

Co-op Community News

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



February 2008

Top Ten Reasons to Stay in Co-op

By Kris Dickenson, Teacher
Wallingford 3-5s AM

Registration for the new school year is approaching. Meanwhile, your preschooler is getting bigger and more capable every day. Will co-op still be a beneficial school environment for her next year?



Kris and the preschoolers of Wallingford 3-5s AM

For the Child:

Increase your child's independence by providing continuity of the school environment. Your child can start the next year with confidence because she knows where the cubbies are, where the easel is, where to go to the bathroom, where to play when it's a rainy day, where to find the pencils and scissors, and where to go when she needs a quiet moment with a book.

Provide a strong social / emotional base by starting the school year with many of the same children and adults they already know. Your child doesn't have to expend emotional energy during those first few months worrying about all the things that are new. Rather, he can begin concentrating his efforts on learning and mastery far earlier than in a completely new place.

Promote self-confidence and potential leadership role by continuing where your child is familiar with the environment and materials. While the teacher and sequence of events may be different from the previous year, the fact that a child knows where to go for self-help contributes to their sense of "I can do this" and "I can manage." They can practice and take risks in the safety of a familiar environment and be ready, when the time comes, to take on the kindergarten's role of managing their own needs.

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2007-08 Calendar

February

11	PAC Meeting
18-22	Mid-Winter Break (no school)
25-28	In-House Registration

March

5	PAC Lecture with Amy Lang <i>see page 6</i>
10	PAC Meeting
10-13	Cross-Over Registration
22	Open Registration
31-April 4	Spring Break (no school)

April

14	PAC Meeting
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May

19	PAC Meeting
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Provide a strong academic foundation in a context that makes sense to your child. North Seattle Co-op programs are developmentally appropriate and child-centered, which doesn't mean "non-academic." Rather, it means that the teacher and program view children as whole beings and place emphasis on all the areas of development – the emotional, the social, the physical and the cognitive – that are the base for academic achievement. Young children learn differently and much more holistically than older children, so we embed academics in everything we do, from writing out recipes for cooking projects, to dictation of their own stories, to open-ended art projects, to the science and mathematical nature of the blocks. This may not be as obvious as worksheets and memorization, but can accelerate later learning. Even when some of the materials and activities stay the same from year to year, they are designed to stimulate meaningful development and progress for your unique student.

Increase your child's ability to problem-solve in the social area. North Seattle Co-ops work to strengthen one of the most important skills to succeed in kindergarten: a child's ability to verbally work out social interactions, such as waiting for a turn, being patient, using words instead of hands, telling someone how they feel, how to ask to enter play already going on, and when to get a grown-up for help. Research has shown the importance of social and emotional awareness to the academically successful child. When children are not stressed over how to take care of themselves or how to get help when they need it, they can attend to classroom learning with much more focus and concentration.

For the Parent:

Be part of a parenting community, with experts in other peers, your teacher, and your parent educator at your fingertips. A co-op community provides a place to talk, share, and grow as a parent. It can be lonely at home with young children, and a quick laugh with other grown-ups in your own life space goes a long way.

Develop leadership skills and gain confidence in your professional abilities by taking on a board position. Board experience can be very helpful in your current or future workplace as well.

Extend your knowledge of child development and enhance your ability to assist in your child's kindergarten classroom and beyond. The parent who steps into a playground argument with skill is or was a co-op parent!

Provide a community of support for your child with the high adult/child ratio. Familiarity with a diverse group of adults increases your child's sense of trust in a larger community – that there are adults, other than their parents, with whom they can receive care, a hug and guidance. This can also be a bonus for future car-pooling needs!

Finally, co-op is the only place where you will ever **get a bird's-eye view of how your child learns** on their own and how they behave in a group. You learn to appreciate all the qualities that your child has, not just the academic ones. As your child grows and attends elementary school, it becomes easier to manage the "I don't know" answer to your quest for information about their school day. But while they're little, a co-op allows you to know much more information about your child and their school than a drop-off preschool can. ●

Registration Basics

Tours - Be sure to contact the parent coordinators of your preferred co-op preschools and schedule a tour soon. Most co-ops require a tour, even if you are planning to continue on in the same space.

