



ECFE Parent Handbook



Revised Jan 2024



PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Big Lake Schools' Early Childhood Family Education mission is to support and strengthen families as they care for and grow with young children by:

- Providing activities for parents and children to do together
- Sharing ideas and information
- Encouraging confident parenting
- Arranging parent discussion groups
- Providing age-appropriate early childhood education activities
- Hosting special events for the entire family
- Offering ECFE & Me Visits
- Building lending libraries of books, activity kits, and other learning materials

ECFE STAFF

ECFE teachers, parent educators, home visitors, and coordinator are all licensed Early Childhood professionals.

CURRICULUM

The MN ECFE Parent Education Core Curriculum is used to plan parent discussion classes and the MN Early Childhood Indicators of Progress is used to plan classroom activities.

WELCOME TO EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION!

Whether you are new to Big Lake Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), or one of the many families returning for another year, we hope this year will be a growing and enjoyable experience for you and your family.

So, what exactly is ECFE?

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth and kindergarten enrollment. It recognizes that families provide the child's first and most important learning environments, and that parents are a child's first and most significant teachers. It is the mission of ECFE to strengthen families and support the ability of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children. Please know that while we tend to use the word "parent", we simply mean anyone serving in a primary caregiver role. This may include grandparents, aunts, cousins, or family friends! All are welcome at ECFE classes! We hope to see you at a class soon!

Big Lake Early Childhood and Family Education Programs
763-262-3233

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CONTACT INFORMATION

Office Hours:

7 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Address:

Liberty Elementary
17901 205th Avenue
Big Lake, MN 55309

Phone:

763.262.3233

Fax:

763-262-8185

Email:

earlychildhood@biglakeschools.org

POLICIES & PROCEDURES

ABSENCES

Please send a SeeSaw message to your teacher if you can't make it to a class. This is especially important if you have a child in sibling care.

AGES

Children must be the age displayed in the class description on the first day of class.

ALLERGIES & MEDICATIONS

If your child has any food or environmental allergies, please inform the ECFE teacher verbally and make sure to note it during registration. If your child has an EPI PEN or other medication needs, please contact the school nurse prior to beginning ECFE to set up a health action plan.

ARRIVAL/DEPARTURE

Upon arrival and departure, parents need to enter through the main doors at Liberty and enter the Early Childhood office.

Please respect the following guidelines set by the school:

- Park in the parking lot provided
- Do not park in the fire lane
- Do not block the office doors, main front doors, or any other fire exit
- Be considerate of elementary classes in session while you are in the building and be as quiet as possible

CELL PHONES

ECFE provides an opportunity to have uninterrupted time with your child. Please limit cell phone use to emergencies only, and remember that while on the phone it is still your responsibility to watch your child. Please mute your cell phone during class time.

CIRCLE TIME

Circle time is a time for your child to participate in a large group situation. We would like all children to participate at their own level, which means some children will join right in while others may wait a while. This is an opportunity for your child to become comfortable speaking and singing in a large group. Parent participation at circle time is very important. Parents are encouraged to remain at and participate at circle time, even if their children do not.

CLASS REGISTRATION:

Registration is filled on a first come first serve basis, however, parents who wish to register for more than one parent/child class must designate their 1st and 2nd choices, as some classes often fill and have a waiting list. If classes are filled, parents will be limited to one parent/child class.

CLOTHING

Please dress children in play clothes. Paint smocks are provided for messy activities, but accidents do occur. Children need to feel free to use project materials without worrying about their clothes. Children are required to wear shoes at ECFE. Shoes need to stay on in the classroom. Bring extra shoes if wearing boots.

GERMS & TOYS

Help us reduce the amount of germs spread by washing your hands before and after class, and by placing toys that have found their way into your child's mouth into the "mouthed toy bucket". We will wash these items before they are used again.

ILLNESS

Out of respect for others, if you or your child is sick we ask that you please stay home. A child/parent should remain home if they have any of the following:

1. A contagious disease such as chickenpox, strep throat, pink eye, or impetigo
2. Vomiting, diarrhea, upset stomach within the past 24 hours
3. Draining ears or eyes that are reddened
4. An undiagnosed rash
5. Severe cough, sore throat, runny nose, or cold symptoms
6. Lice, ringworm, or scabies
7. A temperature of 100° or over (children should remain home for 24 hours after it decreases)
8. If your child is taking antibiotics for an infection, he/she must not come to class until they have taken the medication for at least 24 hours

Please let the teacher know of any contagious disease your child has had so we have the option of notifying other parents of exposure (we do not name your child), and so we can be on the lookout for other children developing symptoms.

POLICIES & PROCEDURES, CONT.

IMMUNIZATIONS

State law requires that you provide dates of immunization and that your child's immunizations are up-to-date in order to participate in ECFE classes. Forms are available from the ECFE secretary. Please notify the secretary when your child has additional immunizations. Each child enrolled in a class or in sibling care must have a completed immunization form on file.

INFANTS UNDER 3 MONTHS

If your infant is younger than 3 months, please feel free to bring your baby with you to parent discussion.

INTERPRETERS

If you or a friend is in need of an interpreter, please call the ECFE office with your request. The earlier the request can be made the better, as it can be difficult to find interpreters on short notice. We will do our best to provide an interpreter when one is available.

SCHOOL DRILLS

Big Lake Schools ECFE programs will follow state guidelines for required fire/tornado/lock down/bus drills. If you have any questions about any of the safety drills, please contact your child's teacher.

