



SOUTH SEATTLE COLLEGE
Cooperative Preschools
Where Parents and Children Learn Together

www.WestSeattlePreschools.org

Family Handbook



**SOUTH SEATTLE
COLLEGE**

South Seattle College Cooperative Preschools

Mission:

Where Children and Parents Learn Together

Values:

Community; Parent Education; Play-Based Learning; Developing Social and Emotional Skills; Commitment to Inclusion, Equity, and Anti-bias Education

Vision:

Community

We are committed to cultivating supportive communities within and outside the classroom. We work to build stronger families, resilient children, and lifelong social networks.

Parent Education

Although we are educators and parents, we are constantly learning and we are invested in that process. Professional instructors provide parents with concrete, research-based tools for parenting in ways that are constructive and developmentally appropriate. We strive to create safe and supportive atmospheres in which parents can build empathetic relationships and learn from one another.

Play-Based Learning

We believe in cultivating a lifelong love of learning using a play-based curriculum that validates and expands children's experiences and interests. Our teachers build open and intentional spaces for developmentally appropriate play and children's exploration, encouraging problem solving, empathy, and shared responsibility.

Developing Social and Emotional Skills

We are committed to fostering the development of the whole child and believe that social and emotional skills are the foundation for school-readiness. We offer children a safe environment to learn new skills, navigate their emotions, build empathy, and cultivate meaningful relationships.

A Commitment to Inclusion, Equity, and Anti-Bias Education

Our goal is to educate every child equitably by supporting each child according to their individual needs. We strive to remove barriers and create a nurturing environment for all families. We see strength in our differences including those of race, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, family makeup, cognitive and physical ability, sexual orientation, religion, socioeconomic status, and others. We are committed to anti-bias education through nurturing empathy, developing positive self-identities, recognizing bias and unfairness, and standing up for oneself and others in the face of bias.

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

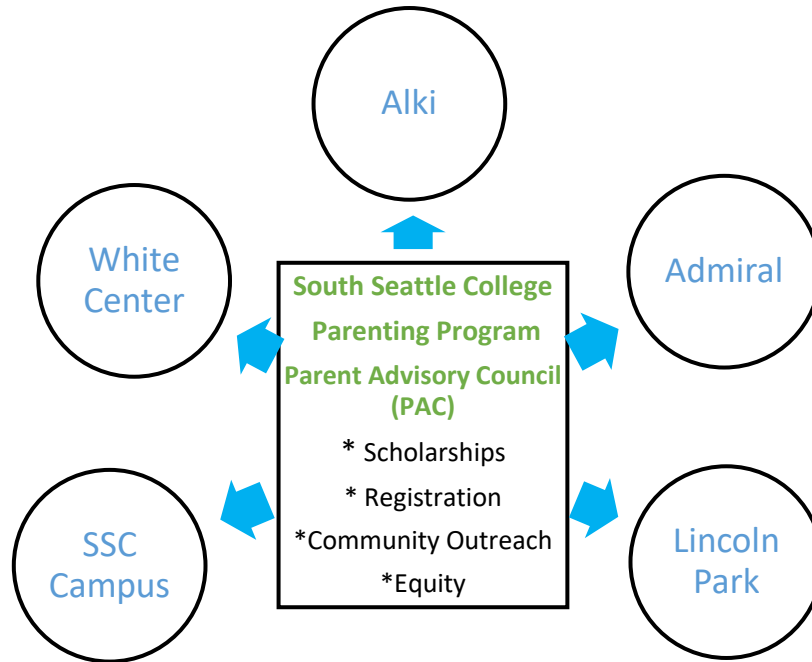
- You can develop a community of friendships that will sustain and enrich your family and your children throughout their lives.
- As Assistant Teacher you are directly involved in your child's education as you work in the classroom observing Teachers who model positive guidance and learning through play. 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

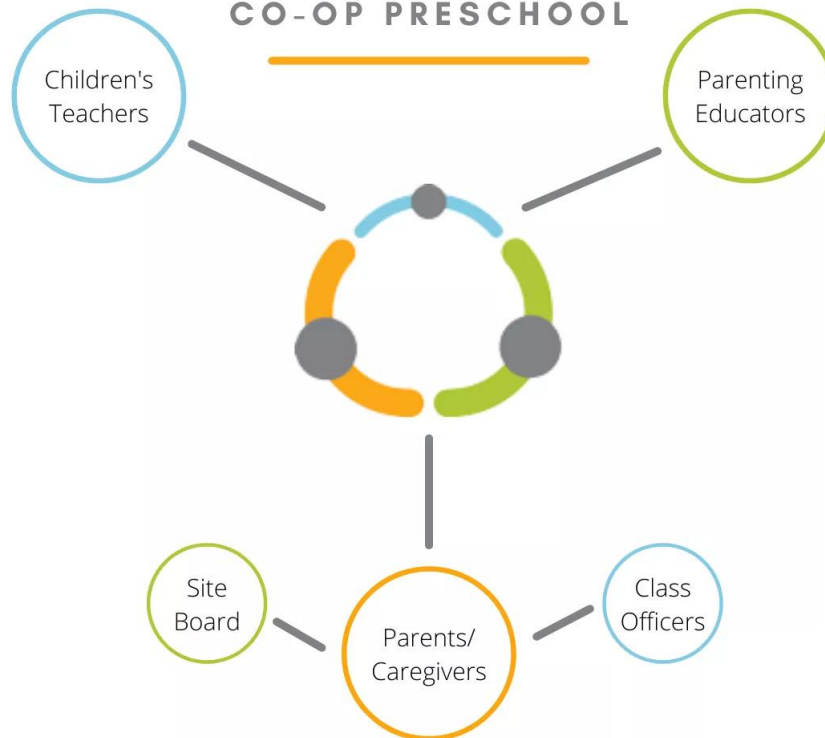
- Your neighborhood preschool is a non-profit small business organized so that there is a role for each parent. You will be building skills like leadership, teamwork, budgeting, and personnel management--all qualities that build your personal resume!
- As your children grow out of preschool you will 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: ORGANIZATION OF CO-OP PRESCHOOL



