

Co-op Community News

From the Parent Advisory Council
of the North Seattle Community
College Cooperative Preschool
Program



November 2007



"Firefighters" Tessa Burnett and Ben Magalnick of Wallingford 3-5s AM enjoy their first day of school. Photo by Janet Robinson.

Notes from the Chair

I have a hunch that most co-op parents, with the exception of PAC (Parent Advisory Council) reps, are not sure what PAC is or what it can do for them. In fact PAC exists mainly to benefit co-op families in a number of ways, large and small. To support co-op families, PAC compiles information on elementary schools (parents of infants, it will be time to worry about this before you know it!), maintains the co-op system's website, helps to promote low-enrolled co-ops, organizes several fantastic lectures, and coordinates the registration process, to name a few of our projects. At the larger, class-wide level, PAC promotes information sharing between classes. With over 40 classes, why should any class reinvent the wheel when presented with a new situation? Whatever comes up, there is a good chance that another class has already confronted a similar situation and developed a strategy to handle it. Finally, an important function of PAC is to administer the co-op scholarship fund, which exists to help make co-op preschool possible for economically needy families. Please be sure that you and your co-op are taking full advantage of PAC this year!

Latife Neu, Parent Advisory Council, President 2007-08

Here's a link to a very handy parenting resource for the Seattle area. Go City Kids includes a comprehensive events calendar, and many other handy resources. Check it out:

<http://qocitykids.parentsconnect.com/?area=182>

2007-08 Calendar

November

- 5 PAC Meeting
- 12 Veteran's Day
(no school)
- 22-23 Thanksgiving Holiday
(no school)

December

- 1 Parent Coordinator
Training
- 10 PAC Meeting
- 24- Jan 4 Winter Break
(no school)

January

- 14 PAC Meeting
- 21 Martin Luther King Jr.
Day (no school)

February

- 11 PAC Meeting
- 19-22 Mid-Winter Break
(no school)
- 25-28 In-House Registration

March

- 10 PAC Meeting
- 10-13 Cross-Over Registration
- 22 Open Registration
- 31-April 4 Spring Break
(no school)

April

- 14 PAC Meeting

May

- 19 PAC Meeting

How About an Evening Co-op?

By Chris David
Teacher, Latona 3-5's
Cooperative Preschool

It's the start of the school year – and preschool year! – again, and we're all looking forward to another year of discovery and learning with our children, other parents, and teachers as we return to our favorite preschool activities and explore new ones, deepen existing friendships and build new ones, find support and new ideas for the difficult job of parenting, and have FUN with our kids!

And if you're wishing that your child's other parent could share this experience, but you've concluded it's impossible because their work responsibilities prevent them from attending a daytime co-op, WAIT: It's not true! North Seattle Community College has three co-ops that meet in the evenings: Northgate Toddlers, Northgate Multi-age, and Meadowbrook Pre-3s.

The Northgate groups meet on Wednesday evenings from 6:30 to 8:30 on the NSCC campus, in beautiful classrooms designed specifically for young children. The Toddler classroom is spacious, recently remodeled and filled with materials perfect for this age group. The Multi-age classroom has child size toilets and low sinks for hand washing. A covered outside play area adjacent to the classroom is another big plus. The Meadowbrook Pre-3's meet on Tuesday nights and Friday mornings in their own classroom at Nathan Hale High School, right next to the recently renovated Meadowbrook Park.

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Waiting! It's Hard to Do!

By Mary Ann Abbott, Parent Educator
North Seattle Community College

WAITING! Some “grownups” are better at it than others. For some adults, just thinking about the possibility of a delay creates impatience, an anticipated nightmare. For others, waiting is a welcome break – an unexpected, pleasant opportunity for self, even a chance to kickback or “zone.” Some people see waiting as a routine happening, something to just get through, tolerate.

A Difficult Task for Young Children

For young children, it's simple. There is no mystery! Waiting is mostly TROUBLE – for themselves, for parents, for others nearby. This truth is almost absolute and became clearer to me as I observed “waiting” at a popular restaurant for Sunday brunch.

The parents were up for the challenge because they knew getting food for the young children **first** was a priority. But, the children ate quickly and then had “free time” while adults were still eating. How does a young child “wait” with a full tummy and being “done” with the mission? Not very well!