SCHOOL CLOSINGS

In the event of inclement weather or other emergency events that cause the school to be closed, we will follow the same procedures as the rest of the school district.

- If school is two hours late there will be no morning classes; evening classes will still meet.
- If school is released two hours early there will be no evening classes.
- If school is closed, both morning and evening classes will be canceled.

Announcements will be made via:

- SeeSaw
- Website - an announcement will be posted on the main district site
- Social Media - a post will be made on the district's Facebook page
- Local Media Outlets - WCCO, KARE 11, KSTP and FOX 9 KMSP

TOYS FROM HOME

Separation/security objects are welcome but be aware that toys from home can be easily lost if brought to ECFE. Please do not bring small items that may be a choking hazard to babies in class.

ADDITIONAL OFFERINGS

DONATIONS

Donations are welcome at Big Lake ECFE! We gladly accept donations of clothing or diapers. Donated items will be available for other ECFE parents. We also accept (and request) beverage donations such as coffee, tea, hot chocolate, etc. These items will be available for parents during parent discussion time.

LENDING LIBRARY

We have a variety of children's books and parenting books for families to check out.

MOTHERS' ROOM

A private nursing room is available to nursing mothers at any time. Simply ask for the key at the main office.

SIBLING CARE

Sibling care is provided for children whose parent is attending an ECFE class. Sign up should occur during class registration; however, if you need to add sibling care, please call the ECFE office as soon as possible (must be before class begins to ensure there is adequate staffing.) If your child needs to use the restroom or a diaper change, we will alert you so that you can take care of it. **Please make sure to alert the office if you will not be needing sibling care on any day.**

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE PHILOSOPHY

We will be firm, fair, friendly and consistent while teaching your child to be respectful, responsible and safe. In order to do this, we will:

- Approach a child at eye level
- Use positive language
- Provide “OK” choices
- Use a statement when there is no choice
- Acknowledge feelings and behaviors, and redirect as needed
- Connect with each child individually everyday
- Allow children to work and process information at their own pace
- Focus on the process, not the product
- Teach problem-solving versus providing solutions
- Foster creativity and individuality
- Avoid comparisons and competition among children
- Make adaptations for individuals as needed

- Not allow children to hurt, be hurt, or destroy property

We are a cooperative community: we play together, sing together and clean up together.

In addition, all early childhood classes will utilize the components of our HIVE FIVE program. The Hive Five program is a comprehensive systematic approach to assuring all of our classes are meeting the social and emotional needs of the children and families involved in our programs.

PARENT DISCUSSION

1. You are invited to be as open and honest as possible. You also have the right to pass.
2. Please share your feelings as well as your thoughts.
3. Be respectful of each person as they speak. Our time is limited. Avoid sub-conversations.
4. Please maintain confidentiality. What is said in the group stays in the group.
5. Be respectful of each person’s beliefs and also feel free to disagree with each other. Exploring our differences can lead to exciting growth as parents.

COMMUNICATION

Our teachers strive to establish partnerships with parents to support student learning. Strong communication is fundamental to this partnership and to building a sense of community between home and school.

CONNECT ONLINE

Get in the loop! Join our group! We have an ECFE group on Facebook where we share a ton of information and other parents share information and stories too! Join our group here: <https://www.facebook.com/groups/BigLakeECFE/>

SEESAW

Each classroom will be participating in using a parent communication tool called SEESAW. Seesaw is used as our primary communication tool. Parents are strongly encouraged to use Seesaw for all communication with ECFE Teachers. ECFE Teachers will use Seesaw to share photos, resources and reminders with families via their smart phone, iPad or other electronic device. Your child’s teachers will provide you with information on how to sign up to use this tool. We ask that pictures that are shared with you via the Seesaw app you do NOT share on other social media. **Thank You!**

SEPARATION ANXIETY

Parent/child separations are not always easy. We recommend that you tell your child you are going to go talk with the other grown ups, and that you will come and get him/her at the end of class. If your child would be more comfortable with his or her favorite security object, please feel free to bring it along. The staff has experience in dealing with separation issues and they will work with you to help find a solution. If your child is not able to separate, you are welcome to stay with your child in the children's group until your child is more comfortable.

Tips for separating:

- Walk into the classroom with your child rather than carrying them.
- Make a point of showing your child that you are hanging your coat by his and that you will both return to get your coats.
- When it is time for you to leave, make your farewell brief and cheerful. Say in your normal, conversational voice, "I'll come back and get you in a little while. I know you'll be having fun while I talk to the other grown ups." Leave with a smile, and never sneak out!
- Some children may prefer to bring a security object to school with them. Others will like to take care of something of yours while you are gone, such as a purse or keys.
- Let your child know that the teacher is there to help and comfort them.
- Remember that it's okay for children to feel sad. We will help by acknowledging those feelings.
- If you choose to stay in the room, please be a "boring parent".

EC ADVISORY COUNCIL

The Early Childhood Advisory Council is composed primarily of parents of young children in the community. The council's purpose is to monitor quality and provide guidance and direction to Big Lake's rapidly growing Early Childhood programs. Members help with special events, fund raising, and providing input into programming. The council meets

4-5 times throughout the school year. Child care is provided free of cost by EC staff.

If you would like to visit a meeting or serve on the council, please call the Early Childhood Office or email biglakeecfepac@gmail.com.