

Magnolia Cooperative Preschool

3555 West McGraw Street Seattle, WA 98199 (206) 286-5922

All About the Magnolia Co-op Preschool

A Place for both Parent and Child

The cooperative preschool is unique in that you and your child enroll in the program together. When your child is a toddler, you both attend class one day a week. By the time your child is in the 4's or Pre-Kindergarten program (Pre-K) class, he or she attends class four days a week and you only go to one class per week.

There are many benefits from this involvement: parents and children share in a high quality preschool program, there is a gentle and gradual transition to the independence of the kindergarten ready child, and parents learn a great deal about early childhood issues and education along the way.

Through years of involvement with this group of children and parents, a community develops. The network of parents, as resources and support, lasts far beyond the preschool years.

The Magnolia Cooperative Preschool was started over thirty years ago and is the oldest and largest cooperative in Seattle. We employ four teachers, conduct twelve classes and have been located at Magnolia United Church of Christ (3555 West McGraw) since 1966.

Program Emphasis

The emphasis of our program is the social development of the child. Of primary importance is the building of a child's positive self-image, self-esteem and self-confidence. We strive to create a warm, accepting atmosphere for children to explore their world through art, music, stories and play. Small and large motor skills are developed through a wide variety of carefully chosen toys, games, puzzles, activities, projects, climbers and riding equipment. All classes have enrichment funds, which are used to incorporate special learning experiences. The program builds as the children are older: 3's, 4's and Pre-K classes offer natural science projects, cooking, and field trips. 4/5 and Pre-K classes have kindergarten readiness activities and personal safety instruction.

Overall, we feel strongly that the best social, intellectual and psychological gains are made through creative and cooperative play.

It Takes Time

Participation in the Co-op does require time. All parents or caregivers work as teacher's assistants one day a week. Class length varies from one hour fifteen minutes to two and a half hours, depending upon the age of your child.

Monthly parent meetings, lasting two hours, are held for each class and attendance is mandatory. The meetings are used for parent education, discussion of class and Co-op wide

issues, announcements and scheduling for the next month's class activities. It is also an opportunity for informal discussion among parents. These evening meetings are held at the homes of class members on dates agreed upon by the entire class.

There are other tasks necessary to operate the Co-op. Members are required to:

- Be on time for class.
- Bring a snack for the class between four and nine times a year (more in classes for older children). There is no snack in the Toddler classes.
- Clean the classroom during class on a rotating basis (after choice time) while the children are in the music room or outside.
- Have an outside class job. These duties range for example from being the telephone tree person (who calls class members with reminders) to the class chair (who attends the monthly Board meetings and runs the class parent meeting). Class members negotiate with one another for these duties.

Each year there is a major fundraiser. Monies raised are used to help keep tuition low, fund scholarships, improve the facility and purchase teaching materials. Each member is asked to participate.

Talents and Leadership Skills Welcomed

The Co-op is a non-profit organization, run by a volunteer parent Board. The leadership skills, creativity and commitment of parent members keep the Co-op running. There are many opportunities to serve the Co-op: Board positions, All-School jobs, and Standing Committees.

Board members (except for Class Chairs) receive a stipend for their service. First priority for class registration is given to in-going and out-going Executive Committee members, in-coming Board members, in-coming Auction Coordinators, and out-going Class Chairs.

Parent as Student: Seattle Community College Affiliation

Parent education is an important focus of the Co-op. Our preschool operates under the direction of the Seattle Central Community College (SCCC). Parent advisors from the college's Parent Education Program are assigned to each class. They make formal presentations (on topics the class chooses) at the monthly parent meetings. They observe and assist in the classroom and are available for both informal and private consultation with the teachers and the parents. These advisors are also a source of community and legislative information regarding children. Co-op members actually become students of SCCC and receive non-transferable college credit, student discounts, library privileges, counseling time and other student benefits.

Parent as Teaching Assistant

You will aid the preschool teacher on the days you work in the classroom. You help with projects, materials and organization. Most importantly, you engage in play and activities at the children's level. You provide encouragement and support to the children to try new activities and help the children to negotiate and cooperate. The preschool teacher assists the parents in understanding their role in the classroom, briefly explaining the projects for the day and her expectations for the children. Parents also help one another with their role as teacher assistants.

