

SOUTH SEATTLE COLLEGE
Cooperative Preschools
Where Parents and Children Learn Together

www.WestSeattlePreschools.org

Family Handbook
(Toddlers)

The Truth About Co-op Preschool

Co-op Preschool is an investment... of your time, talents, and trust.

To be good investors one must ask: What is the Return on Investment?

What will my family gain by the investment we put in as members of Co-op Preschool?

For Your Children:

Co-op children are not perfect. They do not behave like angels.

- Co-op offers a safe place to test limits and be encouraged to try out new ways.

Co-op Teachers will not drill them on ABC's or coloring in the lines.

- Co-op will instill excitement, curiosity and the fun of learning.
- Co-op kids learn pre-academic skills the way brain science tells us works best.

Co-op children are not guaranteed entrance into Ivy League colleges.

- At Co-op, children can practice the experiences that will prepare them for:
 - creative expression
 - decision making
 - independence
 - compassion
 - interdependence
 - problem solving
 - self confidence
 - curiosity and innovation



For Yourself as a Parent:

Co-op does not espouse "one right way" to parent.

- Co-op will encourage you to choose a parenting course that fits your family values and ultimate goals.

Co-op does not promise to make you the perfect parent or even a great parent.

- Co-op offers you a safe place to learn about and try new parenting skills.

Co-op does not promise to make parenting easy.

- Your Co-op community will be there as you face the inevitable parenting challenges together.

For Your Children's Teachers and Parenting Instructors:

Co-op does not expect "perfection."



- Your Co-op Teachers feel privileged to be part of your parenting journey.



Welcome to YOUR Co-op Preschool and Parenting Education Program!

Our MISSION: to build stronger and healthier families through adult and child learning environments.

OPEP: Organization of Parenting Education Preschool Programs

Your Child's Learning Environment

- Your child's preschool is a fun, nurturing and supportive community of children, their parents and care givers, skilled Children's Teachers and Parenting Educators.
- Children learn the joy of discovery through facilitated play and guided learning where they: build social skills, develop empathy, practice creative thinking, learn problem solving, make friends.
- **Your Preschool Teacher provides a carefully planned, rich environment full of learning activities that are just right for the developmental stage of your child.**
- **The SSC Co-op Preschool curriculum is aligned with WaKIDS Washington State Kindergarten Entrance Guidelines and supports:** family connection, whole child assessment for individualized learning, supporting smooth transition into Kindergarten

Your Own Learning Environment

- You can develop a community of friendships that will sustain and enrich your family and your children throughout their lives.
- As Assistant Teacher you are directly involved in your child's education as you work in the classroom observing Teachers who model positive guidance and learning through play. You will practice positive interaction with your own and all the children--at school and at home.
- Your Parenting Instructor, provided through South Seattle College, supports your personal parenting journey and helps you blend the latest in child development and positive discipline guidance with your family values and goals.

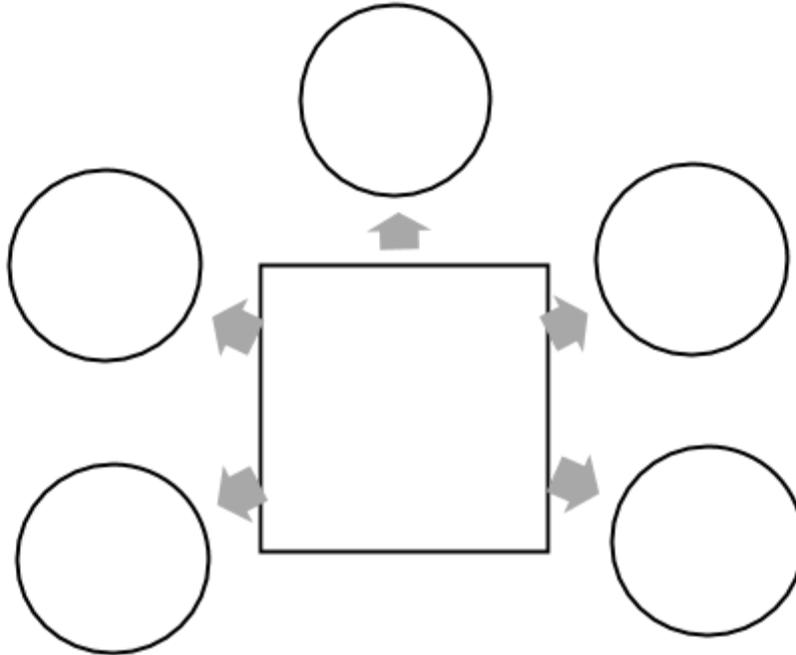
The Adult Learning Environment

- Your neighborhood preschool is a non-profit small business organized so that there is a role for each parent. You will be building skills like leadership, teamwork, budgeting, personnel management--all qualities that build your personal resume!
- As your children grow out of preschool you will take those skills into the world--personally and professionally-- and become a valuable resource in the community.

