



Whatcom Family Cooperative Preschool

Family Handbook 2021-2022

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School Schedule

We follow the Bellingham Public Schools Calendar, which is included in this handbook. We do not have school on holidays and semester breaks indicated on the Bellingham Public School calendar. We will have class on days labeled as “Teacher Workdays”. The calendar is subject to change, and the most up to date version can always be found on the [Bellingham Public Schools website](#). Inclement Weather/Snow Days are decided by Bellingham Schools; they provide updates on their website.

Our first day of school is **Tuesday, September 14, 2021**.

AM CLASS

8:45 am - 10:45 am, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday

PM CLASS

11:45 am - 2:45 pm, Tuesday, Thursday, and Friday

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Children will be dropped off at the outside door at the class start time, and dismissed from the same door at pick up time. The working parent(s) and teacher will help children navigate to the classroom and get settled for the day. All students must be signed in and out daily. If you are carpooling with other families, please make arrangements to transfer car seats as needed before pick up time. It is crucial that your child is picked up on time every day.

The classroom cannot be open until all volunteers have arrived. Please do not plan on an early drop off: time before the classroom opens is important planning and preparation time and is done more easily without children in the room yet.

A fee of \$5 will be assessed for every 15 minutes a child is picked up late, and will be added to the following month’s tuition.

Park Days

There will be designated park days, where we meet at a park/trailhead instead of the classroom. Drop off and pick up will be at the same time on those days. Location will be communicated with families in advance.

STREET AREAS: DESIGNATED USES AND SAFETY PRECAUTIONS

Main Parking Lot

Please use the main parking lot to drop off and pick up your child. You may park in the designated parking spots or park along the drive through area. Either Allie or the working parent will greet you and your child at the outside door for drop off and pick up. If you are dropping off at 8:45, it is best to arrive closer to 8:40/8:45. **The parking lot is very busy until 8:40 am.** If you are picking up at 2:45, it is best to arrive closer to 2:40-2:45. The parking attendants will not allow you to park in the drive through/pick up area before the elementary school traffic has subsided.

Drivers should be mindful of city ordinances and parking restrictions, including taking care to keep alleys and neighbor driveways open. Do not park or block the alleys or driveways. Please be sure to use crosswalks.

Tuition

Tuition is due on the 5th of every month for the following month. For example, October's tuition is due on or before September 5th. Please place all checks in the tuition box on the wall to the right of the cubbies, on the right inside the classroom door. All payments received after the 5th will accrue an additional \$15 charge.

If you have questions about tuition, please contact the school treasurer:

wfcoop.treasurer@gmail.com

Teacher Info + Schedule

Allie Bishop (prefers to be called Allie by kids and adults)

Email: wfcoop.teacher@gmail.com

School Phone: 360-676-6420 ext. 5938 (best Tuesday, Wednesday, Friday 3-4 pm)

Cell Phone: 503-468-2873 (call or text)

I encourage you to communicate with me whenever you have a thought, idea, or concern about your child or our learning community. Email is the best way to start a conversation that might be longer or more in depth, and we can schedule a meeting from there. If the discussion will only take a minute, we can talk before 8:45am or 11:45am at drop off or after 10:45am or 2:45pm during pick-up.

The Daily : What to Expect, What to Bring

DAILY SCHEDULE

For both classes, our daily schedule includes:

- Circle Time
- Indoor Exploration and Play
- Snack
- Outdoor Exploration and Play
- Whole Class Activity
- Closing Circle/Gathering

As we start our school year, our main priority is getting to know each other, creating our learning community, and establishing routines. This is work that we all do together over the first few weeks. Families receive a weekly email on Fridays updating everyone on classroom happenings, so you will always have an eye into what is happening and how we are creating a more specific daily schedule.

Due to surging Covid-19 cases at the start of this particular school year, we will be spending as much time as possible outdoors: we will still maintain structure in our schedule, though it may look different outdoors.

CLOTHING

We will use our whole bodies to explore and play, both indoors and outdoors, every day.

Children should be dressed in comfortable, washable clothing. We will get dirty.

It is especially important that children wear clothing that they can manipulate by themselves (for example: elastic waistbands, velcro, large buttons).

“There is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing.” We will play outside in the rain, and in a bit of cold, and sun, and maybe even some snow! We do not have the resources to have some children indoors and some children outdoors, so please dress your child appropriately. Children should have an extra change of clothes in a ziplock bag, labeled with their name, that will stay at school. If you do not want your child to get paint, food, clay, mud, or whatever other messy things we may use in preschool on their clothes, please do not send them to school in those clothes. *If you need assistance accessing weather-appropriate clothes (boots, coats, hats, mittens, etc.) please reach out for help.*

SNACKS

Young children need appropriate nutrition to get them through their busy day. Please pack healthy, ready to eat snacks in a bag or lunch box. We always have a snack time in our schedule. Please provide utensils as needed and labeled water bottle daily for your child. If there are any severe allergies that require restricting certain foods from coming into the classroom, families will be informed.

