



# NSC PARENT ADVISORY COUNCIL

## COMMUNITY NEWS

OCTOBER 2014



Meadowbrook 3-5s on a field trip to Golden Gardens

**Partnership with Seattle Shelters for Homeless Families** by Emily Bradley, Parent Educator

North Seattle College has a new pilot partnership with two shelters for homeless families in downtown Seattle. It is an exciting opportunity for our cooperative preschool community to extend its reach into the lives of those without access to the parent education that we so value as part of our preschool program. A parent educator spends time bi-monthly at the shelters, conducting the same classes that our co-op preschool community attends in their monthly evening meetings. We are also on site for individual consultations before or after class, giving the parents a chance to brainstorm their parenting challenges and get advice and assistance with individual issues. The parents who participate in the class are students of North Seattle College and receive college credit for their participation in these classes. For some residents, this is the first exposure to higher education and a truly exciting prospect for their futures.

These parents have the same concerns we all do. Sleep, development, nutrition, conflict and all the many issues that come with raising children in our complicated world. However, these families are in survival mode and crisis. The class provides an opportunity to relate, share and teach in a supportive environment that recognizes these parents' strengths and empowers them to feel supported in doing the best they can for their kids.

The students range from teen moms struggling with balancing newborns, high school and life at the shelter to middle aged fathers with teenage kids trying to make sense of their situation and get back on their feet. It is a dynamic community with tremendous presence and grace for its members.

This pilot program needs your help. As you can imagine, the budgets of these shelters are very tight and the residents do not pay for the class at the college. We currently fund these classes with a combination of shelter contributions and grants. If your co-op would like to sponsor a quarter or a year (or portion thereof) of tuition for the residents of one of our shelter programs, (tuition is \$16 per credit, with 20 enrolled the cost is \$320 per quarter for each one credit class) please contact Betty Williams ([betty.williams@seattlecolleges.edu](mailto:betty.williams@seattlecolleges.edu)). If you would like to support these programs with goods, time, energy ,or organization, please contact Emily Bradley ([emily.bradley@seattlecolleges.edu](mailto:emily.bradley@seattlecolleges.edu).)

### Donate to our Scholarship Fund

There continues to be a high need for scholarships in our co-op community, and as always we are limited by our budget. This year marks the highest need in recent years. These scholarships support families who may otherwise be unable to attend one of our valuable early education programs. If there are preschool classes with excess funds, we strongly encourage that some of this excess be donated to PAC. Individual family donations to the scholarship fund are always welcome. For instructions, visit

[http://coops.northseattle.edu/fundraising/support\\_scholarship.html](http://coops.northseattle.edu/fundraising/support_scholarship.html)

Thank you!

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## Calendar

### October

27 PAC Presents: Kindergarten  
Readiness 7-9pm @ Faith Lutheran Church

31 Happy Halloween!

### November

1 Registration Training for PCs at NSC

8 Seattle's Child Building Blocks  
Early Learning Festival 9:30 am  
to 12pm at Hamlin Robinson  
School

11 Veteran's Day, no school

24 - 28 Seattle Public Schools  
Thanksgiving Break

### December

5 Scholarship Deadline for Winter  
Quarter

22 - 1/2 SPS Winter Break

## Beloved Teacher Sandi Dexter Retires by Colette Janning

"How lucky I am to have something that makes saying goodbye so hard." --A.A. Milne

People have been asking retiring co-op teacher Sandi Dexter what she's going to do when she retires. "I don't know, a hundred and five things!" she responds. It's a valid question, given that this incredible teacher has given so much time energy and heart to her students over the past thirty-one years at Wedgwood Co-op.

Sandi knew from a young age she wanted to teach. Her first experience with cooperative preschool was as a parent in an infant co-op with her daughter Katie in 1973. "I was hooked immediately," she says. She remained involved in co-op until both of her kids went to elementary school. In the meantime Sandi began taking classes in Early Childhood Education at North Seattle Community College. In 1983, Sandi was given the opportunity to teach the Toddlers class at Wedgwood Co-op. "It was just great," she says, "because for many kids it was their first experience and their parent's first experience being in a co-op or a preschool. They were just over the moon with everything."

Sandi taught Toddlers and Two's at a couple of other co-ops. After a few years, she applied to be the 3 to 5s teacher at Wedgwood, and started teaching that class in 1989. Says Sandi, "I so loved the opportunity to work with kids that would remember me from Toddlers. It was ideal. And I liked teaching at just one school."

Over the years, Sandi has developed unique keystones of the Wedgwood 3 to 5s curriculum. Two of these are Potlatch and Special Weeks.

A potlatch is a ceremonial feast of the First Nations of the northwest coast. At Wedgwood Co-op, Potlatch developed into an evening celebration to bring communities together. "Potlatch has been incredibly important to me because it's something that's a part of the culture of this area and it's important for kids to know about that," Sandi says.

Soon after Potlatch became an evening event, Sandi heard about a First Nations dance group and called the Fulmer family, who were part of that group. Through their generosity and personal relationship with Sandi, they continued to visit Wedgwood Co-op for potlatch each winter for twenty years, teaching songs and dances to the students early in the week and then dancing with the students at Potlatch in their regalia. Special Weeks happens most weeks throughout the year in the Wedgwood 3 to 5s class. Each week celebrates a country, state, or region in which a student's family has roots.