Locally known as "The Co-ops" we take pride in helping to raise the current and next generation of Seattle families--and we have fun doing it! We are glad you are joining!

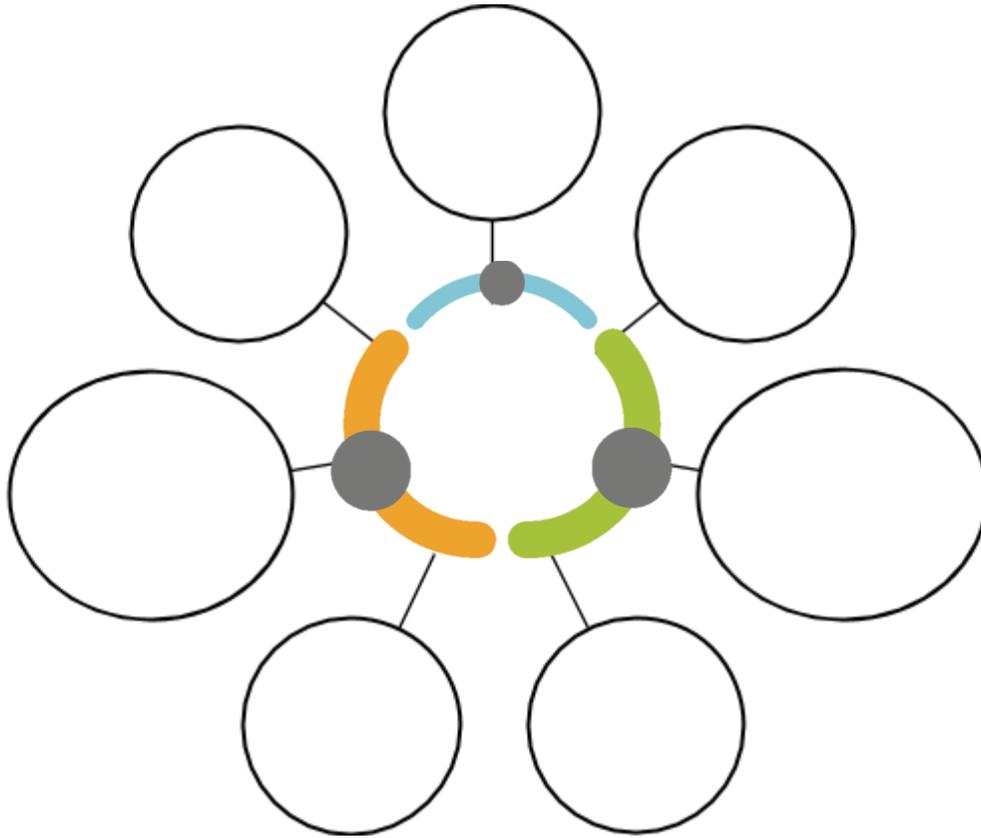


Big Picture: Affiliation with South Seattle College



Big Picture: Preschool Organization





Co-op Preschool Membership

- **To truly be a Co-op, each member plays an important part.**

Member Roles

- **Choose one job that best fits your time, talent, or learning interests.**
- **Every member actively participates in Fundraising**
 - Participate in Class fundraising activities
 - Support PAC (scholarship) fundraising activities
- **Encourage healthy snack time, as decided by group**
 - Bring a healthy snack to share with all children OR
 - Bring healthy snack for your own child

Attend Parent Meeting

- **Once each quarter**--put all dates in your calendar now!
- 7-9:00 pm without children
- Co-op business and Teacher announcements
- Parenting discussion with SSC Parenting Instructor

Assist in Toddler Classroom



- Act as **Assistant Teacher** –alternating with Discussion Group
- Observe modeling by Children's Teacher and Parenting Instructor
- Practice guidance skills with children in class and at home

Enjoy Parenting Education

- Participate in **Discussion Group**—alternating with being Assistant Teacher
- Your teachers will help you and your child separate smoothly when you and your child are ready
- Connect with your SSC Parenting Instructor at class or between class via email or phone
- Ask questions or express concerns

Choose Quarterly Parent Education

- **Attend a minimum of 1 class per quarter--no maximum**
- Choose topics from the quarterly calendar that are relevant to your family
- Bring partners, nannies, other adult family members



Financial Policies

The total tuition for the entire year is divided into 9 equal payments. To make budgeting (yours and ours) easier, each month's payment is the same amount no matter how many weeks there are or how many times you go to class each month.