WHAT TO BRING (AND WHAT NOT TO BRING)

The only thing you need to send your child with each day is developmentally and weather appropriate clothing, a snack, and water bottle. Please label all belongings including backpack, lunchbox, and water bottle. We ask that children do not bring toys/items from home to play with at school: those items will need to stay in their bag during class time.

CELEBRATIONS

At Whatcom Family Cooperative Preschool, we endeavor to be inclusive and encourage sharing in many celebrations. If there is a special family occasion you would like to share with the class, please let us know and we can plan an appropriate way to bring it to our community.

Alternatively, if there is a celebration you do not wish your child to participate in, we respect that and will either choose to not celebrate or find an alternative way to honor your wishes. Due to the significant numbers of students in the school with food allergies and special diets, as well as the Bellingham School District Nutrition Policy, we do not allow the practice of celebrating individual birthdays at school with food treats such as cupcakes. We do welcome celebrating in ways that do not include food.

The birthday child is encouraged to bring in a special book to be read to the rest of the class, by their own grown-up if they wish! In the interest of the feelings and needs of children, you are asked not to bring gifts to school. Please only distribute birthday and other invitations in the classroom if all children in the class are invited.

Parent Volunteer Commitments

As members of the co-op, a representative from each family is expected to:

- attend all monthly Family Connection Meetings;
- hold a school job;
- participate in the auction (including donating items to be auctioned and committing to a shift before, during, or after the auction); and
- actively participate in the classroom a minimum of three days per month. A calendar for the entire school year is available to sign up for work days in advance.

A family representative is required to sign up for work days two months in advance. For example, the work days for the month of December will ideally be finalized by October 1st. If the calendar is not full at this time, family members not signed up for at least three days for the month will be contacted by the scheduler to help fill in the days lacking workers.

If family members are not able to fulfill their previously scheduled work days due to illness, emergency, etc. the family members should try their best to find a sub. This works best through email. If a sub cannot be found, the scheduler for the particular class should be contacted.

If a worker is not scheduled for each school day, class will be cancelled. It is imperative that all families commit to working one to two days per month. All individuals working in the classroom (including subs) must have a cleared background check. Please follow this link for more information <https://bellingshamschoolsvolunteers.myschooldata.net/>.

In addition, families can choose to work on committees, with the Board of Trustees, with various fundraisers, field trips, and preparing projects at home. The more family participation we have in the school, the stronger our school will be! The board and teachers will reach out to share volunteer opportunities as they arise.

WORKING PARENTS AS ASSISTANT TEACHERS

The working parent who has signed up/been assigned to the class session has a number of responsibilities:

- Arrive 15 minutes before class begins (8:30 for the AM class, 11:30 for the PM class). You'll use this time to help Allie finish setting up for class, and to get specifics on what the session will look like and what is expected of you. Working Parents must enter through the front door of the school, sign in at the office, and wear a visitor badge.
- Support children at play during class: this may look like being stationed in a specific area, or floating around the room depending on the day's plan.
- Help children with hygiene tasks before and after outdoor play and snack (sanitization/handwashing)
- Participate in documentation (notes, photos, and videos) about children's learning and play (training provided)
- Stay for 15 minutes after class to help tidy, sanitize, and chat about the session with Allie.

Working parents are encouraged to interact with children in accordance with our child-centered model, providing support for their playful learning. Helpful signage will be posted around the classroom to assist with open-ended questions and how we can keep children in the lead. You are welcome to ask teachers about methods and teaching styles at any time!

In order to reduce distractions from working with children, **working parents must leave their phone in the designated spot on top of the cubby area.** Cameras will be provided in the classroom to document learning; please do not use your personal camera during class sessions.

The parent volunteer on park/trail days will arrive 15 minutes before class and stay for 15 minutes after class to assist the teacher.

SCHOOL JOBS

A representative from each family is expected to have a school job; these range from board positions to fundraising, carpentry, field trip coordination, etc. There is room for parent talents and interests in the school jobs! Your skills can help make our community thrive. School jobs will be coordinated in the first month of the school year.

Health and Safety

PICK UP

You will be asked to provide a list of people who are authorized to pick up your child. These will be on file in the classroom, and can be changed by you when and if needed.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH RECORDS

A complete, current, and signed immunization record form must be on file in the classroom prior to your child's first day of school. This includes returning students.