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**
 - Fundraising Chair or Class Fundraising Representative
 - Participate in Preschool fundraising activities
 - Support PAC (scholarship) fundraising activities
- **Every member votes –at All School Business Meeting**
 - Elect Site and Class Board Members
 - Hire Children's Teacher
 - Approve Operating Budget
 - Approve Affiliation with SSC
- **Provide Healthy Children's Snack on a Rotating Basis**

Attend Parent Meeting

- Once each month--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 Preschool Classroom

- **Assist as Assistant Teacher one session per week**
- Observe modeling by Children's Teacher and Parenting Instructor
- Practice guidance skills with children in class and at home
- Talk individually or in small groups with your Parenting Instructor

Choose Quarterly Parent Seminars

- **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 no matter how many weeks there are or how many times you go to class each month.

Your SSC Parent 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 for the whole class. Payment options:**

- Pay on-line through your Jovial portal (check your payment status here, too).
- Bring a check to the Parent Meeting or put it in the File labelled Class Treasurer. They track the payments and give checks to the Site Treasurer who deposits them.
- ***Other Payment Options are explained by your Site Treasurer.***



Financial assistance is available from the Mary E. Phillips Scholarship Fund and the Wendi Hirshberg Memorial 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. 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 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 understand that financial situations can change. If you have financial concerns, please talk with your Parenting Instructor.

Oh, no! I have to miss my Parent Meeting!

Attendance is an important part of membership...and of building community. Informal sharing and connections are so valuable and hard to replace.

If you **MUST** make an exception and miss a meeting:

- **Notify Parenting Instructor.**
- Ask a friend to **gather handouts (or turn in completed forms)**. Or check your file/cubbie later.
- **Update yourself about important announcements** by reading meeting minutes--if minutes are not ready before the next class, ask a friend right away for key points.
- To make up the **missed parent discussion**, find an alternate format, such as:
 - attend an extra class from the Parenting Education Class Calendar,
 - read a parenting book or article,
 - attend a parenting lecture.

Report to your Parenting Instructor and share information with your class.

- All members are welcome to attend Site Board meetings (held once each month) any time and attendance could also be in lieu of a missed Parent Meeting.
- Remember to pay your **monthly tuition**.



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

It is very important that you get a sub.

We need adult coverage.

Planned Absence or Suspected Illness

In advance...contact the parents who work on days opposite from you to find a substitute/s who can work your day/s--group email might be an efficient way to start but individual requests might be more effective and necessary

Work out to trade days or offer something equally appealing and fair--childcare at another time, coffee card, etc.

Notify the teacher of your pending absence and who will sub.

Emergency or Illness

**If your Co-op has an
Emergency Sub System**

Call the E-sub person--noted on your class schedule--as soon as possible.

Do not email. The E-sub will want to get on with their day if not needed.

Thank them profusely!

**If your Co-op does *not* have
an Emergency Sub System**

Contact the parents who work on days opposite from you and ask them for help and to sub for you.

Do not email. Phone or text to find a sure solution.

Work out a trade to work at school for them. If that is not possible, offer something equally valuable (childcare or play date at another time, coffee card, etc.).

Thank them profusely!

It's Preschool Drop-Off Day!

Before I leave home...

Check the "Work Schedule" to make sure this is NOT my workday!

Help my child be ready to play and learn:

- Dress my child for messy play, comfort, safe climbing, and to learn independent self-care. Boots and sandals are not easy or safe to run in or climb.
- Go over the Curriculum notes--talk together about the fun things planned; gather and bring things requested by the Teacher.
- If I am concerned about or predict separation issues, talk to the Children's Teacher and Parenting Instructor, and make a plan together.

At arrival time...