Your SSC Parenting Education tuition is determined by SSC and is included in the monthly tuition amount.

Payment is **due at the beginning of each month. Our aim is to have any/all checks deposited shortly after the 15th of each month. Your late payment can hold up deposits from the whole class. Payment options:**

- Pay on-line through your Jovial portal (check your payment status here, too).
- Put a check in the File labelled Class Treasurer. They track the payments and deposits them.
- ***Other Payment Options are explained by your Site Treasurer.***

Financial assistance is available from the Mary E. Phillips Scholarship Fund through our Parent Advisory Council (PAC). Contact your Parenting Instructor for the form. Complete and return it before the deadline for that quarter. Scholarships may be granted for *up to half* of your monthly tuition. Applications are reviewed by a small confidential committee (1 SSC staff, 1 PAC representative, 1 community member—usually a Co-op or staff alum). Because that process takes a while, applicants need to make arrangements with their Class Treasurer for the tuition payment until it is granted. If the applicant clearly fits the guidelines, they arrange to pay half. Adjustments can be made later, if needed. For bookkeeping purposes the people aware of the scholarship grant are: Parenting Instructor, Class Treasurer, Site Treasurer, scholarship committee. **You must re-apply each quarter where you have the need.**

To give us adequate startup funds, members pay first and last months' (Sept and May) installments up front. Last month's payment is applied in May or as your last month, for early withdrawal.

If you registered over the summer, you paid a registration fee and one month's tuition to hold your spot. That is the one we reserve for the last/May tuition. You pay the first/Sept tuition in September.

If you registered in the fall or during the school year, you did not make an advance payment. The last/May tuition is due within 2 months. Because that can be a large sum, payments can be spread across a few months by talking with the Site Treasurer. Be sure to note on your payment why the amount is anything other than the usual (example in check memo line: Sept tuition+ partial May tuition)

If you must withdraw from preschool before the end of the year, give a 30 day notice to your Parenting Instructor and Board President or Treasurer. Your last month's prepaid tuition can then be applied to your last month of attendance. We will try to fill your spot from the waiting list as soon as possible.

We understand that financial situations can change. If you have financial concerns, please talk with your Parenting Instructor.



Your First Weeks at Preschool

- At arrival time sign in, get a name tag, and greet the Children’s Teacher with your child.
- Take a little while to settle yourself and your child. Show your child around to see the fun things available, friends to play near, and other friendly adults to help.
- In the weeks before Discussion Groups and Work Stations start, you will stay near your child. Encourage your child to play by playing yourself!
- Get to know other children and parents, too.
- Practice “Factual Commenting” and “Sportscasting”—communication techniques you will be learning.
- You can use this time to talk with your Parent Instructor and to watch both teachers as they model interacting with the children.
- The Children’s Teacher will lead you through the day—play, snack, music—and is happy to answer questions or help.
- Co-op is very stimulating for children. It takes a few weeks to get adjusted. Expect your child to be either very wired or very tired at the end of class!

Starting Discussion Groups and Classroom Assistance

After a few months or so (when the teachers feel that most children are comfortable in class and parents are ready to work with other children) the class will be divided in half. Parents in both groups will alternate weeks between attending discussion group with the Parent Instructor and working in the classroom with the Children’s Teacher.

If you joined class mid-year give yourself and your child time to get adjusted to the new place and people. You may want to “shadow” your child for a few sessions to ease into it before joining one of the groups. Co-op can be a stimulating environment to walk into!

Discussion Groups and Work Stations start after about 20 or 30 minutes of settling in time.

Discussion Group is a time for parents to ask questions or raise concerns about their parenting journey, to get support from other parents, and to get information about child development and guidance from the Parent Instructor.

For some children and parents this may be the first experience in spending time away from each other. Easy separation from parents is not “expected” because it can depend on the child’s age, personality temperament, experience, or even mood of the day. Not to worry! The teachers will *work with* parents and children when they are ready.