Current information about the Washington State vaccine requirements, the Immunization Information System, and how to provide proof of vaccination or exemption is available here:

<https://www.doh.wa.gov/YouandYourFamily/Immunization/SchoolandChildCare#cis>

SICKNESS/ILLNESS

Sick children should stay at home until at least 24 hours after they no longer have a fever or signs of a fever without the use of fever-reducing medicine. Lethargy, vomiting, coughs lasting more than one week, and Pink Eye are all reasons to keep your child home. Keeping your child home when s/he does not feel well, not only gives your child the comfort s/he needs, but it also

helps prevent the spread of illnesses to the other children and adults in the classroom which will minimize the need for a substitute teacher and substitutes for in-class working family members.

COVID-19 SAFETY PROTOCOLS

We will continue taking precautions based on information we have about the Covid-19 pandemic. These protocols will likely shift and change over the 2021-22 school year as the board deems necessary, and all changes will be communicated with families. As the school year begins, the requirements below are in place: the source/authority on that policy is noted in parentheses.

- Parents will respond to a daily health attestation when they sign their child in, including taking their child's temperature. The working parent in the classroom will do the same. ([OPEP Protocols](#))
- All children and adults must wear a facial covering indoors: please see below for additional mask expectations. ([Whatcom County Health Department](#))
- Adults in the classroom must maintain a distance of 6 feet from other adults; children should attempt to keep 3 feet of distance (Bellingham Public Schools policy, based on [Washington State Department of Health recommendations for K-12 schools](#)). This distancing will be "to the degree possible and reasonable".
- Parent volunteers are required to take training, provided by Bellingham Public Schools.
- Whatcom Community College requires students taking in-person classes (volunteering in the classroom and attending preschool events) to be fully vaccinated against COVID-19 prior to the start of classes. Individuals will be able to claim a medical, religious, or philosophical exemption from receiving the vaccine.

Mask Expectations

The Whatcom Family Co-op Preschool is in alignment with the school district, and our expectation is that all children and adults will wear masks indoors. Younger students aged two to four years old must be supervised when wearing a face covering or face shield. These students may need help with their masks and getting used to wearing them. Masks will also be provided by the school if needed. Whatcom Family Co-op Preschool will reevaluate these mask expectations as our knowledge of the COVID-19 situation changes.

Please reach out to us if you are having trouble getting your child/children to wear a mask.

Wear fabric or disposable face coverings or face shields, such as: cloth face masks, surgical mask, N95 / KN95, or plastic face shields that have protective coverings at bottom of the shield preventing droplets from entering under the mask. Do not wear a face mask with a valve/vent. Face coverings or masks with ear loops are preferred over ones that tie around the neck or behind the head during physical activity to reduce the risk of injury. Schools must provide face coverings or masks, as appropriate, for staff and students who do not have them. The face covering must fit over your nose and mouth. To protect yourself, wear face coverings properly.

- Your mask should always cover your nose and mouth.

- Face shields should have a covering at the bottom of the shield to prevent exposure coming up under the mask.
- Always wash your hands with soap and water or use an alcohol-based hand sanitizer before you put on a face covering and after removing it.
- Change your face covering when it gets moist.

Wash your face covering after each use.

Some people do not need to follow this expectation, including:

- Babies and toddlers under age two should never wear cloth face coverings.
- Children above two and adults are expected to wear a face covering unless medically directed to do otherwise.
- Anyone with a disability that makes it hard for them to wear or remove a face covering.
- Anyone who is deaf and moves their face and mouth to communicate.
- Anyone who has been advised by a medical professional to not wear a face covering because of personal health issues.
- Anyone who has trouble breathing, is unconscious, or unable to remove the face covering without help.

Outdoor Mask Requirements:

Per the Secretary of Health's Mask Order, face coverings are not required outdoors, regardless of vaccination status. Masks are strongly recommended for unvaccinated individuals when outdoors in crowded spaces or when in close contact with people from outside their household for a sustained period of time, as the risk of COVID-19 infection increases with the duration and closeness of contact between individuals. Schools should support students and staff who choose to wear a mask or face covering outdoors.

MEDICATION

Please do not send medication, including cough drops, to school in your child's backpack or lunchbox. Medications for students are kept in a locked cabinet below the sink in the classroom or in the refrigerator in the kitchenette between Rooms 153 and 154. A completed and signed medication form must accompany all medication. If your child has a life-threatening allergy or condition that requires the use of medication (Epi- Pen, Asthma meds, etc.), a health plan must be established with the school nurse and a signed health plan form must accompany any prescription medications to be kept at school prior to your child's first day of attendance. A child with a life-threatening allergy or condition will not be permitted to be at school until these critical steps have been taken to ensure his/her safety.

TOILETING

Children enrolled at WFCP should be potty trained. We have our own restroom inside of our classroom that is available. Children should wear underwear to school (not pull-ups/diapers).

Accidents happen, of course: please make sure that your child's change-of-clothes bag includes underwear.

