

# Parent Handbook



Learning through play on  
Vashon-Maury Island Since 1970

Last Updated August 2023

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# WELCOME TO VASHON MAURY COOPERATIVE PRESCHOOL

## **Who are we?**

Vashon Maury Cooperative Preschool (VMCP) is a nonprofit organization that has been in operation since 1970. Originally formed by island parents, and the only cooperative preschool on Vashon-Maury Islands, VMCP differs from other preschools in the instrumental role parents take in the classroom and in the preschool community as a whole. The cooperative preschool is a place of learning and growth for the entire family.

We offer five classes for ages ranging from newborn to Pre-K. We are run by an all-volunteer parent board and currently employ two teachers. We are affiliated with North Seattle College which provides each of our classes with a parent instructor. We place high value on parents working in the classroom, attending parent education meetings, and supporting the whole family in each child's first educational experience.

As a cooperative, we, the members, are entirely responsible for the operation of the preschool, which requires us to handle a wide variety of tasks: decision making for the organization, working in the classroom, supporting the daily operations of the school, and raising funds to support our yearly budget. Participation in the cooperative requires time and energy.

## **Why choose Vashon Maury Cooperative Preschool?**

It's simple: what you give, you get back and more. To choose VMCP is to join a community of children, parents, and teachers who share the bond of helping to raise young children. We parents certainly have a common goal: to give our children a strong beginning. You are your child's first teacher, but this does not mean that you must do the job alone. Children, even very young children, often have needs that extend beyond the resources of parents.

Adults, too, are in need of some guidance on the path of parenthood. This preschool is unique in that you and your child enroll in the program together. There are many benefits of this shared involvement. One is that parents and children experience a high-quality preschool program together. Another is the gentle and gradual transition towards the independence of the kindergarten-ready child. Another is the way in which parents learn a great deal about early childhood issues and education. Lastly, but so very importantly, is how parents and children become a part of a real-life network that lasts far beyond the preschool years.

At VMCP, our program emphasizes the social development of the child, with a focus on building 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 and play structures. The curriculum for each age group is thoughtfully planned to suit the particular interests and capabilities and to encourage physical, intellectual and social-emotional growth.

**The cooperative serves parents too.**

Parents participate weekly in the classroom. In doing so, they develop skills in group cooperation. Parents and children work closely together giving parents the opportunity to observe and interact with children in a supportive environment. Time spent in the classroom also gives the parents the chance to know and to develop trust with the schoolmates of their children as well as with other parents. Additionally, VMCP's program includes monthly meetings geared specifically for parents. Conducted by the North Seattle College Parent Instructor, these parent education meetings cover a range of topics relating to parenting and family living. Besides giving parents a place to discuss classroom activities, the meetings give us parents the opportunity to share our concerns and experiences as well as to offer support to each other.

Knowledge, friendship, support, growth...The benefits of cooperative preschool are boundless.

*We welcome you!*

## **CONTACT INFORMATION**

Email: [info@vmcp.org](mailto:info@vmcp.org)

Physical Address: 10020 SW 210th St. Vashon, WA 98070

Mailing Address: PO Box 925, Vashon, WA 98070

Website: [www.vmcp.org](http://www.vmcp.org)

Tax Identification Number: 91-1040606

## **CLASSES & MEETING TIMES**

### **Baby Class**

Tuesday 12:00pm-2:00pm

Children should be no older than 1 year by August 31

This is the perfect way to bond and play with new baby and meet other new parents

### **Toddler Class**

Wednesday 9:30 - 11:30am

Children should be 1 by Aug 31st

Introduce your child to the wonders of discovery in the classroom and to meet other families.

### **2-3 Class**

Monday & Tuesday: 9:00-11:30 am

Children should be 2 by Aug 31st

This class nurtures your child as they move toward independence and the ability to attend school one day a week on their own.

### **3-4 Class**

Wednesday, Thursday and Friday: 9:00 am-11:45 am

Children should be 3 by Aug 31st

With increasing independence, this class introduces an age appropriate curriculum to begin pre-reading, writing & math skills.