In-house registration - February 25-28

Enroll your child in your co-op's on-site preschool program for next year.

Lottery and/or space
assignment notification: February 29

Cross-over registration - March 10-13

Enroll in a different NSCC co-op preschool.

Lottery and/or space
assignment notification: March 14

Open registration - March 22

Another opportunity to enroll in co-op preschools that hold spaces, as well as registration for new families.

Meadowbrook 5's - Meadowbrook 5's does not participate in cross-over or open registration. To enroll, call the parent coordinator for a tour appointment. After the tour, fill out a form and leave a \$40.00 deposit to hold your spot. The school phone number is (206) 362-0067. We look forward to showing you around!

For more information, please visit our Web site:
<http://coops.northseattle.edu/coopbasics/enrollment.html>

It's the Little Things That Count

By Sandra Looper, Parent Education Instructor

What do playing with blocks, singing a rhyme, putting a puzzle together, matching socks and setting a table have in common? These seemingly insignificant activities that occur naturally throughout a child's day definitively help them establish important mathematics skills.

Concerns

The experts are worried. The U.S. appears to be lagging behind other countries (TIMMS study) when it comes to mathematical reasoning and knowledge. Our students perform well on computation skills, but problem-solving, logical reasoning and other tasks where real thinking is involved, scores are low. In order to compete in a global marketplace, government officials and educators alike are concerned about how to improve this critical area. Let's take a look at what changes are being made.

Transition

In the United States, we're gradually seeing a shift in the philosophy of early childhood mathematics. We're moving away from so much memorization toward problem-solving activities. By providing situations which require children to create their own framework for learning about how math works, we hope preschoolers will develop confidence and creativity while using mathematical concepts. The following chart shows some of the differences.

FROM

Convergent- single answer questions

One way to solve a problem

Memorization of facts

A specific math time/subject

Just 'doing math' or computation

TO

Divergent- various correct answers

Many ways to solve problems

Understanding of concepts

Math integrated throughout the day

Giving words to what and why we do something



Communication

As parents and teachers, we must listen as well as ask important questions. Bob Baratta-Lorton in Issue 1 of *Mathematics...A Way of Thinking Newsletter*, lists six basic questions and statements that parents and teachers can use over and over again in order to help children cultivate mathematical thinking. Get in the habit of using the following:

1. What would happen if _____?
2. If you can do it with _____, can you do it with _____?
3. How many ways can you _____ or Can you think of a different way?
4. Do you see a pattern?
5. Predict _____.
6. Find the one(s) that doesn't (don't) work. Find the exception.

We must resist the urge to tell our children "how to" solve problems and let them figure out their own solu-

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tions to various everyday dilemmas. Since problem-solving takes time, effort and thought, we must allow children to work through the process without providing a quick-fix. Constructing meaning is hard work and necessary if we are to respect the individual's right to build those scaffolds that support their learning.

"Teaching means creating situations where structure can be discovered." Jean Piaget

Everyday Problems

One thing we can do to enhance mathematical concepts is to give words to what we're doing as we go about our daily tasks. When we set the timer on the microwave, "I'm going to heat this for sixty seconds or one minute." When we weigh ourselves, "I weigh 145 pounds. Do you think you weigh more or less than me? Let's see." Teaching opportunities are all around us every day. Here are just a few ideas to get you thinking.

In the Kitchen

"Oops. I had two extra napkins. Instead of 4, I had 2 extras or 6 napkins." or "I'm matching up one fork to one plate so that everyone at the table with has one of each. Can you add a spoon to each spot? How many do you think we'll need?"

"We bought some fruits and vegetables today. What different ways could we group or sort them?" If they need urging, you might ask, "By color? We could put all the red ones in one pile, yellow in another and green in a third pile."