- Arrive on time so my child can be personally greeted by the Teacher (Hint: it is easier for children to enter play when they are first or entering *with* their friends. It can be hard to enter when everyone else is already playing).
- Sign in. Encourage my child and others to take care of hanging their own coats, washing hands, and finding nametags.
- Make sure there is at least one working parent there with the Teacher before I leave.

At the close of the day...

- Keep adult conversations quiet or outside the music circle so that kids continue taking part in music. Or I can join in with them!
- Help my child learn to take care of coats and things that go home.
- Sign out. **Help the gate keeper ensure no child leaves without their adult.**



After school...

- My child, and children in my care, are my responsibility once they leave the classroom.
- Even though this is my time to talk with friends, I know that tired, wound-up children need extra supervision.
- I will limit outside play to 10 minutes (hint: it is easier for kids to stop playing if all parents agree to leave at the same time).
- I won't leave a child unattended in my car while I "run in." A Co-op solution is to ask another parent to watch my child who is in the car.
- Expect a tired or wired child--learning at preschool is hard work!

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*.

Before I leave home... Review the Curriculum from the Teacher so I can:

- Think about the "theme" of the week and how children might engage in play at my station.
- Think about how I might facilitate their play and extend their learning.
- Review what I have learned about guiding children and facilitating problem solving.

At arrival time...

- After **arriving on time**, go to my station and open the area as children will be ready to play.
- Explain to my child which station I will be working at today and that it is my "job" to stay and take care of my area and other children. Ask the Teacher if I need help with my child.
- After greeting all the children, Teacher will give me special instructions or answer my questions.

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.
- The optimal number of children at my area is defined by the number of chairs, space or play supplies. I can limit the number according to what I feel comfortable with, too.
- If children are old enough, I can start a waiting list. Waiting for what they want is an important skill to practice! And they learn the power of the written word!
- *Expect "disputes" over things and people--consider this prime opportunity for social learning. Try not to "fix it" but help them negotiate. Their solutions are often very creative and successful!*

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 work alongside but direct--giving each child specific tasks until it is all done.

At Snack Time...

- Double check I have my whole color team before going to wash hands..and before leaving the bathroom to walk together (like a train, bunnies, mice, on tip toes....) back to their snack table.
- Encourage children to build independent skills and polite social habits with me and each other.

At Music and Story Times...

- Since the Teacher is leading, I support her by helping individual children who need guidance.

As children are dismissed... **Help the gate keeper ensure 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 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. For safety while eating or drinking, 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.

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.



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

When you arrive at school, a Teacher and at least one working parent must be present before you leave. At the end of the day at least 2 adults must remain at school until all children have left. One may be the Teacher.

Siblings are not covered by insurance except for special events. Activities are ready for preschool children to explore and are not appropriate or safe for siblings. Try not to linger too long with little ones. If you must leave another child in the car, ask a fellow parent to supervise while you bring your child in to school.

Toileting and Diaper Changing

Diaper changing and visits to the bathroom also require more than one adult (except with their parent). Older children (4–5-year-olds) can use the bathrooms themselves if the facility allows. Dress children in clothes that make bathroom trips easy. We have some extra clothes in case of accidents but changing into their own might be helpful for the child.

We teach handwashing habits by washing our hands *with* the children after diapering and using toilet.

There is a bleach solution and paper liners to use on the changing table. Please take soiled/wet diapers.

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.

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.

All families complete Immunization Records or Statement of Exemption.

Attention to Climbing/Large Motor Activities

Stay within arm's reach. Keep arms and hands free. Do not leave the area unattended. Instruct/monitor children on safe procedures.

Weapons and Adult Items

Weapons, concealed or not, are not allowed in Preschool classrooms, areas used by the Preschool or when working with the Preschool Class in a remote location, i.e., Outdoor Class at a local park or on a field trip. Weapons are defined by our Risk Management Manual as:

A weapon means any firearm, explosive, knife, club, or other object that has been designed with the intent to harm another person or property (or replica of such a firearm or object) or an object used to inflict harm to another person or property.

Additionally, other items legal for adult use but potentially dangerous or unhealthy for children including but not limited to; marijuana and associated paraphernalia, prescription or other drugs, mace, adult literature, etc. should be left at home. If you find yourself accidentally at preschool with anything that might be considered dangerous or unhealthy for children, please notify your Preschool Teacher and/or Parenting Instructor so they can assist you in storing the item(s) in a secure location.

Proactive Approach to Health

Besides washing hands, the most proactive thing we can do is to stay home when we are sick.

Deciding when to return after an illness is also a judgment call. We often see children relapse if their reserves are not strong enough to return.

★ Members should follow the latest/most updated health and safety guidelines for the program as presented by their parent instructor during the school year.

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.



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.

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.

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. Teachers have a plan for lockdown or shelter-in-place situations. In a real emergency, Teachers will follow instructions of emergency responders and will stay with children until they are reconnected with their parents.



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/remote, cancelled or 2 hours late. Listen for reports.
- Afternoon class is cancelled if Seattle Public Schools are closed/remote. Because our weather is hard to predict and roads can clear by afternoon, watch for email announcements to confirm. 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.