### **4-5 (Pre K)**

Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday and Friday 12:45 pm-3:45 pm

Children should be 4 by Aug 31st

Curriculum in this class has been thoughtfully developed to give your child a strong foundation for their transition into kindergarten.

## **MEMBER OBLIGATIONS**

In order to assure a successful and productive school year at VMCP, we have outlined below the minimum commitment required of each co-op member family. Please read this carefully and ask for clarification if you have questions. Thank you!

1. **Pay tuition fully and promptly each month.** Tuition is due on the 1st of the month. A \$5 late fee will be charged if payment is received after the 5th day of the month.
2. **Work your assigned day in the classroom each week.**
3. **Attend all required parent meetings including the All-School Business Meeting in the spring.**
4. **Support VMCP's fundraising activities**
5. **Fulfill the duties of your co-op Operations Job.**
6. **Assist in the all-school clean-up week at the end of the school year.** An all-school, end-of-the-year cleaning is held the week following the last week of school.

## **TUITION INFORMATION**

A non-refundable registration fee is paid once per year upon enrollment. Families added to a class' waitlist after the school year has started will not be required to pay registration fees until they are able to enroll in a class.

A last month's deposit is collected in July prior to fall school start. This deposit is non-refundable and is meant to cover the withdrawal notice period (30 day notice) if a student needs to drop. If a student remains in school all year the deposit is applied to the last month of tuition in June.

VMCP tuition is an annual amount that is divided into ten installments (September through May with the last deposit applying to June tuition). Tuition is due the first day of each month. If tuition is paid after the 5th day of the month, a 5% late fee could be applied. If you will be gone for more than a week on vacation or due to illness, please let your class' Parent Coordinator and Teacher know. Your full tuition will always save a spot in class for your child.

Payment through Jovial is preferred, if paying via check is your preference please make checks payable to VMCP and note your child's name and class on the check each month. Tuition checks would be mailed to P.O. Box 925, Vashon, WA 98070.

For new enrollees, VMCP's portion of tuition will be prorated for the month of enrollment on a space-available basis only.

## **SCHOLARSHIP INFORMATION**

The purpose of the VMCP Scholarship Fund is to help families who could not attend VMCP without financial assistance. Contact the Treasurer if you are in need of tuition assistance.

Scholarships are available in-house via VMCP's scholarship fund and from outside of the preschool via North Seattle College's scholarship fund. In-house tuition assistance will be granted by the scholarship committee based on financial need. The applicant must submit a completed scholarship application form to North Seattle College and VMCP's scholarship committee on a quarterly basis.

All scholarship information and documentation will be treated confidentially. Information will only be disclosed to those people who are involved in the administration and selection process of the scholarship.

## **LEAVE-OF-ABSENCE**

Leaves of absence may be granted for sickness, surgery, new family members, or emergencies to a member's family in order to relieve the parent of workday responsibilities for up to six weeks. After this time, they must provide a substitute. Any special circumstances must be brought to the Board for approval.

Members who choose to take a vacation leave will be responsible to find a substitute for all workdays when they will be absent.

If first approved by the Board, an accommodation may be made for parents to forgo their operations job during the six-week new sibling leave.

Tuition will remain the same during any leave of absence, except for when a family selects the option to remove their enrolled child from preschool during the six-week new sibling leave. Please see our Policies and Procedures for more detail.

## **WITHDRAWAL FROM MEMBERSHIP**

If you must withdraw from preschool before the end of the year, you are required to give at least a 30-day notice to your Parenting Instructor and Registrar. Your tuition deposit will be used to cover this withdrawal period.

## **FAMILY CONTRIBUTIONS TO THE COOPERATIVE**

At VMCP, the enrolled families are responsible for the daily operations of the preschool and for helping in raising funds to cover our yearly budget. Each family must choose one Operations Job per school year.

### **Operations Jobs**

Operations jobs help keep the school operating on a daily basis, and are a required part of co-op membership. Our school could not run without the commitment and support from each and every family. Examples of Operations jobs include: cleaning the bathroom once per week, managing library books for the classroom, organizing classroom toy storage, or hauling recycling to the transfer center.