Children may not be used to their parent paying attention to other children. With time and practice they learn that your job is to take care of your area and other children. If you need to move away, you can just ask another parent to watch your area for a while—it’s the Co-op way!

Be easy on yourself and have realistic expectations of your child. We don’t expect them to know how to act in a room full of children or with other adults. They (and YOU) are *learning*....that’s why we are all here!



I work at Preschool today as an Assistant Teacher!

Before I leave home... Check the "Work Schedule" to see which station I will be working:

- If it is ART, dress myself for a mess. If it is SNACK, bring snacks that follow the *Snack Guidelines*.
- Review what I have been learning about guiding children and facilitating problem solving.

At arrival time...

- Sign in, get a name tag, and greet the Children's Teacher with my child.
- Take a little while to get settled. I'll show my child around to see the fun things available, friends to play near, and other friendly adults to help.
- Discussion Group and Work Stations start after about 20 or 30 minutes.
- After greeting all the children, the Teacher is available to answer my questions and help.

As children come to my area to play and learn...

- Greeting each child welcomes them into play.
- To be available, I will stay on the children's level (not sitting on furniture; not standing around).
- Since the room gets busy and noisy, I will keep my own voice low--*go to* children to talk to them.
- *Expect* "disputes" over things and people—I'll consider this prime opportunity for social learning for my child and myself. I can always ask the Teacher for help.
- Don't use the "S" word—I do not ask them to share yet! That comes later...

At Clean Up Time....

- Even though it would be faster if I just cleaned up, it's still an important learning time. My job is to involve kids to take part by handing them a toy, walking them to the shelf, etc.

At Snack Time...

- Facilitate hand washing—it's hard to wait!
- Encourage your child to sit by placing your body close, right behind the chair, and by giving lots of attention by engaging in talk about the food, placemat, etc.
- Remember the safety rule: we sit down when eating or drinking.

At Music and Story Times...

- Since the Teacher is leading, I support her by being involved! My child will be as involved as I am...
- I'll keep my expectations realistic. Participating in group times takes practice!
- **As You Leave...**
 - Watch to make sure no child leaves without their adult.
 - I'm tired, but I know that my being here means a richer learning experience for my child and the others. It's the beginning of being involved in my child's education!
 - My child is tired, too.



It's my Snack Day at Preschool!

Keep it.....

- Simple to prepare
- Safe and easy to eat

Simple to prepare: For health code reasons, all foods for children must arrive at school in original sealed packages. Snack needs to be prepped at school. Fruits and vegetables must be washed and cut at school. Baked foods must be cooked at school.

Include maybe 2 items. It is snack, not lunch! Examples:

- cheese; buttered whole grain bread strips
- mandarin oranges; whole grain cracker
- sliced grapes; canned beans
- un-frozen peas; cheese cubes
- cantaloupe; string cheese

Start with one serving. Children can ask for and be given seconds, if time allows. **We always serve and encourage drinking water.**

Safe and easy to eat:

- Bite-sized finger foods
- Safe, child sized portions
- Chewable and not choke-able (avoid raw carrots, whole grapes, etc. for toddlers. Pirate Booty and rice cakes can become choke-able with wiggly toddlers, too)
- Avoid common allergens like all nuts & all nut butter. Respect class protocol for specific allergies.
- Surprisingly sweet things to hold off on: sweetened yogurt, fruit snacks, raisins, graham crackers

YOU like variety but kids don't. Feel free to bring the exact same snack each time it is your turn if it was "a hit." **Snack duty is not a competition!**

Kids can find school snack time a good time to try something new. Don't be surprised (and don't make a big deal out of it!) if your child eats things at school they have never eaten before....or if they refuse a current favorite. For all children, offer then accept their choice.

If a child chooses not to eat, they may not be hungry! It's ok--the next meal comes soon enough. If a child chooses not to eat, they may be upset that play time has ended. Or, they may not be used to sitting with so many other kids. Encourage kids to sit at the table by giving attention for doing so, chat about pictures on place mats or what they played with at school today. For safety, kids must sit while eating or drinking—a good rule to follow at home, too!

Before and After Snack: Follow the Guidelines at your preschool to sanitize tables (before and after) and placemats; clean utensils, plates, and glasses. Dispose of uneaten, served food and garbage. Recycle recyclables.



Help! I can't make it to school today! What do I do?