Waiting Can Be Chaos!

The outcome was very messy! I saw children dribbling ice from one glass to another. I saw children mixing orange juice with fruit punch, spilling it, and slurping it while drinking with a straw. I saw children begging for bites of the parents' food and diving under the table to chew it. I saw children crawling around under the table, smashing crackers, and poking the adults' legs. I saw children climbing

on the chairs, grabbing the leaves of the nearby plant, and accidentally pulling the tablecloth with their feet. I saw adults trying to entertain but running out of ideas. What seemed to be a simple idea of family-bonding time at brunch with the grandparents turned into chaos and a major frustration for everyone.

What contributed to the chaos? The parents selected a restaurant where the food was ready, no waiting. That was a plus. All the adult members of the family took turns trying to entertain the children during the “waiting.” That was a plus. On the negative side, it was close to noon, and the children were getting tired. The whole experience took longer than expected because of the busy restaurant. The place wasn't very kid-friendly and had no place to walk off extra energy. This “waiting” exhausted everyone's coping skills. The restaurant staff was glad to see the family leave.

Recently, a friend told me about some “waiting” her child did while she was talking on the phone. The mother discovered that her 3-year-old daughter had climbed into the tub, uncorked the shampoo, and painted it all over the sides of the tub. “Waiting with a creative flair!” Sometimes waiting for a haircut, even in a kid-friendly shop, can run down a child's patience. What about waiting for a medical appointment? Riding in the car for an extra long time? Sitting in a grocery cart? Shopping on foot? (“I can't walk any more! Will you carry me?” 40 lbs!) An amusement park? (“I'm tired!”) A family wedding reception or piano

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The Mouse in the Minivan

By Lauren Howell, Ava Fleisher's Mom
Woodland Park Pre-3s Class of 2002-2003

I recently heard of a co-op parent who was finally convinced to clean out her minivan. The reason: she found a mouse living among the apple cores, leaves and other child-related stuff accumulating inside. I laughed out loud and with complete empathy for that mom. I'm guessing she was a lot more careful with her vehicle's appearance, once upon a time.

It needn't take a brush with death or disability to change one's mind about taking time off from a hectic career, or crafting a more flexible work arrangement.

Driving home with my own child and load of composting crumbs, I marvel again at the silly and substantial ways parenthood changes our lives. How well I remember our own pre-child pronouncements: "No big plastic kid stuff in my house!" "Barney? Yuuuuuck!" "No sugar, no TV!" And, of course, "My kid would never behave that way in public!" Ah, from the mouths of the naive and child-free. A lifetime later (my daughter's, that is), we've managed to minimize the plastic, TV and sugar—but Barney? Brothers and sisters, I have seen the light. And yes, that was us you saw the other day, stone-faced mom plucking kicking, wailing child out of the playground wood chips.

Small, sometimes silly adjustments, all. But what about the big stuff—the

truly seismic shake-ups of parenthood? Brought on by baby's arrival, fostered by her growth and development, we take on and adapt to new and often alien roles: "provider," "caretaker," "teacher," "PARENT!" We shoulder new cares about parental ineptitude, financial insecurity, lurking dangers, mortality (ours and theirs). Our hearts swell with new joys. We're awed by our children's progress. And through their eyes, we see once again the magic of this world, the wonder in small things. What a gift! What a *tough* job!

My own parental paradigm shift took on extra significance when we almost lost our daughter at birth, to a Group B strep infection contracted despite a course of antibiotics during my labor. Nothing prepared us for the experience, of course. One day, a perfect pregnancy. The next, a nightmare of round-the-clock vigils in a neonatal ICU.

It took thirteen days for our daughter's respiratory system to kick into gear. If she'd been born five years earlier, the docs couldn't have helped her—the "oscillating" respirator she needed hadn't been invented. Even with this gear, things were truly dire. Until, finally, "You can take her home tomorrow!" No more respirators, chest tubes, IVs. We could finally hold our baby, nurse her, take her home.

We were so very, very lucky; our daughter recovered completely. "Your biggest challenge now," said the releasing RN, "is to treat her like a normal newborn." Happily, our girl gave us little chance to do otherwise. We settled into the normal chaos of a

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How Much is Enough?

