



OPEN CLASSROOM

INFORMATION
FOR
OC COMMUNITY MEMBERS

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The complete list of Salt Lake School District policies can be found here:
<https://www.slcschols.org/schools/school-handbooks/documents/elementary-school-handbook/english/elementary-school-handbook-english.pdf>

SECTION 1: THE OPEN CLASSROOM AT A GLANCE

The Open Classroom (OC) is a community of learners in which the students, parents, and teachers actively participate in creating and maintaining a meaningful, purposeful learning environment. We educate the whole child, addressing individual students' academic, social, emotional, creative, cognitive and physical growth and development. **(See also Section 2, The Open Classroom Philosophy.)**

There are many ways that both parents and students are expected to contribute to the OC (**see also Section 3, Committing to the Open Classroom**). The primary tasks that comprise the majority of the parents' time commitment to the OC are summarized as follows:

1. Co-oping: Parents are expected to participate in the classroom three hours per week, per child, with a voluntary-limit of six hours per week, per family. This is referred to as "co-oping", and the participating parents are referred to as "co-operators". Indeed, co-oping is a primary feature of the OC that sets it apart from other schools. **(See also Section 4, Co-oping.)**
2. Committee work: As part of each family's commitment to the Open Classroom community, parents agree to sign up for one type of committee and to complete the tasks required of them by that committee during the school year. **(See also Section 5, Committees.)**
3. Class parent meetings are held six times during the year. These meetings provide a mechanism for teachers and parents to participate in in-depth discussions about 1) upcoming classroom and school-wide events, 2) committee reports by classroom representatives, and 3) any relevant issues that need to be addressed. Parents are expected to arrange for appropriate child care as it will not be available at the parent meetings. A parent from each OC family is expected to attend all parent meetings for their child's class. **(See also Section 6, Communication.)**

The OC is committed to providing a diverse and stimulating learning experience. This requires financial support through private donations. Financial contributions are requested from families/friends of attending students but are completely voluntary. **(See also Section 7, Additional Ways to Contribute.)**

The OC Problem-Solving Procedures were established to resolve issues such as the following: 1) dissatisfaction with how well your child's needs are being met, 2) dissatisfaction with the classroom environment in general, 3) a disagreement with another parent or a teacher, or 4) a teacher's concern with a co-oper's participation in the classroom. **(See also Section 8, Problem-Solving Procedures.)**

We have a dynamic program that changes every year. Ideas are processed, amended, and approved (or not) based upon the belief that they will benefit the community as a whole and are in line with district policies. If you have a program suggestion, issue,

concern, question, or comment, we have several mechanisms in place from which you can choose to share it. (**See also Section 9: Speak Up to Make Changes!**)

SECTION 2: THE OPEN CLASSROOM PHILOSOPHY

The OC Philosophy Statement

The OC is a community of learners in which the students, parents, and teachers actively participate in creating and maintaining a meaningful, purposeful learning environment. The curriculum embraces traditional academic subjects as well as decision making and problem solving on many levels. The OC offers parents and students a unique educational environment and relies on parental involvement in the classroom and in the creation of a learning community.

The OC philosophy states that students learn most effectively when they are immersed in meaningful, authentic learning experiences where they can:

- Practice self-reliance.
- Assume responsibility for their own learning.
- Develop positive self-esteem and confidence.
- Learn cooperatively in multi-aged settings.
- Be supported by active parental participation.

Goals That are Unique to the Open Classroom

- To create a child-centered, parent-supported and teacher-directed public school that prioritizes instruction that builds on students' interests in a collaborative way, where some of the learning activities are planned by children and parents, under the guidance of the teachers. Additionally, parents provide enhancement activities to support a teacher-directed, child-centered curriculum.
- To educate the whole child, addressing individual students' academic, social, emotional, creative, cognitive and physical growth and development.

The OC Steering Body/Committee

The OC Steering Committee is the governing body of the Open Classroom. It consists of the Principal, faculty representatives, the Steering Executive Committee (made up of both parents and faculty), and one parent representative from each classroom. In coordination with and subject to the approval of the Salt Lake City School District, the OC Steering Body is responsible for managing the policies, curriculum, budget and hiring decisions of the school. Thus, both parents and faculty/staff play an important role in shaping the educational environment at the OC.