If you are not scheduled to work in the classroom, try to email your Teacher or Parent Instructor. This is not critical—we just worry! If you miss several times in a row, please do let us know what is happening. Maybe we can help.

Help! I can't work my day at Preschool! What do I do?

In our Toddler Classes we can ask someone to move from Discussion Group into the Classroom for that day. If it starts happening too often with too many people missing, we will figure out a system for coverage.

A thought for the future: In 2-Day Co-op Preschools (where your child attends one day without you) there is no adult available to move into the classroom. But there will be a system in place to find subs so that we have enough adult coverage. It always works out!

I have a question!

MY QUESTION IS ABOUT	WHO MIGHT KNOW
My work station or rotation	Work Schedule or Parent Coordinator
My snack day	Work Schedule or Parent Coordinator
Snack Duty	Children's Teacher or Experienced Parents
Tuition	Treasurer or Jovial Portal on-line
Need financial assistance	Parenting Instructor
Curriculum	Children's Teacher
Classroom Safety	Children's Teacher
My Co-op Job	Children's Teacher
Handling situations in class	Children's Teacher or Parenting Instructor
Guidance and discipline at home or school	Parenting Instructor
Family circumstances	Parenting Instructor
Fundraising	PAC Rep or Preschool Fundraising Coordinator



Proactive Approach to Health

Besides washing hands, the most proactive thing we can do is to stay home when we are sick. It is hard to predict when a child is getting ill--and yet may be contagious. You know your child's usual demeanor and should follow your instincts to keep them home if they seem lethargic or "not themselves." You know that you appreciate it when other parents keep sick children home.

As Assistant Teacher you, too, need to assess your own illness--staying home if you may be contagious or if you are not feeling up to doing your job at preschool.

Please complete and update Emergency Information forms, as needed

Deciding when to return after an illness is also a judgment call. The child who returns too soon can tire easily and not make good use of the busy preschool day--and we often see children relapse if their reserves are not strong enough to return.

When to Stay Home

- Fever, anything over 100 degrees underarm within the last 24 hours (not medicated).
- Severe or phlegm-producing cough.
- Nasal secretions that require frequent attention.
- Sore throat with fever or swollen glands.
- Within 24 hours of beginning antibiotic treatment.
- Three or more watery stools in 24 hours.
- Vomiting within 24 hours.
- Body rash, especially with a fever.
- While chicken pox sores are still infected.
- While cold sore is wet or is not covered.
- Redness, thick mucus or pus draining from the eye.
- While any evidence of lice remains.
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Health and Safety Policies

We care about kids and make all efforts to have a healthy and safe preschool! We want parents to feel confident that preschool will be a good experience for them and their children. We will work together to limit illness and injury as much as possible.

Arrival and Departure

We ask all children and adults to wash hands as they enter school, before snack, after toileting. We recommend washing hands when you leave school--especially if family immunity seems down or during illness prone seasons. Sign in and out--so we have an accurate count in case of emergency.

Toileting and Diaper Changing

Diaper changing happens in the designated areas. Please use the bleach solution to clean the area before and after. Remember to wash your hands and your child's hands when done--it's the start of a good habit! Please take wet and soiled diapers with you--thanks!

Disease Control

Children in group situations do get sick. We have procedures to keep our site clean before, during, and after class.

- Disinfecting solutions are kept locked until used by adults--this is one time children are not asked to help!
- Food prep areas and children's tables are disinfected before and after snack.
- Toys and other objects that have been in a child's mouth are cleaned and air dried.
- Dishes are cleaned in a 4 part system: hot soapy wash, hot rinse, bleach rinse, air dry...or in the dishwasher.

All families complete Immunization Records or Statement of Exemption.

Allergies

Parents will notify the Parent Coordinator and Children's Teacher of allergies that need special attention. Food allergies will be noted on the child's placemat. Other parents will be notified and instructed about snack preparation. Parents of the allergic child can bring safe foods to have available during snack time.

Medications

Asthma inhalers and Epi-pens require written instructions and must be clearly labeled with child's name and doctor's name. Parents will also provide verbal instructions for their use.

Attention to Climbing/Large Motor Activities

Stay within arm's reach and with your hands/arms free. Do not leave the area unattended. Help children learn to climb and play safely. Since they don't yet have control of their bodies, or their impulses, be especially aware when children are near each other or wanting to play in the same area or at the same time.



Injury

All Preschool Teachers and Parenting Instructors hold valid First Aid/CPR cards. In case of Teacher absence an adult on the premises must hold valid First Aid/CPR cards.