PAC Lecture Series

PAC would like to invite all parents to the second in our PAC Lecture Series.

Connie Dawson, Ph.D., a retired therapist and co-founder of the **Overindulgence Project** (www.overindulgence.com), will speak to us about "**Figuring Out How Much is Enough.**"

The Overindulgence Project is an ongoing research project studying the relationship between childhood overindulgence and subsequent adult problems and parenting practices.

A product of the project is a book Dr. Dawson co-authored with Jean Illsley Clark and David Bredehoft, "**How Much is Enough?: Everything You Need to Know to Steer Clear of Overindulgence and Raise Likeable, Responsible and Respectful Children – from Toddlers to Teens.**"

The lecture will take place 7pm, Wednesday, November 14th at Faith Lutheran Church. This is close to I-5 off of Lake City Way/522.

Thank You!

Big thanks to everyone who volunteered at the Education & Enrichment Fair on November 4. The event was a big success!

Waiting! It's Hard to Do!

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recital? (“Can we go yet? When will it be over?”) When is my birthday? (repeated many times!) These scenarios are recreated hundreds of times in the lives of many families! It's undeniable – “waiting” is hard for the young child.

Adults Should Be Ready

To help the child cope with waiting situations, an astute parent will be **READY!** That's anticipating the unexpected! It's easy for parents to have put aside the “what if” skills learned for infant care. Preschoolers, though advanced in many ways, still need help with waiting. It may involve advance preparation with “activity bags or boxes,” (a kind of portable toy center) – one box for favorite toys while riding in the car, another with a different set of toys for use while mom is talking on the phone, still a different one for sitting in quiet places, etc. One parent carries a set of Uno cards at all times, just in case. Different children will respond to different things, and what works for one family may not work for another. A surprise activity/toy – one that's never been done before – is always a winner.

The best advice for both parents and teachers is to lessen the child's waiting times. This means the adults must discipline themselves ahead of time to intentionally cut the waiting time. It's unfair to the children for adults to knowingly put them in a situation which yells “trouble” or “failure.” It may take some tricky organization to minimize the waiting.

Plan B. Can't cut the waiting time any more? It's time to use the creative activities for those necessary, unavoidable waiting times.

Last resort? Leave. Give everyone a break. Go home. Relocate. A caution: change the situation before too much frustration and hostility has seeped out. It's a real temptation for adults to push the child's limits too far. Get to a relaxed, comfy spot.

And breathe in. Put the frustration aside and reestablish the adult/child bond!

These ideas are simple. The challenge is to learn from mistakes and follow what makes children successful. The by-product is that both the children and adults will feel empowered and successful!

How About an Evening Co-op?

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Evening co-ops are just like their daytime counter parts – parents work in the classroom, playing with the children, and attend parent education discussion groups. The evening co-ops attract parents who work during the day as well as parents who are at home during the day but prefer to come to co-op in the evening when a partner or spouse or babysitter can stay home with siblings of the co-op child. More than one parent has said to me, “I wanted to do a day co-op, but with a baby at home I didn't know how I could handle it. The evening group is just the answer. My spouse stays home with the baby and I get one-on-one time with my older child.” Or, as I hear at Meadowbrook, “My partner comes to class with my child on Tuesday night; I have the night free and Friday mornings, too!” Sometimes a couple will enroll their child in two co-ops, with one parent attending during the day and the other attending in the evening, so that both parents are able to enjoy co-op with their child and participate in parent education.

Because the Northgate Multi-age Class includes a wide age range, parents can enroll siblings in the class together. Consequently, there is a family feel to the evening groups. The evening groups have a larger number of fathers attending than in the daytime co-ops, which is wonderful not just for the children of those fathers, but for all the children. As a parent educator, it is exciting to see the fathers play and relate with the children. As one Dad said, “This is my time to be with my daughter. I wouldn't give it up.” The teacher for the toddler group commented, “One evening we had mostly dads. We marched to a song, ringing our bells. Here were scientists, lawyers and construction workers still in their work clothes marching around together, being role models for their children. What a priceless gift!”