The Open Classroom's Unique Teaching/Learning Strategies

The primary component that makes the OC unique is parent co-oping. Parents commit to spending a specific block of time each week in their child's classroom. Parent presence is integral to the teaching and learning environment.

The OC is a community of learners. Students, parents, and teachers are a part of the process as they each embody the roles of teacher and learner. Titles (Mr., Mrs., etc.) are not used at the OC in order to create a sense of equity in learning. As such, every person at the OC is called by their first name, even the Principal.

Observing and asking questions are essential to the way students, parents, and teachers approach teaching and learning at the OC. Open-ended questions, rather than dictated learning or conduct, are often used to allow students the opportunity to reflect on their learning or behavior. Students are therefore encouraged to ask questions, make requests, and propose ideas for learning activities that either interest them or potentially the whole class. In this way, students and parents are encouraged and supported to be active in their learning.

Teachers

The Open Classroom Teacher

The OC teachers are primarily responsible for teaching the core curriculum outlined by the district. However, they accomplish this through the unique learning environment and teaching style of the OC. Each OC teacher:

- Supports the philosophy of the Open Classroom.
- Is the classroom leader.
- Promotes engagement in authentic, purposeful learning.
- Leads students to come together, form a community, share in decision-making and ask questions.
- Empowers students to take initiative, think for themselves, and assume responsibility for their own learning.
- Encourages dialogue for the purpose of understanding and constructing meaning.
- Builds curriculum in conversation with students.
- Engages learners in evaluating aspects of classroom life.
- Builds and teaches a common language.
- Celebrates individual and classroom successes.
- Chooses to think, act, and speak positively.
- Follows through and keeps commitments.
- Acts as a guide for other learners through discussion of learning and structure in the classroom, by modeling effective strategies, and by providing learning experiences in which all members of the community participate.
- Recognizes and takes advantage of teachable moments.
- Re-frames mistake making.
- Invites responsible choice making.
- Focuses on learner self-evaluation.
- Values and encourages learners to ask their own questions and seek their own answers.
- Helps learners set realistic goals.

Parents as Teachers (aka co-ops)

- Collaborate with teachers to plan, organize, and teach curriculum in a variety of ways to meet individual students' styles and needs.
- Act as small-group facilitators of learning activities.
- Share expertise and professional experience through their roles as co-ops thereby bringing "real life" experience to the classroom.
- Plan and teach small groups of students based on the interest of the students, the talents of the parents, and the curriculum requirements as envisioned by the teacher. These are called "Mini Courses" and "Explore Courses."

Students as Teachers

- Plan, prepare, and facilitate small group activities with their peers. They learn what it is like to be a "teacher" and "co-op". This is called "Kid Co-oping."
- Have the opportunity to participate in multi-age mentoring whereby the "older" student in a multi-aged classroom models what they know for the "younger" students. Younger students therefore have the opportunity to learn from their peers through the multi-age experience.
- Have a voice in guiding the direction of the curriculum through conversation with the teacher. Teachers learn from the students about students' interests and strengths, and use this to create a student-centered curriculum.
- Are encouraged to design independent learning centers with their parents to bring into the classroom. These centers are student-made and kid-friendly activities that are available to all students in the classroom.

Assessment and Tools to Measure Student Growth

The OC considers the assessment of learning an integral component of the learning process. Teachers use district and state assessments for reading, writing, math, and science through a variety of methods. Since the OC philosophy educates the whole child, every area, including academic, social, emotional, creative, and physical is considered to be equally important. OC teachers employ the following methods of student assessment:

- Teacher observation.
- Parent and teacher anecdotal records.
- Student self-evaluations and assessments.
- Student assessment tests required by the State of Utah and the District.
- PTK (Parent-Teacher-Kid) conferences.
- Portfolios created by the parent, teacher, and student.
- On-going dialogue with students.

SECTION 3: COMMITTING TO THE OPEN CLASSROOM

Parents and students are expected to make certain commitments when they join the Open Classroom. We ask that every member of the Open Classroom do so by reading and signing the following document.