Teacher will administer First Aid. Minor injuries will be treated with ice, Band-aids and hugs. Parents will be informed.

For serious or head injuries, parents will be called immediately. 911 will be called as needed and a designated adult will stay with the child if transport is required until the parent arrives.

Emergencies

Classes regularly practice fire and earthquake drills with children and parents. For emergency departures (and drills) if a parent is not immediately nearby, take that child to their parent as you both exit. Teachers have a plan for lockdown or shelter-in-place situations. In the event of a real emergency, Teachers will follow instructions of emergency responders and will stay with families on site as long as needed.



Email Protocol

- ✓ In order to be "cooperative" our Co-op Preschools rely on email communication for quick and direct messages to an entire group...or to one individual. Please be sensitive to proper use.
- ✓ Please check your email before class and before Parent Meetings for announcements.

Preschool business: Teachers, board members, etc. will expect email communication to be read before class and before meetings. We are saving paper and valuable time--and coming prepared will mean smoother meetings or preschool days.

NNTR: You may see or use this to denote "**No Need To Reply**"

Email groups: If your class chooses to set up a class email group, make it clear if it is set up whether a reply goes to an individual or to the entire group. Teachers may choose to opt out of this group if it is used more for social communication--the Teacher's name is then cc'd when group business is discussed.

Each class can vote whether to use Facebook, google groups, etc. Be sure the entire class is on board.

Reply all: Be sensitive to the time and in-box of others. *Use Reply All only when the entire group needs to be involved.* Keep discussions to a minimum by using polls (replied only to sender), etc.

Social vs. Preschool business: Social connections are an important part of co-op and often arranged through email. Your class can decide if it is becoming overwhelming. **Remember that the roster is private and the list should not be given out or used for reasons other than for preschool.**

Communication to/from your Teachers:

Children's Teachers and Parenting Instructors welcome questions and concerns--either about your child and family or about the running of preschool. Email is one route--it can also be used to alert your Teachers that you would like to schedule a time to talk at school or on the phone.

If you have a concern about your co-op: Group email is not a place to air concerns or voice complaints. As we know, the emotional tone of email can easily be misunderstood.

Begin with a private email (or phone call) with your child's Teacher and/or Parenting Instructor and/or board member. That person will help you decide the best route for problem-solving.

In Co-op we teach children that problem solving is important and needs to happen between the people involved with the help of a neutral person who can facilitate. The same process works well for adults.

Stories about children: We all like to hear stories about kids--especially if they are heartwarming or funny, but not all stories should be shared. It takes a judgment call whether to tell only the child/children's parent/s or the whole group---better to share with the parent first and ask permission to tell the group. Teachers prefer to work out situations between children at school. **If there is a difficult event or interaction during school time it is best relayed to parents by the Teacher rather than another parent.** Because children live in the present, we try hard to reach resolution between kids at school.

Reminders: Emails do get lost in the files....or the inbox gets so full that it takes a while to work through it. If you do not get a response, try again!





Calendar, Holidays, and Weather

Calendar

Preschool generally follows the **Seattle Public School vacation schedule (Thanksgiving, Winter, Mid-Winter, Spring)** and **holiday schedule** (such as, Veteran's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day). Anything different will be decided on by the group and announced.

The full Seattle Schools calendar can be accessed here: <https://www.seattleschools.org/district/calendars>

We hold school during Teacher In-service, Semester Breaks, Half Days, etc. If you have older children, you may need to plan ahead for childcare of siblings.

Whether class is held during **Seattle School Parent Teacher Conference/Thanksgiving week** is up to the Site Board and depends on chosen start and end dates to assure that there is 33 weeks of instruction.

Parents attend one more week than children. Plan to attend Clean Up without your child that week.

Holidays

Co-op Preschools are generally Holiday-Frenzy-Free Zones and kept a place where routines are predictable. Decisions about celebrations will be made on a class by class basis with input from the Children's Teacher and Parenting Instructor.

Talk with your Children's Teacher about birthdays or other personal events.

Weather

In case of snow:

- Morning class is cancelled if Seattle Public School Kindergartens are closed, cancelled or 2 hours late. Listen for reports.
- Evening classes and Parent Meeting cancellation will depend on local driving conditions. Look for an email announcement.

If more than 2 consecutive days of school are missed due to weather, the Children's Teacher can propose how to make up at least one.

