. Instead of taking full Early Childhood Educator Assistant training, parents can meet the Licensing requirements through ongoing parent education sessions, as well as about 10 hours of orientation (completed before the first duty day). Under the most recent amendments to the Licensing regulations, another option would be to take the 20-hour "responsible adult" training prior to the start of the preschool year.

It's more than just a Licensing requirement, however. When alumni parents were surveyed recently, most of them looked back on parent education as one of the best aspects of preschool. A speaker might help you realize that your daughter isn't being deliberately difficult – she's just behaving appropriately for her age. Or you may have learned how to help your baby when he's choking. While every topic might not be relevant now, you are likely to appreciate the information and resources over your years of parenting. Parent education should help you understand yourself and your child, develop confidence and improved skills, and prepare you for assisting in the classroom.

Frequently Asked Questions about Parent Education

My partner and I both do duty days. Do we both need to attend all parent education meetings?

No, you do not have to attend all parent education together. The assumption is that the person at the meeting will go home and thoroughly discuss the topic with his/her partner. You could alternate or come to some other arrangement.

I can't make it to the next parent education evening? What should I do?

Since Licensing has agreed that ongoing parent education fulfills the Assistant training requirement, you must do some alternative education before your next classroom-participation day. Check your preschool's policy about this – perhaps you can attend another preschool's meeting, read a related article/book/website, or discuss the speaker with another parent who did attend.

I don't know our preschool's policy about missed parent education. What should I do?

Each preschool should have its own policies and procedures manual in the classroom. Ask your teacher or an Executive member. Due to Licensing requirements, it's mandatory to keep up with monthly parent education.

This is my second child in the preschool. Do I still have to do all the parent education?

Once a parent has 20 hours of training, the requirements can be reduced. All parents should attend the first meeting and initial classroom orientation by the teacher. Even if you attended last year, the classroom set-up may have changed, the approach may be different, and it might be a new teacher. So it's important to come and find out what to expect on your duty days. In addition, attending

parent education evenings helps build your preschool community – so feel free to come to as many as possible. Returning parents should attend the first parent education evening and a minimum of two more through the year: one from October to January, one from February to June.

All the speakers seem to talk about the same topic – what can I do?

The Parent Education person in your preschool should have a list of speakers provided by the Council, as well as lists of past and future speakers. Request topics that are relevant to your family. Ask your teacher to suggest appropriate topics and speakers. Consider attending nearby preschools' speakers (ask first but it's usually okay). Contact the Council office for suggestions and resources.

Our preschool is struggling financially. How can we afford parent education speakers?

A number of agencies offer free speakers – consider asking your Community Health Nurse, BC Teachers' Federation, BC Centre for Ability, local library, and other community resources. Contact nearby parent participation preschools to see if you can share speakers or co-host evenings. Approach the local elementary school PAC to see about co-hosting a parent education speaker. Some parent education speakers may lower or waive their fees in certain situations. Attend the Council's November Parent Education Speaker event for a reduced cost. You can also have at least one discussion evening, where parents meet to discuss a relevant parenting or developmental topic. Watch a video or listen to a podcast and then discuss.

I just can't make evening meetings – should I avoid parent participation preschool?

It depends on how much involvement you can manage. If you can participate in the classroom, which is the most important part for you and your child, inquire with the preschool Executive about working out a possible solution. Could you watch the speaker by Skype from work or home? Can you meet with other parents to “catch up”? It's a shame that you have to miss this important aspect of preschool community-building. Maybe you can create connections by helping with weekend events. Or perhaps you can take the time to do weekend training through the local Child Care Resource and Referral centre (www.ccr.bc.ca/). Each preschool will have its own solution to these challenges.

I am the Parent Education Chair at my preschool. What do I do?

Lucky you! You can help select what topics and who to book – because you are doing all the legwork. First, ask for suggestions at the June meeting (and possibly by e-mail as well, in case parents think of things later on). Based on the feedback, consult the Council's parent education speaker list. Attend the Council's June workshop to meet and book speakers. Check out community resources such as the local nurse, library, and so on. Try to fill the first couple of months, then ask again at the September meeting. Work ahead with any suggestions made by parents or the teacher. Contact potential speakers by e-mail or telephone and give them a choice of dates. Try to book well ahead of time and send a confirmation of the date and expected speaker fee.

Check in with each speaker about a month beforehand. Provide an overview of the evening (e.g. speaker portion held before or after general meeting, number of parents attending, etc.) and a map to find the preschool.

A week before the meeting, contact the speaker and make sure all the arrangements are clear. Check whether any supplies are needed, such as audiovisual aids, tables, chairs, or other materials.

On the evening of the meeting, have the payment cheque ready before the speaker arrives. Be prepared to meet the speaker at the door and show her/him where to put materials and personal belongings. Assist with any set-up. Provide a glass of water, remind the speaker of time constraints, and arrange a signal for indicating when the time is up.

Welcome and introduce the speaker (name, profession, topic, other information). Keep it short and friendly. Deal with any disruptions during the meeting. Thank the speaker at the end and help her/him pack up. Don't forget to hand over the cheque. Follow up with a thank you note, mentioning anything you particularly enjoyed. Congratulations, you did a great job as Parent Education Chair!