Questions and Answers

1. *Is the Magnolia Cooperative Preschool expensive? When do I pay tuition?*
The cost of the preschool is very reasonable because of member participation. Tuition is due the first day of every month and is considered late if not paid by the tenth day of every month. In addition, a non-refundable registration fee is due at the time of registration. At the time of registration, the first and last months' tuition for the school year are due.
2. *How old are the children at the Co-op?*
A child must be one by August 31 to attend the "Toddler" class that begins in September. The same deadline is used for the 2's, 3's and 4's classes. A child must be five by December 31 to attend the Pre-Kindergarten (Pre-K) class that begins the previous September. The Co-op admits children of every race, religion, sex and national origin.
3. *How are the workdays and class jobs assigned?*
There is a class orientation meeting in early September prior to the start of classes. Parents negotiate workdays and class jobs at that time.
4. *What is the class size? How often are classes? What is the child/adult ratio?*
All classes have approximately sixteen children. Each class has one lead teacher. Parents act as assistants. Child/adult ratios are one to one in the toddler classes, two to one in the 2's classes, approximately three to one in the 3's classes and approximately three to one in the 4/5's and Pre-K classes.
5. *What happens in class?*
The program builds as the children grow older. There is an established order of activities for each class, which is followed for the entire year. The normal "routine" can change at times when the class has special visitors, special activities or field trips (older children). "Free choice" is typically the largest block of time. The following is a list of period time examples to give you an idea of the type of activities you could expect. Please keep in mind that individual teacher's programs will vary:
Circle Time – Kindergarten readiness tasks in a group. This may include discussion of the date and weather ("calendar time") and a discussion of the "job" table (*please see below*).
Free Choice – Art, blocks, play dough, manipulative toys and games, sand table, water table, indoor climber, dress-up, books are all typical activities of free choice. In the 4/5's and Pre-K classes there is also a "job table" where (unlike other choices) everyone participates at some point. The activities are readiness tasks such as dictation of a story to the teacher, cutting, pasting, or worksheets.
Field Trips – Previous field trips have included visits to a local pumpkin patch, a Northwest Puppet Theatre performance, a trip downtown Seattle during the holidays to ride the monorail and carousal, the Seattle Children's Museum, a

children’s performance at the Seattle Symphony, the Burke Museum, a tour of the local fire station, Discovery Park and an overnight at Camp Long (older children). On average, there is usually one field trip each month.

Special Visitors – Previous visitors have included fire fighters and their truck, a storyteller, a doctor, a librarian, a baseball player, Seattle Aquarium personnel, Campfire leaders who discuss personal safety and various animals. Most visitors come to the 3’s, 4’s and Pre-K classes.

6. *What is the role of the teacher, the parent advisor, the chair and the parent coordinator (PC) during the class?*

Teacher – Moves about the class and is involved in all activities. She determines the focus of class activities and sets the tone of the class.

Parent Advisor – Observes the class and may assist the teacher as well as give advice to parents upon request.

Chair – Makes Co-op business announcements. Handles orientation of new members.

Parent Coordinator (PC) – Collects any necessary forms. Helps class chair with orientation of new member.

7. *Who do I talk to when I have a Co-op related question or problem?*

Questions regarding:

Talk To:

Co-op business/operation issues
(e.g. Board decisions, tuition issues or withdrawals)

Class Chair

Class scheduling (e.g. work days and snack)

Class PC

Problems regarding:

Talk To:

Teacher, classroom procedures, curriculum,
Discipline or parent advisor

Teacher or Parent Advisor

Another parent or child

Teacher

When a problem arises, if you are comfortable, first talk directly with the person involved: the parent, the advisor or the teacher.

Remember to treat others with the same respect and care you would want directed toward you if the situation were reversed.

Please remember to ask your questions and handle your problems OUTSIDE of class. Exchanges in class where children are present should be kept on a positive level. Only discuss a problem with those DIRECTLY involved or those indicated above to avoid misunderstandings and hurt feelings. Always keep these matters confidential.