Holding a position on the school's board serves as a family's Operations Job for the year. No family is exempt from their Operations Job unless approved by the board.

Contact the Operations Job Manager to discuss your family's Operations Job.

### **Fundraising**

In order to keep the tuition costs reasonable at the preschool and to cover the operational budget, we may need to fundraise. Members who are able are encouraged to help. Fundraising will vary based on the needs of any given year.

## **PARENT EDUCATION**

Attendance at parent education meetings is required for each family. These meetings are 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 parent education meeting, please remember to:

- Notify the Parent Instructor prior to the meeting
- Ask a friend to gather handouts/other information
- Update yourself about important announcements by checking in with your Parent Coordinator or Teacher

## **HEALTH & SAFETY**

The following are the safety rules we need to follow at school. These rules not only keep us in compliance with our liability insurance, they are also designed to keep everyone safe, reduce the spread of germs, and protect everyone's health and well-being. **THESE RULES ARE MANDATORY AND MUST BE FOLLOWED BY EVERYONE.**

VMCP uses the Organization for Parent Education Programs (OPEP) Risk Management Manual as a health and safety guide. The policies in the manual are in effect for all cooperative preschools in Washington that are affiliated with a community or technical college as a parent-child study laboratory. Compliance

with these policies allows cooperative preschools in Washington to participate in an affordable group accident and liability insurance plan set up through the Risk Management Office in Olympia.

Our goal is to comply with policy, keep our children safe, and not expose the cooperative organization to risk or unnecessary liability. Please feel free to refer to the Co-op's copy of the Risk Management Manual found in the classroom for detailed information or ask your Parent Instructor for a copy.

## General Safety Procedures & Practices

The following procedures and practices highlight the policies that need to be understood by members prior to working with children.

### All the time:

1. Sign in the child you are caring for and sign out when leaving. Remember, only designated caregivers may pick up children. ID will be required.
2. Know where the posted emergency evacuation plan, first aid equipment, fire extinguishers, emergency contact information, and allergy information are.
3. If a child has been injured in any way, please report immediately to the Teacher or Parent Instructor so the appropriate paperwork can be filled out.
4. Please stay at the children's level during discovery time, or when communicating with children.
5. Children are NEVER to be left without adult supervision or left unattended in cars.
6. Playing with children, along with observation, is encouraged, and it is the adult's responsibility to learn skills for supervising and interacting with children respectfully.
7. Coffee or other hot beverages with lids can be kept on the art counter.
8. Look around, if your workstation is slow and another parent needs help, you are welcome to help that parent, and then return to your area when appropriate.
9. If you need to leave your workstation, ask another parent to cover for you.
10. Children need to walk at all times while inside the classroom (they can run outside).
11. We encourage inside voices while inside the building.
12. Tell children what they **can** do!
13. Only adults in the storage room.
14. All poisons will be stored in a locked cupboard.
15. Large equipment will be anchored.
16. At least 2 adults must remain at the co-op until all children have left.
17. If hazardous situations are noted, the Teacher, instructor or Health & Safety Manager must be notified immediately.
18. Proper choking prevention protocol must be followed.
19. Children not enrolled in the Co-op cannot attend the Co-op on a regular basis. Exceptions to this rule include newborns in carriers, open houses, and family nights, provided a Special Event form has been filled out. Occasional visitors including prospective parents do not require a Special Event form.



20. No weapons or firearms (concealed or not) of any kind are allowed on the preschool grounds.

**In the Blocks Area:**

1. The blocks can only be built as tall as the shoulder of the shortest child in that area.

**At Circle Time:**

1. Please join your children at all circle times, unless your job is to clean tables in preparation for snack time.

## **Snack Protocol**

Each child shall bring their own snack to school each day.