PARK DAYS/FIELD TRIPS

Families will receive notice for any off-site outings we may plan. Because the curriculum unfolds with the interests and curiosities of our community, we do not have a pre-planned schedule of field trips: they will be coordinated as we decide visits are relevant to our explorations.

As part of our Covid-19 response, we will have a park date every Thursday from September through December. A working parent will be assigned to each session.

Inclusion Education

We collaborate with the developmental preschool class housed next to ours at Happy Valley Elementary. "Inclusion education" is a research-based model of having classrooms with students who have special needs in the same class with students who do not have special needs. Therefore, each of the two classrooms, at different times throughout the day, will have a mixture of students with and without special needs. Planning for the classes is done thinking about all students' ages, development and the unique needs of each child whether they are enrolled through the co-op portion of our program or the district. Our teachers work hard to be sure the composition of each class is best for each student.

Teacher Jen is the lead teacher in the developmental preschool, and we will work closely with her to provide the most appropriate and inclusive programming we can. Due to Covid-19 protocols and safety measures, this collaboration will likely be less frequent in the 2021-22 school year.

Confidentiality

By law, teachers must keep each child's personal information confidential. This includes any special needs, delicate family situations, and any supports in place for those needs (speech therapists, occupational therapists, school or private counselors / psychologists / psychiatrists, behavioral contracts or contracts verbal or written between the teacher and the child's family). For this reason, you will not be made aware of specific needs of or plans for any child in the classroom without the written consent of the family of the child.

PROTOCOL FOR CONCERNS

Due to strict confidentiality laws and out of respect for the families within the co-op and the elementary school, all personal information of the students and the families is kept confidential. At times, you may notice a behavior from a child that is unfamiliar to you. You may also notice different ways in which Allie, Teacher Jen, or any of our supports handle an unfamiliar situation. Our teachers and staff are trained professionals. There are often “plans of action” between parents and the teachers.

Sometimes these “plans of action” can look different to someone unaware of the plan. Please understand that the teachers always have the safety and well-being of all students as their top priority. If at any time you have questions or concerns, please follow the appropriate steps to find answers to your questions and solutions to your concerns. This applies to concerns regarding a child, a teacher, a specific situation, and classroom environment or the program in general.

1. Talk to the teacher in private outside of class time. Allie’s contact information is noted in this handbook.
2. If you do not feel that your question or concern was adequately addressed by Allie, please contact our Board President, Christine Biernacki, wfcoop.president@gmail.com.
3. If an issue is still unresolved, it should be addressed with our WCC Preschool Facilitator and Parent Educator, Carolina Olza-Kelsh by email at colza@whatcom.ctc.edu.

Behavior Expectations

Whatcom Family Cooperative Preschool works in cooperation with Happy Valley Elementary School to develop school-wide expectations and behaviors that are positive and consistent, and that support learning and community. In doing so, we lean on best practices including Positive Behavior Interventions and Support. In addition to providing academic support, we also need to support the social emotional needs of all students. PBIS is a systems approach for establishing a positive culture needed for students to feel acknowledged, safe and ready to learn. At Happy Valley, PBIS is a non-reward system that helps students move toward becoming intrinsically motivated. Students need to be seen, heard, understood, and acknowledged.

The School-wide Guiding Principles are:

- Show Respect
- Make Good Decisions
- Solve Problems

Behavioral expectations are appropriate based on age and development. We will model respect for all members of the classroom and guide students toward positive social behavior.

Family Communication

The preschool classroom is a busy place, with constant learning and action. Because we are a cooperative, there are always discussions and decisions to make, so staying up on our communication will help our community thrive. Communication will mainly be through email; if you do not have regular access to email, please reach out and we will find an alternative plan to keep you in the loop.

WEEKLY E-NEWS

The teacher sends a weekly email on Friday afternoon with a recap of the week, and a look forward at what is coming up. These emails will include stories of learning as well as logistics, like the school calendar and upcoming meetings.

Because Covid-19 protocols prevent family members from visiting the classroom outside of being the working parent in the classroom, this electronic communication is important to keep up with so you know what is going on. Please take a few minutes each weekend to read the email as well as links to other relevant information included in the email.

MONTHLY BOARD UPDATE

The board secretary will send an email after the monthly board meeting with relevant updates.

Documentation + Portfolios

Throughout the year, children's playful learning is documented using photo + video, notes, and artifacts of their learning (drawing, painting, etc.). Each child's journey tells their own story, and also the story of our community.

This information is collected for children's portfolios, which will be shared with families. The portfolio is a way to see children's growth: children will not have formal assessments. Working parents will be trained in various documentation techniques throughout the year so they can participate in the portfolio process.

Portfolios will be sent home at the end of our school year.