- 8.** *Do I have to prepare a curriculum or project for the days I work in the classroom?*
No. The teacher plans the curriculum and projects. You just need to come to class prepared to get involved.
- 9.** *How should we dress for class?*
Both you and your child should wear casual clothes that you don't mind getting dirty.
- 10.** *What about illness?*
If the child is not well enough to go outside, he/she should not be sent to school. If a child has exposed the class to a communicable disease (e.g. chicken pox), the preschool teacher and nursery supervisor should be notified immediately.
- 11.** *What happens if I (or my child) am sick on the day I am supposed to be a teacher's assistant?*
It is your responsibility to get a substitute. In some classes there will be designated "substitute" parent(s) for this purpose.
- 12.** *Can I bring my child's sibling to class when I work?*
Babies up to three months may occasionally accompany a parent in the classroom but only with prior permission of other parents in that class and the class teacher. These newborns must be kept in pack on the parent's body to insure his/her ability to fully function as a teacher's assistant. Otherwise you will need to get babysitting for the sibling so you can devote your full attention to the preschool class. The Co-op does operate a nursery/playroom, and siblings whose parents are working in class have first priority for this facility.
- 13.** *Can alternate caregivers bring my child to class?*
YES. As the Co-op depends on good communications between the teacher, parent and other class members, special guidelines apply for members who have alternative caregivers with their child during class time.
- 14.** *What about parking?*
Park anywhere on the street except in the church's loading zone on McGraw Street. The church parking lot is available on a very limited basis to Co-op members: a member may park in this lot on his or her assigned snack day or if a parking pass is purchased at the auction. Otherwise please avoid driving in the alley behind the church to minimize traffic.
- 15.** *What are appropriate snacks?*
Please be aware that some children have allergies and these are listed on the class rosters and posted in the classrooms. Common allergies include peanuts, chocolate and dairy. If a child has multiple or severe allergies to foods, the parent will often provide a separate snack for the child. Snack usually consists of juice or water and all (or two) of the following groups:

Sliced fruit (apples, bananas, oranges, melon)

Diced cheese (cheddar, string etc.)

Crackers (often bite size are best)

Special occasions can include Jell-O, cookies, muffins, bagels and cream cheese, pretzels or other appropriate foods.

An effort is made (especially with the older children) to include the children in snack preparation: setting the tables, decorating cookies or adding ingredients to finish the snack (e.g. mini pizzas).

16. *What is the Multi-age Nursery/Playroom?*

This service is only for children of Co-op members. Operating hours are generally Monday-Friday from 9am – 3pm. There is an hourly fee for the nursery/playroom service. Priority for use of the nursery/playroom is as follows:

Siblings of children whose parent/caregiver is working in a class.

Regularly scheduled children whose parent/care-giver is not working in class.

Drop-ins.

17. *What is a “Parent’s Night Out”?*

An evening out for parents where there is no agenda other than to chat and get to know one another better.

18. *What is a “Dad’s Day”/”Special Friend” or “Family Day”?*

During the year, several of these special days are scheduled. The class does not meet at the regular time, instead it meets on an evening or Saturday morning to allow dads and other family members the opportunity to participate, meet other parents and see what happens in school.

19. *What is the Preschool Board?*

The Board of Directors runs the Co-op. The Board consists of elected officers and a representative of each class (the class chair). Teachers and parent advisors also attend the monthly board meetings, as can any Co-op member.

20. *What is the priority for signing up for classes?*

There is an attempt to give priority to those who have served the Co-op Board and those children who are CURRENTLY enrolled in a class. Basically, the priority is: 1) Board Members 2) Current Members 3) New Members. Members of the same priority use a lottery system when there is more demand than space in a given class. Members who have an unenrolled sibling (who will enter a class other than the Toddler class in the upcoming year) can enroll that child before new members, but only after currently enrolled children entering that class are registered. For example, you have a child currently enrolled in a 3’s class and another child who could have been enrolled in the Toddler class but you chose to wait until the 2’s class to enroll him or her. You can register the child in the 3’s class with other current members for a 4’s or Pre-K class, but you register the child entering the 2’s class after all toddlers currently enrolled have been assigned to a 2’s class.