1. Hands must be washed before preparing food, serving food, or eating.
2. Tables must be sanitized before and after serving food.
3. Placemats must be sanitized after each use.
4. For safety, food is consumed only in the snack area.
5. Children should be sitting down while eating to avoid choking hazards.
6. Children only eat the food they brought from home. We recognize that the toddler class may have difficulty eating *only* the food they brought from home.
7. A table will be available for an optional snack for children who need one. If a child chooses to have a snack the sign-in parent will help with: hand washing before and after eating, supervising snack, and sanitizing the table after they have finished eating.
8. Food Preparation for class projects or special occasions:
  - a) All food must arrive at the preschool in its original sealed packages.
  - b) All fruits and vegetables must be washed thoroughly at the school prior to usage.
  - c) All baked goods must be completely prepared at school or store bought in original sealed packages

## **Allergies**

Parents will notify the Parent Coordinator, Health & Safety Officer, and Children's Teacher of allergies that need special attention. Parents of the allergic child can bring safe foods to have available if a class cooking project is underway.

## **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.

## **Bathroom Etiquette**

We wash hands before entering the school, before snack, and after bathroom time. Have children wash hands while singing "Twinkle Little Star" to encourage thorough washing.

Many children have bathroom buddies (another parent who can help the child). If you are unsure of who that might be, ask the Teacher. For everyone's safety and protection, when an adult (not the child's parent) is assisting a child using the bathroom, another adult must be in line of sight as well.

## **Outside Play**

Watch the outside climbing structure(s) carefully, and stay close to the children while in use. Not all of our equipment is meant for every age. Shoes must stay on at all times while outside.

## **Injuries**

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

Teachers 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.

## **WHEN TO STAY HOME**

Please do your part to keep everyone healthy. The school community relies on people staying home if there is illness or exposure to serious illness in their immediate family.

Stay home if any of the following symptoms apply:

- Fever within the last 24 hours
- Severe or phlegm-producing cough
- Nasal secretions that require frequent attention
- Within 24 hours of beginning antibiotic treatment
- Vomiting or diarrhea within 24 hours
- Body rash with fever
- If anyone in your home has chicken pox speak with the Health and Safety Officer before returning to school
- Conjunctivitis of the eye
- Any evidence of lice

You know your child best. If they are unusually tired, pale, have a lack of appetite, are confused or cranky, they may be getting sick.

**A good general rule to follow: If you were to see a child in public that has the same symptoms as your child, would you think, "I do not want my child exposed to this child."? That will help you make your decision. The Teacher may ask you to take your child home if they feel your child needs to go home to recuperate.**

## **WORKING IN THE CLASSROOM**

### **Before leaving home**

- If you are scheduled at the art workstation, dress appropriately for a mess.
- Think about the classroom themes and how children might engage in play at your workstation.
- Think about how you might facilitate their play and extend their learning.
- Review what you have learned about guiding children and facilitating problem solving.

### **At arrival time**

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

### **As children come to my area to play and learn**

- Greet each child and welcome them into play.
- To be available, stay on the children's level as much as possible (not sitting on furniture; not standing around).
- Since the room gets busy and noisy, do your best to keep your voice low, including going to children to talk to them.
- The optimal number of children at your workstation is defined by the number of chairs, space, or play supplies. You can limit the number of children according to what you feel comfortable with, too.
- If children are old enough, you 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 a 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 you cleaned up, it's still an important learning time. Your job is to work alongside and to direct, giving each child specific tasks until it is all done.

### **At Snack Time**

- Wait for the Teacher to dismiss students to go wash their hands.

- Help children to use “walking feet” when inside the building and walking to and from the bathrooms to wash their hands.
- Help children remember to eat the snack they brought and to stay seated in their chairs while eating.
- Encourage children to build independent skills and polite social habits with adults and each other.

#### **At Music and Story Times**

- Since the Teacher is leading, support her by helping individual children who need guidance.
- Sing and dance along with the Teacher during music time. Your example will help children know what to do.

#### **At Dismissal**

- As children are dismissed from school with a stamp or sticker, help the gatekeeper ensure no child leaves without their adult.
- If you’re tired at the end of the school day, remember that your time in class means a richer learning experience for your child and the others.

## **DROP-OFF DAY**

#### **Help your child to be ready to play and learn**

- Dress your child in clothing that is comfortable, safe for messy play and climbing, and helpful to learning independent self-care.
- If you are concerned about or predict separation issues, talk with your child's Teacher and Parenting Instructor and make a plan together.