Student _____ Teacher _____

Open Classroom Commitment Form

The Open Classroom Charter School is a teacher directed, parent supported, child centered learning community. Curriculum is designed and implemented based on daily parental involvement, making it possible to support students on a more individualized level. Your co-oping commitment is an integral part of teaching the whole child. As a parent in the Open Classroom, you agree to the following with the understanding that there is an exit process for families who do not meet these expectations.

PARENT AGREES TO:

1. Commit to having my child at school at 8:40 AM every day.
2. Actively support and participate in my child's learning environment 3 hours per week (up to 6 hours per week per family) or have alternative/substitute arrangements agreed upon in writing through the co-oping committee and classroom teacher. I will make every effort to find a substitute if I am unable to co-op due to illness or other valid reasons.
3. Arrive 10 minutes before my co-oping time begins to communicate with the teacher and other co-opers, unless otherwise agreed upon with your teacher.
4. Arrive for co-oping prepared to engage with the students and support the classroom learning community.
5. Attend scheduled parent meetings for my child's classroom and attend parent education workshops.
6. Be an active member of a committee or complete tasks as agreed upon.
7. Familiarize myself with and follow Open Classroom Policies and Procedures.
8. Participate in Parent-Teacher-Kid conferences.
9. Support my child with home learning (i.e. reading each night, research, completing homework).
10. Read weekly parent letters and Open Classroom Community Newsletters (OCCN) to keep updated on class and school wide information. Sign up on email class lists or request a hard copy.

CHILD AGREES TO:

1. Commit to being a part of my community every day on time.
2. Actively participate and contribute to the learning community through respectful actions and words with a goal of being a self-directed learner.
3. Follow the classroom and school agreements.
4. Show evidence of progress in the areas of academic, social, emotional, and physical learning and growth.

Parent's signature

Date

Child's signature

Procedures for Dismissal from the Open Classroom

The following information is a brief summary of the procedures for dismissal from a school residing within the Salt Lake City School District:

Once enrolled, the student may remain enrolled in that school without renewed application as long as he/she complies with district rules and standards and as long as space is available. The principal will notify students who are currently enrolled by March 15 if they are to be excluded for the following school year.

A student's application may be denied or a student may be excluded from enrollment based on:

- Unavailability of space in the building or capacity in a program
- Unavailability of a program the student requires
- The student having committed serious infractions of the law or school rules, including rules of the district in which enrollment is sought, or having been guilty of chronic misbehavior which would, if it were to continue after the student was admitted, endanger persons or property, cause serious disruption in the school, or place unreasonable burdens on school staff.

Students cannot be excluded on the basis of tardies or poor attendance.

For more information on district-wide policies for school admissions, see the following url:

<https://www.slcschools.org/board-of-education/policies/s-1/s-1-ap/english/s-1-ap-english.pdf>

SECTION 4: CO-OPING

Co-oping In the Classroom

Parents are expected to participate in the classroom three hours per week, per child, with a voluntary-limit of six hours per week, per family. This is referred to as “co-oping”, and the participating parents are referred to as “co-ops”. Co-oping is a primary feature of the OC that sets it apart from other schools.

The success of the Open Classroom depends on parents who co-op regularly in their child’s classroom; co-oping creates the foundation for the Open Classroom philosophy. However, since not all families have the flexibility to co-op on a regular basis, alternative mechanisms of parent contribution that suit the unique needs of an individual family may be identified through discussion with the Principal, the classroom teacher and the classroom-specific co-op representative. This is called “alternative co-oping.” Finally, if any parent is unable to meet participation requirements, due to serious economic or personal circumstances, a waiver for co-oping may be granted by the Principal. A 12-week parental leave from co-oping is available to new parents if needed.

Successful Co-ops at the OC:

- Gather materials and/or research topics.
- Teach particular activities assigned by the teacher.
- Organize field trips and guest speakers.
- Bring in special talents and skills relevant to the core curriculum.
- Complete their co-oping requirements by arriving on time prepared to work in the classroom.
- Are willing to learn.
- Actively participate in the community.
- Take responsibility by staying “on task”.
- Plan curriculum enhancement activities with the teacher.
- Listen to children attentively and speak with them respectfully.
- Ask questions that encourage independent thinking.
- Encourage children to listen and learn from each other.
- State expectations.
- Encourage self-control rather than impose control.
- Foster independence through thoughtful conversations.

