



## What is a Cooperative?

A cooperative (“co-op”) is an organization operated by its members—in the case of FWS, families and full-time staff. Parent members support the co-op by participating in most of the decision-making and operations. Each member has important contributions to make, and everyone possesses unique talents that contribute to the success of the school.

## How are parents involved?

Parents help out with the **educational program**: in the classroom by supporting teachers, in the community on hikes and field trips, and on the yard facilitating fun activities and conflict resolution.

Parents help out with the **functioning of the school**: helping keep the school clean and safe, fundraising, serving on the Board of Directors, overseeing admissions, marketing, and the finances of the school.

Parents participate in **decision-making**: providing input towards and voting on the budget, helping to evaluate co-op rules and obligations, and participating in future strategic planning.

Parents are **part of a community** of children, faculty, and families - learning and growing together. This includes everything from ordinary daily events, to supporting families in need, to annual whole-school celebrations. For families, being a part of the Friends Western community is often a deeply valuable, unique, and transformative experience.

## Why is parent involvement so important?

**Families are the child’s first teacher.** As a cooperative, we collaborate on supporting each child’s development, and the life of each child and their connection to their family is unique and celebrated. We work together to understand one another as adults committed to building a caring, affirming relational foundation for learning and growing as a community.

**Multiple perspectives benefit children.** Children are most successful when parents and teachers share information and work together to deepen their understanding of each child. Through their involvement at Friends Western, parents understand their children's school experience, and are therefore better able to support their children.

**Children and adults learn first-hand about democracy.** We are a living, breathing example of democracy in action. Students, staff, and parents all develop the skills of communication, collaboration, and problem solving by working together in this community.

**Parent involvement allows your financial contributions to go farther.** Having parents handle school functions typically managed by paid staff allows us to keep overhead costs as low as possible.

### **What are the obligations for families?**

The obligations required of families to keep our co-op functional are very flexible, and a wide variety of families find it possible to meet these expectations. The responsibilities can be fulfilled through helping the school with various activities and tasks.

- At least one parent from each Member family must work one **yard duty** shift per week, scheduled to recur weekly at the same time. You will be supervising the playground during recess or lunch under the guidance of the Outdoor Education Teacher and other staff. Members who do not wish to participate in yard duty may buy out of this role on a per-term or yearly basis.
- Each parent is expected to work one **co-op job** over the course of the year, under the guidance of Associate Committee Chairs and staff Committee chairs. Committees conduct regular monthly meetings to ensure coherence of their work. Members who are not able to or prefer not to participate in co-op job work may buy out one or both jobs. Committee assignments are made in consideration of parent skills, interests, and the needs of the school.
- Attend the monthly **Membership Meeting**. This is where the bulk of planning and decision-making takes place. All members are expected to have at least one parent from each family attend the monthly general membership meeting. Attendance is mandatory and will be taken.
- **Volunteer** at least 20 hours per school year. These volunteer hours cannot be bought out. Twelve (12) of these hours should go towards Fundraising. This may include setting up the space for an event such as the Gala, working a shift during the event, cleanup, etc. The remainder of volunteer hours may be fulfilled through Site Days, helping staff on campus when they request

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community support or chaperoning a trip. As field trips are an integral part of our curriculum, volunteering as driver/chaperone on at least one trip per year is appreciated.

The following table summarizes the costs and responsibilities when choosing to buy out of various co-op commitments.

	<b>Co-Op Responsibilities</b>				
	<b>Membership Meeting</b>	<b>20 Volunteer Hours</b>	<b>Co-Op Job</b>	<b>Co-Op Job</b>	<b>Yard Duty</b>
No Buyout	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
<b>Buyout (Cost)</b>					
Yard Duty (\$30 per one hour weekly shift, billed per term)	✓	✓	✓	✓	
One Job (\$1320/yr)	✓	✓	✓		✓
Two Jobs (\$2640/yr)	✓	✓			✓