



**Salt Lake City Open Classroom**  
Learning together since 1977

## ~What About Sharing?~

1. Sharing is an integral part of the OC philosophy. It takes different formats depending on the kids, the teacher, the classroom dynamics, and the developmental level of the students.
2. This school wide practice puts the child in the teacher/co-oper role for a brief period nearly every week. It gives them the opportunity to practice their skills at being part of the cooperative learning environment for which they are an integral part.
3. At the same time this “sharing time can be a huge, constant, and reliable source of exasperation for teachers and parents. It is where the OC philosophical rubber meets the road”. It is where we can assess a student’s capability in managing the role of teaching others. Do they get silly and goofy, do they go on and on without assessing the feedback from their audience? We need to step back from our initial reaction to see what is really happening for the sharer and the audience. “Frustration comes when sharing time looks and feels like the children are active members not in an academic community but in a social or play community”. Reflecting on what is going on may provide broader perspective to realize that the process is a learning tool for the entire community.
4. The benefits of trusting children to handle this activity come when you can observe the developmental ascension of this activity through the upper grades. The rules and expectations of sharing create a framework of courtesy within the entire OC community as the participants eventually learn to respect and consider another’s point of view. Visitors to the upper grade classrooms during sharing circle often admire the maturity of social exchanges, the willingness of children to listen attentively and respond thoughtfully to one another. Children also gain confidence in sharing of themselves and becoming teachers in the classroom that eventually expands beyond the classroom and the OC community into the broader community.
5. Sharing time becomes a much anticipated part of the day and the activity is kid directed and kid managed. It can feel that there is a loss of control in the classroom, but the modeling from teachers and parents in overall classroom activity will provide some structure for sharing. Students will request that certain issues around sharing be explicitly created to ensure fairness. They may ask for those to be put in place in the younger grades or create them themselves in the upper grades.
6. The emphasis on sharing is about the child’s ability to eventually emerge from the OC experience with a healthy understanding and courtesy of having meaningful exchange with others both as a learner and as a teacher without a heavily imposed management device.