SECTION 5: COMMITTEES

Committee work is the second of the three main areas in which parents of OC students are expected to contribute. Parents can choose among many committees to find the work that suits them best. As part of each family’s commitment to the OC, one parent per family agrees to sign up for one type of committee and to complete the tasks required of them by that committee during the school year. The next page lists brief

descriptions of the committees. For a more detailed description of the requirements for each committee, please visit ocslc.org.

CAFETERIA (20 Members): The Cafeteria Committee is made up of co-ops who stay after (or come early to) their co-oping shifts so that they can help monitor students in the cafeteria during lunch. Committee duties include supporting appropriate behavior and helping kids collect and dispose of their lunches appropriately.

COMMUNITY CONNECTIONS (10 Members): The goal of the Community Connections Committee is to bring the whole school community together through events and school-wide service projects. Annual Events that are hosted by this committee include: the Back to School picnic, Gingerbread Houses at the Holiday Craft Bazaar, participation in the St. Patrick's Day parade, the Art Stroll Talent Show, and Lagoon Day.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT (17 Members): *Members of the Community Support Committee are chosen by teachers.* This is a committee of caring and community building that helps make the classroom families feel supported and connected. The "Community Support rep" helps solve problems in the classroom, organizes a few general get-togethers, emails information about school notices and reminders about events, and coordinates support for families who may need help.

CO-OP (17 Members): *Members of the Co-op Committee are chosen by teachers.* The classroom "Co-op reps" work closely with the teacher to coordinate the classroom co-op schedule and to help contact parents who miss their co-op times and may need additional support.

COORDINATION (4-6 Members): The Coordination Committee ensures that all OC families are assigned to their preferred OC Committee. The members work closely with the Faculty Reps, Committee Chairs, and the Steering body to ensure that all committees run smoothly and that members are supported in ways that serve the Open Classroom.

FUNDRAISING (20 Members): The mission of the Fundraising Committee is to raise the funds our school needs to provide unique field trip opportunities, music & dance programs, improved technology, and art supplies, and to support the whole-child education model that emphasizes community and individual expression. This committee hosts many events during the year such as the Walk-A-Thon, Art Stroll Auction, Holiday Bazaar, and more.

GARDEN (10 Members): The Garden Committee works closely with the teachers and students to create an outdoor classroom space that can be used for a variety of curricular experiences. Tasks involve planting, harvesting, construction, creation and watering.

LIBRARY (15 Members): Members of the Library Committee are expected to participate in planning, setting up, breaking down, and managing the annual book fair. Committee members are also expected to shelve books weekly. In addition, members

direct literacy events, pull books for teachers, display seasonal books, prepare books for the shelves, and assist the librarians in other tasks.

PHILOSOPHY (10 Members): The purpose of the Philosophy Committee is to infuse the OC's unique child-centered, learning-together philosophy, as described in our charter, into the daily workings of the school. We administer a yearly OC Philosophy Survey to both adults and students to assess whether we are 'walking the walk,' share the results with the community, reinforce our strengths and brainstorm improvements for our weaknesses.

PUBLICITY (14 Members): The Publicity Committee is responsible for spreading the word about the Open Classroom and for recruiting new families to the school. Publicity hosts several Parent Information Nights throughout the year, as well as booths at the Avenues Street Fair and other public venues. Publicity is responsible for allocating the advertising budget to ensure the greatest impact in the community through print, radio, online, or other advertising campaigns.

STEERING (~28 Members): *Members of the Steering Body are elected by their class during the first parent meeting.* The Steering Committee is the main governing board for our school and is responsible for planning and approving the direction of the Open Classroom. Representatives from each classroom meet monthly to discuss and approve activities, policies, procedures and budgets.

TRAFFIC (40 Members): Traffic Committee members are responsible for helping kids get safely to the curb and will monitor kid/parent car drop-off safety one shift per week for the entire school year. Morning shifts involve setting up cones, signs and flags and keeping the flow of traffic moving. Afternoon shifts involve directing the safe pick-up of kids and putting equipment away.