By size? We could put the biggest vegetables in this bag; the medium size in another and the smallest ones

in another." Other ways might include By shape? By type? or maybe by the ones children like or don't like.

You could also create a pattern from the cans or boxes or vegetables. An A-B pattern might include a green vegetable and a yellow one, a green and a yellow one, etc. You could then clap/snap for the A-B pattern. Be creative and once you begin to provide the experiences and the math language that goes with it, children will begin to discover and enjoy these findings on their own.

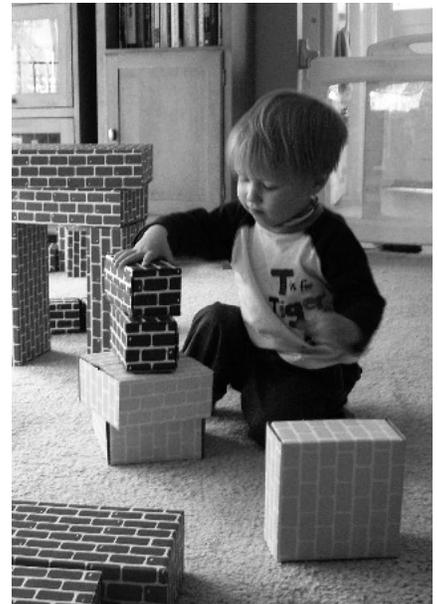


Cooking together provides many opportunities for various types of measurement activities and math language such as more, less and equal.

In the Laundry Room

Some ideas for creating math concepts include:

- Matching socks (size, color, identical matches)
- Counting items.
- Helping set the dryer timer to begin to associate time as a mental construct.



Anywhere Activities

- Use various board games that involve dice and money. Card games like Go Fish which require recognition of similarities and differences as well as counting.
- Read books that rhyme or repeat, contain numbers, shapes, colors and have tactile pictures.
- Sing repetitive songs like Bingo, Wheels on the Bus or Farmer in the Dell to help develop sequence and missing items.
- String beads or paper links, designing and extending various patterns.
- Sort objects finding similarities in color, shape or size (or another property).
- Sort objects looking for differences, like which block is largest.
- Use all types of containers and blocks, shape sorters and puzzles to help establish spatial sense.
- Count and become familiar with numbers and number words. Count as you go, everywhere and everything. Count forward and

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New Val Donato Award for Parent Ed Prof Development

Parent Education Program at NSCC

The mission of the Parent Education Program is to promote the development of knowledge and skills for strong and healthy families.

Parent education programs help students become more effective and satisfied in their role by helping them understand their child's behavior, by encouraging them to recognize developmentally appropriate activities, by assisting them in acquiring valuable information in areas which affect the welfare of the "whole child," and by teaching them methods to help their children develop responsible behavior.

Students' comments about the NSCC Parent Education Program and Val Donato

- "It is a great program! [Parent Education classes] should be required of all new parents – it provides a great opportunity to understand your child's development and be involved in your child's 'school' life in a way that is not as possible once they enter the regular school system. The program helps build confidence as a parent and provides a support network for when you are less than confident. I have enjoyed participating."
- "I don't think I could have quit my career and stayed sane without [Parent Education]."
- "I know I am a better mom because of what I've learned through [Parent Education]!"
- "Val is an exceptional teacher and a proven leader. She has been a tremendous asset. She always knows the right questions to ask, and has helped [us] deal with conflict in a very supportive, yet unassuming way. She has an incredible fund of knowledge, and [is] available for anyone."

Val Donato

Val Donato graduated from Queens College in New York City with a BA in Education. She moved to Washington DC and then to San Francisco, ending up in Seattle in 1970. She enrolled in Parent Education/Child Study classes at North Seattle Community College and began teaching those classes as a part-timer in 1974. As a student at NSCC, she became active in the leadership of that parent education class, assuming offices of parent coordinator, treasurer, and Advisory Council representative.