#### **At arrival time**

- Arrive on time so your 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 your child and others to take care of hanging their own coats and backpacks, stowing their own shoes, and washing their hands.
- Make sure there is at least one working parent there with the Teacher before leaving.

#### **At the close of the day**

- Help your child learn to take care of coats, backpacks, and other items that go home.
- Sign out. Help the gatekeeper ensure no child leaves without their adult.

#### **After school**

- Your child, and children in your care, are your responsibility once they leave the classroom.
- Even though this is often a good time to chat with other parents, keep in mind that tired, wound up children need extra supervision, and the Teacher may need to ready the classroom for the next class.

- Please do not leave any children unattended in your car while you "run in" to pick up a child from co-op. A better solution is to ask another parent to watch the child who is in the car.
- Expect a tired or wired child--learning at preschool is hard work!

## CALENDAR, HOLIDAYS, & WEATHER

### Calendar

Preschool generally follows the Vashon 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 co-op and announced to families via email.

No classes are held during the week of Thanksgiving.

*Parents attend school one more week than children do. Plan to attend the mandatory Clean-Up Week without your child after the last week of school in June.*

### Holidays

Decisions about celebrations will be made on a class by class basis with input from the children's Teacher and Parent Instructor. Talk with your child's Teacher about birthdays or other personal events.

### Weather

The Preschool generally follows the Vashon Public School District's cancellations or delayed starts. Listen for reports and check your email for official co-op cancellation or school delay notices.

Washington weather is hard to predict and roads can clear by afternoon. Watch for email announcements to confirm. Parent education classes and Board meetings cancellation will depend on local driving conditions.

If a class is canceled due to forced school closure, the Teacher will make a good faith effort to make up the sessions.

Outdoor playground time will be canceled for an AQI of 150 or higher, high winds or thunder and lightning.

## HERE'S WHO TO CALL FOR HELP

Most parents of young children have lots of questions regarding their child. Being enrolled in a cooperative preschool lends itself to lots of questions too. It's common to have questions, concerns, or problems. Please don't hesitate to ask for help. We're all in this together and are here for you!

Child's progress at school:.....	Teacher or Parent Instructor
Curriculum:.....	Teacher
Child or family concerns:.....	Parent Instructor
Workday scheduling change:.....	Another parent, substitute, or Parent Coordinator if you cannot find a replacement
Parent education meeting questions:.....	Parent Coordinator or Parent Instructor
Absence from Parent Meeting:.....	Parent Instructor
Health Concerns:.....	Health & Safety Officer
Safety Concerns.....	Health & Safety Officer
Operations job:.....	Operations Job Manager
Tuition:.....	Treasurer
Scholarships:.....	Treasurer
Teacher concerns:.....	Parent Instructor
Termination of membership.....	Registrar
Parent education suggestions:.....	Parent Instructor
Issues for the Board to consider:.....	PC or Board Member
Concerns not listed:.....	Teacher or Parent Instructor

**COVID-19 Guidelines - We follow King County Public Health Childcare Guidelines and if those are updated after the handbook update we will defer to the most recent Public Health documents.**

**1) When To Stay Home Guidelines**

- a. If a student is exhibiting any of these symptoms: cough, fever of 100.4 or higher, chills, shortness of breath, muscle aches, headache, runny or stuffy nose, sore throat, diarrhea, vomiting, or loss of smell/taste: the student **MUST** isolate at home and test for Covid-19. If student is negative for Covid-19 they may return to school if:
  - No fever within the past 24 hours (without medication)  
**AND**
  - Symptoms have significantly improved  
If symptoms persist. Retest every 24-48 hours through at least five days after symptoms started.

**2) In the case of a Covid-19 positive student, staff or working caregiver :**

- a. The Co-Chairs should be notified. Info will also be shared with the Health and Safety manager and plan will be set for follow up with the family.

**3) Masking**

- a. VMCP is mask optional
- b. We will follow all King County Public Health requirements as updated