"Before [Special Weeks] got started, people would say to me, 'I love your school but I want to go to one that's more diverse.' I kept thinking, I can't change the demographics by myself. We live in the North End." From one child's excitement to share mementos from Italy, the idea grew, with parents adding snacks with foods from the special weeks destination, and a "mini-museum"—a collection of artifacts photos, books, and costumes relating to the country or area the class is "visiting" that week.

Throughout her career, Sandi has stayed on the leading edge of early childhood education, bringing back ideas from state conferences and workshops with leading lights in early childhood education, among them Bev Bos and Tom Hunter. Sandi has gone on to lead workshops of her own for early childhood educators, and in 1996, she wrote a book called *Joyful Play with Toddlers: Recipes for Fun with Odds and Ends*.

One parent told me: "Sandi gave our family an amazing introduction to what it meant to be a parent of a school-aged child. Her focus on community and her constant energy and involvement was a model for how to be engaged with our kids."

Of the parents in the Wedgwood community, Sandi says, "The parents bring so much to the program. And I certainly couldn't have done what we've done all these years without parents giving their all. Co-op is such a great model because children know, 'My education is so important that my parents are involved.'"

The gifts of teaching have been many for Sandi, including recognizing the impact she has had on the lives of young children.

"It's been incredibly rewarding and utterly delightful, almost without exception. I still get Christmas cards from people whose kids are married now. It's really wonderful because of that community. We say, 'once a part of Wedgwood; always a part of Wedgwood.' For many people, that experience is forever a part of them."

## Separation Some Survival Tips

By: Cesily M. Crowser, Parent Education Instructor

We have all been there. Those tearful and clingy “good byes” that tear at your heart and make you want to pick up your child and never let them go. The truth is that children need to learn how to separate from you. For some it comes easy. For some it is hard to let go of the comfort and security of mom or dad. Some seem to be doing just great and then out of nowhere parting becomes difficult. The reasons for this are as varied as there are people. Sometimes it is developmental, sometimes it is temperament, and yes sometimes it is even that you the parent are having a hard time and they sense that. Whatever the reason the 6 tips below should help things go a little smoother.

- 1. Prepare your child for the changes ahead.** Make sure your child knows what to expect. Talk with them about school (what is the teacher’s name, what will they be doing, are any of the old friends going to be there, etc.) This is also the time when you start to prepare them for the fact they you will be leaving.
- 2. Create a “Good-bye” ritual.** Decide, with your child, how you will be saying goodbye – and stick with it. Will it be one kiss, one hug and a high-five? My son and I did one kiss, one BIG squeeze and an extra kiss for each of our pockets. Then I left. Knowing that we had this ritual and needed to be **consistent** with it was helpful on those days when one or both of us wanted to delay.
- 3. Give your child something from home to keep at school.** A family picture is great. It is a wonderful conversation starter for the teacher and others in the class who are trying to comfort you child. Some parents even get a second of their child’s favorite snuggle object to keep in their cubby.
- 4. Tell them when you will be back.** “I am going to do errands now, but I will be back to get you after the goodbye circle.” Make sure you put it in terms your child can relate to. For many young children telling them you will be back at 12:00 or in a few hours does not make much sense, the concept of time is too abstract. Instead put in terms of which part of their daily routine you will arrive – then **be on time**. Little minds will remember waiting, if you are late, and will be less relaxed the next time you leave and promise to return.
- 5. Arrange a carpool with a classmate.** This can be a miracle cure. Arrange to have your child picked up by a friend and the “good bye” takes place in a familiar surrounding. They get excited about riding with someone they know and school is now no longer a part of the separation equation.
- 6. Remember to have patience.** Find the tips that work for you, remain consistent and trust that in time things will work themselves out.



### Make Your Online Purchases Count. Register for iGive!

Register for iGive and participating online retailers will donate a percentage of their profits towards PAC scholarships. Sign up at [www.igive.com/nsc](http://www.igive.com/nsc) You’ll be guided through the steps to add an iGive button to your browser. More than 1,500 online retailers participate, including Amazon.com, Barnes & Noble, Home Depot, Nordstrom, Orbitz and Expedia. Register in the month of October and PAC will receive a \$5 sign up bonus!

### PAC’s Amazon Store

One of our most successful fundraisers is also one of the simplest to participate in. Simply bookmark the link to [PAC’s Amazon Store](#) and PAC will receive 6% of your purchases. Even better, share the link, which is also found on the [North Seattle Co-op](#) website with family and friends and ask them to do the same. These earnings will help fund families in need.

Monday, Oct. 27, 2014; 7-9  
pm  
Faith Lutheran Church  
8208 18<sup>th</sup> Ave N.E. Seattle

Are you and your child  
**Ready for  
Kindergarten?**

- How do I know if my child is kindergarten ready?
- What are the teachers' expectation of my child?
- How can I better prepare my child to thrive in their new school?

Come learn from and ask questions of our panel  
of experienced teachers and parents

**The Panel:**

**Katie Becker** – Parent Educator at North Seattle College

**Kris Dickenson** – Teacher for the Wallingford 4-5s Cooperative  
Preschool

**Margretta Murnane** – Seattle Public Schools K-1 Teacher from  
John Stanford International School

**Susan Sasnett** – KapKa Coop Elementary School teacher

**Elena Blair** - Co-op veteran parent

***Free and open to the public***

***Bake Sale, Used Books Sale support PAC Scholarships***  
***ASL Interpreter available upon request. Please contact Betty Williams***  
***(206) 934-4571 before 10/14/14***

Presented by the Parent Advisory Council of the North Seattle Community College Cooperative Preschools

<http://coops.northseattle.edu/>