Val Donato with one of "her kids"

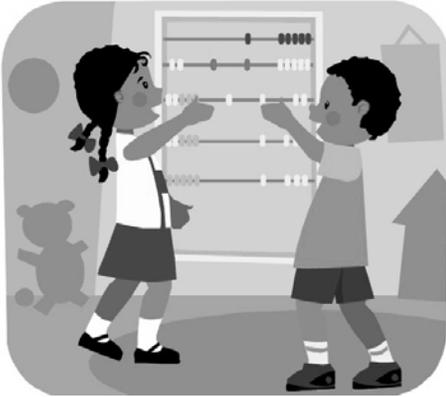
When Val first began in the program, only families of children from three to five years old were served. Val expanded the program to include parents of children beginning at birth. She has at various times taught every class offered by the program. The program now serves 42 preschools and 22 local childcare centers serving over 1000 families per quarter through co-operative classes, on-line classes, short-term classes, and lectures.

In 1997, Val earned a Masters in Human Development with an emphasis on Leadership in Education. She is the coordinator for and a full-time instructor in the program. In her spare time she loves to read fiction, garden, and be a grandparent to two wonderful grandchildren.

The Val Donato Award

In September, 2007, the Health and Human Services Division at NSCC initiated efforts to create the Val Donato Award to recognize Val and her dedicated, hardworking, and outstanding parent education faculty members. Depending on the amount of funds obtained (a minimum of \$10,000.00 is needed), the annual award will consist of one or more \$500 stipends to be used for professional development to further improve the Parent Education Program. Applicants/nominees will be selected by a committee of Parent Education faculty based upon their embodiment of Val's ideals and of the program itself.

Contributions to the award fund are 100% tax-deductible; for further details or to make a donation, contact the North Seattle Community College Education Fund at (206) 527-3604 / nscceducationfund@sccd.ctc.edu.



backward. For example, how many steps to your bed? Let's count the number of stop signs on the way to school. Let's see if we can find all numbers 0-10 by the time we get to the market.

- Allow them to share food, treats, or toys by dividing them into equal portions.
- Make reusable graphs (put one inside a plastic sleeve and your can use a dry erase marker) and graph all kinds of things, from your daily activities to foods, to chores, to weather.
- Measure the length, height and width of items using standard (inches, feet, etc.) and non-standard (hands, paper clips, crayons, etc.) units of measure.
- Weigh food and themselves and record the weight.

- Use the calendar and begin to establish a concept of time (days, weeks, months, year).
- Use terms such as *above*, *beneath*, *level*, *larger*, *smaller*, and *equal*, and words such as *horizontal*, *vertical*, *perpendicular*, and *parallel*, to describe things you see.

Math is an everyday experience for your child. The best teachers know how to capitalize on it.
Diana Townsend-Butterworth

Everyday People

The U.S. Education Department's free booklet, *Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics*, emphasizes the importance of using everyday interactions to help develop skills. As a parent, you are that everyday person, and as such, an important contributor to your child's participation and enjoyment of math.

Multiply your awareness of the mathematical possibilities that surround you each day. Subtract the fear of making a mistake. Divide the responsibilities with your child's teacher and your added joys will result in a confident child who will be able to problem solve, communicate mathematically and develop reasoning abilities.

It all adds up because the little things count. •

Sources:

Helping Your Child Learn Mathematics, U.S. Education Department; Online Source <http://www.ed.gov/parents/academic/help/math/index.html>

Mathematics Standards for Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 2, ERIC Digest.

What to Expect in Preschool Math by Diana Townsend-Butterworth

PAC invites you to a lecture and discussion

Amy Lang



The Facts By Five

- Why you should talk to your kids sooner than you think
- What to say, when and how to say it
- Values exploration
- Exploration of concerns about talking with children about sex

Wednesday, March 5
7-9 pm
Faith Lutheran Church
Social Hall
8208 18th Avenue NE
Seattle, WA 98115

This lecture is free and open to the public.
No RSVP is required.

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