VISUAL & PERFORMING ARTS (20 Members): Members of this committee will work closely with classroom art co-ops (and would ideally *be* art co-ops) in creating age appropriate art in the classroom. This committee also organizes the annual Art Stroll and the annual Holiday Bazaar. Members have the opportunity to facilitate school-wide music events and music field trips, as well as supporting classroom musical activities, music staff, and classroom teachers.

WEB (3 Members): The Web Committee manages and maintains the OC website and mailing lists. It also coordinates with other committees to make sure the content and school calendar on the OC website are up-to-date.

YEARBOOK (6 Members): The Yearbook Committee is responsible for creating a yearbook that expresses the spirit of the year for the entire school. In addition to photos, tasks might include assistance with page layout, sales, proofreading, and organization of parent/child participation.

SECTION 6: COMMUNICATION

Email Lists

Email will be the primary means of communication about important school-related information throughout the year:

- The OC News email list is reserved for important announcements only. All families with email are encouraged to sign up for this list.
- The OC Steering Body email list is used for communications within Steering and for anybody curious about OC governance.
- The class-specific email lists are used by the teacher and families in your classroom to communicate news that is relevant to your child's classroom.
- The individual committee email lists are used to communicate news from the committee you belong to.

To sign up for email lists, please go to the following website:

<https://docs.google.com/a/ocslc.org/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScAdoMYgyqJWm8hDpAZo-g1VzP7vvOYSJ7PVYXdfH50ymZjxQ/viewform>

Class Parent Meetings

Class parent meetings are the third way that OC parents are expected to contribute. Each classroom holds a parent meeting six times during the school year. These meetings provide a mechanism for teachers and parents to participate in in-depth discussions about 1) upcoming classroom and school-wide events, 2) committee reports by classroom representatives, and 3) any other relevant issues that need to be addressed. Meetings are either held in the classroom or hosted by an OC family in their home. Parents are expected to arrange ahead of time for appropriate child care as it will not be available at the parent meetings. A parent from each OC family is expected to attend all parent meetings for their child's class. If circumstances prevent a parent from attending, however, it is the family's responsibility to obtain handouts and learn what was discussed at the meeting. To facilitate this, each family is asked to select a parent "buddy" that can collect information distributed at the meeting and pass on important information.

Co-oper Workshops

Co-oper workshops are held periodically for the purpose of involving and educating parents on co-oping strategies, OC philosophy, curriculum, learning resources, and other major OC issues. These are held during the school day, and co-ops attend them during their regular co-oping shift.

OC Steering Body Meetings

The OC Steering Body discusses and resolves matters of policy and budget. Steering Body meetings are held monthly; the schedule will be established at the beginning of the year. All parents are encouraged to attend the OC Steering meetings, to learn about how the OC is governed, and to participate in the discussion!

OC Steering Meeting Minutes

The Steering meeting minutes will be posted on our website shortly after the meeting takes place for all to read and will also be promptly emailed to individual class email lists.

Open Classroom Community News (OCCN)

The OCCN is the OC newsletter, and it is distributed via the OC News email list. The OCCN contains program-wide announcements and updates, pictures and articles chronicling recent OC events, and the OC calendar. Members of the OC community are welcome to send in letters for publication in the OCCN.

OC Website

The OC website (www.ocslc.org) contains all pertinent information related to the OC. Of note, parents can use this website to inform the office of child absences.

Parent Letters

Each classroom teacher creates a weekly parent letter that is usually emailed to parents on Friday. The parent letter contains highlights from the previous week, upcoming events and dates, important announcements, and class-specific information.

SECTION 7: ADDITIONAL WAYS TO CONTRIBUTE

Snacks

Depending on the classroom, parents may be asked to bring a snack for the students on an average of one school day per month. Class-specific Co-oping Representatives will provide a schedule for snacks. Healthy snacks (such as fresh vegetables and fruit) are encouraged and appreciated.

