

Great Classes for Children (Birth to 7) *and* Their Parents!

Community College-Based Parent Education & Cooperative Preschools

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Are you looking for:

- A place where your child can explore toys, create art, hear stories, sing songs, and make friends?
- A fun activity to do *with* your child where s/he learns new skills and you get new ideas?
- Opportunities to meet other families and build community?
- Expert advice and research-based information about parenting and child development?

You can find all these great opportunities in one place!

In the Seattle area, our community colleges sponsor parent education programs, which are a fabulous resource for families. For children, classes offer hands-on learning, discovery and play. For adults, they offer on-going education on all topics related to parenting, and connections to other parents.

What is the children's experience like?

The programs are *play-based*, because research shows that children learn best through hands-on exploration in places where they feel safe and free to explore. Each classroom has several stations, which children are encouraged to move around and explore at their own pace: art activities (play-dough, painting, craft projects), sensory tables and water tables, large motor (climbers, tumbling mats, balls, ride-upons), small motor manipulables (puzzles, blocks, shape sorters), and imaginary play (dress up clothes, dolls). They all include "circle time" where the teacher leads the group in singing songs, dancing, playing musical instruments and reading stories together.

What makes these children's programs different from other programs is the opportunity for such diverse experiences in one familiar setting over a long period of time. Parent ed programs run for the full school year. Seeing the same children week after week allows kids to build friendships. Returning to the same classroom with a rotating set of toys and activities helps children feel safe and comfortable as they practice and master skills and explore new ideas.

What are they like from the parent perspective: how do they work?

Each program works a bit differently, so check to be sure of the details, but here is the general idea:

Parent-infant Classes and Parent-Toddler Classes: Meet weekly for two hours. Every other week, the parents attend a one hour parent education session. Infants remain with their parents, toddlers are encouraged, but not required, to play in the other room while the parent attends parent ed.

Staffing and Parents' Role: Each class is staffed by a parent educator and *may* also have one or two children's teachers. Parents provide snacks for the class on a rotating basis and assist in classroom.

Cooperative Preschools: Three-year-olds may attend 2 or 3 days a week, four-year-olds attend 3 or 4 days a week. Typically, the parent stays with the child and works in the classroom one day per week, and the other days are "drop-off" preschool for that family. Classes may be 2 – 3 hours long.

Staffing: There is a preschool teacher, trained in early childhood education, who is responsible for planning and coordinating the children's activities, and leading group times. A parent educator observes / consults during some class sessions, and offers a monthly parent education session.

Parents' Role: Parents contribute by working in the classroom ~once a week. They also help with the running of the school by: providing snacks, fundraising support, helping with end-of-year cleanings, serving on the board (treasurer, secretary, etc.), or as class photographer, play-dough maker, etc.

Length of program: Most classes meet for the full school year – September through May. [Note: sometimes there are openings in the winter or spring – call a program to ask.]

What do Programs Cost?

Costs range between different programs. But in general, you'll find they are cheaper than most other programs in the community, such as regular preschools, children's music classes and children's gym classes. (When comparing them to other programs, it's best to look at per hour cost. So, you may see a class offered elsewhere in the community that is \$80 for a session, and a parent education class that is \$240 for a quarter. But the \$80 session is four 45-minute long sessions - \$27 an hour. The parent education is ten 2-hour sessions, so \$12 an hour.)

These programs also offer scholarships to lower income families which can further reduce the cost.

What do parents get from the class?

Parent Education: Experienced professional educators offer information that is current and research-based but also relevant to the day-to-day reality of parenting little ones. Topics are tailored to the age and needs of the families, but may include: daily routines, discipline, child development, enhancing early learning, nutrition, potty training, emotional intelligence, and self-care for parents.

Individualized Advice: Parent educators and children's teachers have the opportunity to get to know you and your child as individuals. They can answer your questions in a highly personalized way.

Parent Involvement: These programs let you be an engaged, active participant in your child's early education. You'll know their friends, know what they did in class, and get ideas for new activities.

Peer Support and Social Connections: Meeting with parents for several months, working together in the class, and discussing the joys and challenges of parenting allows time for friendships to build.

Learn More about Programs Near You:

Program Name / Website	Locations	Ages Served *
Bellevue College www.bellevuecollege.edu/parented/	Bellevue, Issaquah, Mercer Island, Sammamish, Snoqualmie	Birth to 5 years
Edmonds Community College www.edmonds.edu/programs/pared/default.html	Edmonds, Lake Stevens, Lynnwood, Marysville, Mill Creek, Snohomish	4 months to 5 yrs
Lake WA Institute of Technology www.lwtech.edu/parented	Bothell, Kirkland, Redmond, Woodinville	4 months to 5 yrs
North Seattle Community College http://northseattlecoops.org/	Broadview, Cap. Hill, Crown Hill, Lakewood, Latona, Loyal Hts, Madrone, Magnolia, Northleaf, Queen Anne, Rainier Val, Sandhurst, Univ-Ravenna, Vashon, Victory Hts, Wallingford, Wedgwood, Woodland Park	Birth to 5 years
Shoreline Community College www.shoreline.edu/parenting-education/	Shoreline, Bothell, Inglemoor (Kirkland), Woodinville	Birth to 5 years
South Seattle Community College http://westseattlepreschools.org/	SCCC campus, Admiral, Alki, Arbor Heights, Lincoln Park	Birth to 5 years

*Not all ages served at all sites. For example, most programs only have infant classes at one site.