Parents sometimes wonder, “Isn't 6:30 – 8:30 too late for toddlers and preschoolers?” This question, though frequently asked, is answered by experience: parents discover that their children really look forward to co-op, and are just as involved and lively as they are during daytime co-ops. As 8:30 approaches, the teachers slow down the pace of the activity, with stories and song circle time, so that by the end of class your child is quieted down and ready for bed. Parents often bring their children's PJs or sleepers to class, and put them on for the drive home. Some even brush their children's teeth before leaving!

So if you hear a parent say, “I would love to do co-op with my child, but I just don't have the time,” you can respond: “Have you heard about the three evening co-ops offered through North Seattle Community College? It just may be the right co-op for you.” And if your spouse or partner is feeling a little envious of the experience you and your child are having at a daytime co-op, think about enrolling your child in an evening group as well. You'll enjoy the time at home in the evening alone with your baby or older child . . . or just alone!

The Mouse in the Minivan

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newborn's homecoming and put those nightmarish thirteen days behind us.

Yet we are haunted. It's ever-present at the fringes of our daily routines: echoes of darkness, flashes of gratitude. We were so lucky, yet might not have been. So many aren't. We met them, in the neonatal ICU and in Children's Hospital during our follow-up visits—the little boy needing a heart transplant, the brain-damaged toddler (birth trauma), the preemie who just wasn't far enough along. Perhaps you know these families, or are one of them. There are more of you than we realize, since you go about your daily lives like the rest of us. I salute you, for your undoubting love and courage.

We all make adjustments, silly and substantial, in light of parenthood. It needn't take a brush with death or disability, for example, to change one's mind about taking time off from a hectic career, or crafting a more flexible work arrangement. Finances and circumstances cramp our choices, but we do what we can to "do right" by our families. Yet, oh, those darn distractions! The daily grind of chores, work and worldly concerns take their toll. We all need reminders on a daily basis. "Note to self: Take advantage of the here and

now. We're lucky to have it, and it will be gone all too soon."

Driving home in my own crumb-mobile, consumed with thoughts of "To Do" lists left unchecked, I pull up to a stoplight, glance in the rear-view mirror—and catch my daughter's eye. She laughs. I'm struck anew by her joy, her beauty, and how lucky we are to be here. I take a deep breath, tell myself, "Relax, slow down, realign." OK, quick reality check: there's pizza in the fridge—dinner, check. Everyone's got clean underwear for the morning—laundry can wait. And no, the

crumbs in car and house have not yet achieved mouse-attraction mass. Almost, but not quite.

Right then. List out the window, U-turn to the North. "Buggler-Boo, what do you say to An Adventure, Christopher Robin-style? Let's pull out the Big Boots and head to Carkeek." My daughter hoots with delight, eyes gleaming. What a gift—for her, yes; but also—and perhaps more so—for me.

Hi-ho, hi-ho, to Carkeek let us go!
We work all day so we can play hi ho, hi ho, hi ho, hi ho!

NSCC Co-op Preschool Openings for 2007-08

	Co-op	Contact
Infant	North Seattle - Weds.	Irene Wagner, 524-9346 (w)
	North Seattle - Thurs.	Irene Wagner, 524-9346 (w)
Toddlers	Northgate Wed evening	Carrie Goetz, 525-0113 CL932goetz@hotmail.com
Pre-3s	Ingraham	Trina Nonis, 362-1499 adam_trina_nonis@earthlink.net
	Meadowbrook	Lakshmi Meadows, 293-4584 meadowbrookpre3@gmail.com
3-5s	Broadview	Karla Alcantara-Warren, 417-1474 karlakaywarren@yahoo.com
	Crown Hill - AM	Shelley Rousseau, 782-5396 shelley_rousseau@comcast.net
	Crown Hill - PM	Alison Cohon, 706-1556 ajcohon@yahoo.com
	Ingraham	Michelle Beaumont, 522-7495 beaumontmp@seanet.com
	Meadowbrook	Stiroh Lang, 713-3386 smoly@u.washington.edu
	Sandhurst	Joanne Lentz, 522-3032 joanne_lentz@msn.com
	Victory Heights - AM	Adiel Pahlman, 425-890-0648 adielpahlman@yahoo.com
	Victory Heights - PM	Jen Marberry, 274-8172 jenphat@hotmail.com
	Wallingford - AM	Cindy Flannigan, 216-0655 cindyflannigan@comcast.net

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