Financial Donations to the OC

The Open Classroom is committed to providing a diverse and stimulating learning experience. This requires financial support through private donations. Financial contributions are requested from families/friends of attending students but are completely voluntary. However, you may donate any amount, at any time, and as many times as you would like throughout the school year. Monetary contributions are placed in a fund called Parents For Open Education (PFOE). Teachers and committees use PFOE funds to purchase supplies, books and class materials. PFOE funds support art, drama, music and sporting programs, field trips, special events and the 8th grade graduation. Ultimately, the range and diversity of activities offered to students depend on the total amount of contributions received. However, no student will be denied access to a school or sports activity if a donation has not been made by the student's family.

All check donations to the OC should be paid to the order of "Open Classroom" or "Salt Lake Education Foundation (SLEF)" with the abbreviation "PFOE" noted in the check's memo section. Checks made out to the Salt Lake Education Foundation or "SLEF" will

receive a receipt for tax deduction purposes from the district. Company donations must be made out to SLEF. There is a metal donation box in the main office for check donations. Any cash donations should be brought to the office where you can obtain a receipt. Online donations can also be made from the home page of the OC website (ocslc.org) in which case a receipt will be emailed to you. Many companies match donations, so be sure to check with your HR department!

SECTION 8: PROBLEM-SOLVING PROCEDURES

Student-related issues: In each classroom, students will be oriented to abide by four main agreements in all of the common areas of the school, such as cafeteria, playground, hallways, etc. These are:

- **Be an attentive listener (problem solving works best when we listen to each other's requests);**
- **Show appreciation – No put-downs;**
- **Mutual respect; and**
- **The right to participate and the right to pass.**

If these agreements are not being followed, then co-ops/staff can follow the **5R** guidelines to resolve the problem, as follows:

1. **Reminder:** Say just once "(student's name), I need you to _____."
2. **Relocate:** Redirect student to sit away from the group, for example near the teacher, at a different table, or perhaps a designated "think" chair.
3. **Removal from class/Reflection:** Remove student to the hallway or another classroom. Obtain and discuss the "OC Reflection sheet" with the student. If necessary, contact the teacher or grade level paraprofessional for help.
4. **Return to classroom:** Resume classroom activity and/or write an apology, etc. Contact parents if necessary.
5. **Replacement behavior:** Inform student of the appropriate behavior (possibly through role-playing) should a similar incident happen in the future. Implement circle reflection time if needed.

Parent-related issues:

The OC Problem-Solving Procedure was established to resolve issues such as the following: 1) dissatisfaction with how well your child's needs are being met, 2) dissatisfaction with the classroom environment in general, 3) a disagreement with another parent or a teacher, or 4) a teacher's concern with a co-oper's participation in the classroom. The following options, in order of priority, begin the process:

1. Go directly to the relevant party with whom you have a concern or issue. Most problems can be solved with a direct, honest, and open dialogue.
2. When #1 doesn't solve the problem, please contact your classroom-specific Community Support Representative for guidance.
3. If necessary, the Community Support Representative will take the problem to the Steering Body co-Chairs or to the Chair of the Community Support committee.
4. If #1-3 fail to solve the problem to your satisfaction, contact the Principal.

SECTION 9: SPEAK UP TO MAKE CHANGES!

We have a dynamic program that changes every year. Ideas are processed, amended, and approved or not, based upon the belief that they will benefit the community as a whole and are in line with district policies. If you have a program suggestion, issue, concern, question, or comment, we have several mechanisms in place from which you can choose to share it:

1. Speak with your Class Steering Body Representative. The Class Steering Representatives, who are nominated by the teacher and elected at the first parent meetings of the school year, are available as information conduits between the class parent meetings and OC Steering Body meetings.
2. Attend OC Steering Body meetings. Come to join in the discussion or just observe. All are invited, including new families! In fact, you can also attend almost any committee meeting for the same purpose. Contact the specific committee Chair first for more information.
3. Contact the Chairs of the Steering Body or any of the committees whether you have an issue or want to change an existing policy or practice.
4. Bring it up at your parent meeting. One of the purposes of your parent meeting is to share ideas, comments, and concerns. If possible, speak to your class Community Support Representative in advance about the agenda. You may also suggest that your class meet early specifically for unstructured social time in which to discuss your concerns.
5. Use an appropriate email list. This is a good choice for general classroom or program suggestions.
6. Write a "Letter to the Editor" of the OCCN newsletter.