



EARLY LEARNING CENTERS



2024-2025

**PARENT
HANDBOOK**

PHILOSOPHY & OVERVIEW

The Cypress-Fairbanks I.S.D. The Early Learning Center (ELC) program is designed to create a safe, wholesome environment where children may enjoy learning in a nurturing, caring atmosphere. Individuality is recognized and used as a foundation on which to encourage children to reach their maximum potential.

The ELCs are fee-based licensed child care programs within the Community Programs department and provide care for children of regular full-time or regular part-time CFISD employees. Children may enroll from ages 6 weeks until they are eligible for kindergarten.

HOURS, LOCATIONS & CONTACT INFORMATION

PROGRAM HOURS

6:00 AM - 5:30 PM

6:00 AM - 4:30 PM ON DESIGNATED TEACHER WORKDAYS

ELC LOCATIONS AND INFORMATION

ELC 1

Director: Jennifer Carlton
11711 Falcon Road
Houston, Texas 77064

PHONE NUMBER

281-517-2824

LUNCH

Lunch provided
Monday-Thursday

ELC 2

Director: Gloria Bivens
13935 Smokey Trail Dr.
Houston, Texas 77041

PHONE NUMBER

713-849-8222

LUNCH

Lunch provided
Monday-Thursday

ELC ANDRE'

Director: Erica Ainsworth
8111 Fry Rd.
Cypress TX 77433

PHONE NUMBER

281-807-8028

LUNCH

Children bring lunch

ELC BARKER

Director: Kim LaBarbera
17522-B, Liner Lane
Houston, Texas 77095

PHONE NUMBER

281-856-1072

LUNCH

Children bring lunch

ELC TELGE

Director: Charity Sutherland
11208 Telge Road
Cypress, Texas 77429

PHONE NUMBER

281-897-4592

LUNCH

Children bring lunch

All children enrolled at the portable building centers must bring their lunch daily, as the portables are not equipped with a full kitchen. (See the Meals & Snacks section for further information)



2024-2025 ELC PROGRAM DAYS

The ELCs are aligned with the Cypress-Fairbanks ISD calendar and are open on most CFISD teacher workdays. Please see the list below of early release (4:30 pm) and closed dates for the ELCs.

November 4, 2024

ELCs Closed

November 5, 2024

Early Release (4:30 p.m.)

January 6, 2025

ELCs Closed

April 21, 2025

Early Release (4:30 p.m.)



JULY 2024

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

AUGUST 2024

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SEPTEMBER 2024

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OCTOBER 2024

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NOVEMBER 2024

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DECEMBER 2024

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JANUARY 2025

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FEBRUARY 2025

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MARCH 2025

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APRIL 2025

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MAY 2025

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JUNE 2025

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22	23	24	25	26	27	28
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- ELC PROGRAM DAYS (190)
- CFISD TEACHER WORK DAY
- ELECTION DAY (CLOSED)

- STUDENT & STAFF HOLIDAYS (CLOSED)
- ELC STAFF DEVELOPMENT/CLOSED (7)

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

All information in the online registration system, in addition to the Parent Handbook, is to be read and completed by parents. Registration and supply fees are due at the time of registration. Children may not attend until the registration process is complete and all registration information is reviewed by the center director.

The following documents must be received to complete the registration process:

1. a copy of the child's birth certificate
2. a copy of the child's current immunization records
3. a physician's statement of health
4. food allergy emergency plan, if the child has a diagnosed food allergy

Documents should be uploaded while completing the online registration or may be emailed to earlylearningcenter@cfisd.net.

The Community Programs Department is located on the second floor of the Mark Henry Administration Building.

Community Programs

Mark Henry Administration Building
11440 Matzke Rd.
Cypress, TX 77429
281-807-8900

Hours:

7:30 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. (Mon-Thurs)
7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m. (Fri)

TUITION & FEES SUMMARY

Registration Fee	\$50
Supply Fee	\$50

MONTHLY TUITION RATES

ELC 1 & ELC 2

Infant	\$810
Toddler	\$770
2-Year Old	\$750
3-Year Old	\$730
4-Year Old	\$710

Andre', Barker & Telge

Infant	\$790
Toddler	\$750
2-Year Old	\$730
3-Year Old	\$710
4-Year Old	\$695

Other Fees

Late Payment Fee	\$30
Return Payment Fee	\$35
Late Checkout Fee	\$2.50/MIN
Access Card Replacement	\$10
Processing Fee (E-Check)	\$1
Processing Fee (Credit Card)	\$2.50



TUITION, FEES & PAYMENTS

Invoices for tuition are generated on the 20th of the month previous to the current month of service. All tuition invoices are due by the 15th of each month of service. If tuition is not received in full by the 15th, the account will be considered delinquent and subject to additional fees and suspension. On the 18th of each month of service, a late fee of \$30.00 will be assessed to all delinquent accounts, and accounts will be suspended. While accounts are in suspension, the child will be unable to attend the program until payment has been made for the outstanding balance on the account. On the last day of the month, all suspended accounts will be automatically withdrawn from the program. Regardless of a child's attendance in the program, tuition will not be prorated or refunded.

Forms of payment accepted are credit card, ACH draft, money order, or cashier's check. Money orders and cashier's check payments must be made to Community Programs and delivered during regular business hours. If any payment is returned, the parent will be responsible for a returned payment fee of \$35.

A late pickup fee will be assessed at \$2.00 per minute per child, beginning at 5:31 p.m. Continued or excessive late pickups may result in removal from the ELC program.

A two-week notice in writing via email must be sent to earlylearningcenter@cfisd.net and to the center director to withdraw your child from the ELC program. Parents are responsible for tuition during those two weeks, regardless of whether or not the child attends.

Questions regarding tuition and registration fees should be directed to the Community Programs department. If you have questions about a specific ELC location, please reach out to the director of each center.

EMERGENCY CLOSURES

All ELCs will be closed anytime CFISD is closed due to an emergency or inclement weather. The centers will also follow all CFISD weather-related delayed openings and early closures. We will be delayed or close early for the same amount of time as the district. For example, if the district is delayed two hours, the centers will open at 8:00 a.m. instead of 6:00 a.m. In the event of unexpected closure, tuition for the closure days is non-refundable and non-transferable.



Gang-Free Zone

A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang-related activity is subject to increased penalties under Texas law. The gang-free zone is anywhere within 1000 feet of our child care center. Any gang-related or organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of the center violates this law and is subject to increased penalties under state law.

Health, Illness, and Exclusion Policy

Parents are the best judge of their child's health, and we trust parents will not bring a sick child to the center. However, if a child is sick, in the opinion of the director or administrator, parents will be contacted to pick up the child. **Children must be picked up within one hour of being contacted by the center.** We recommend each family has a designated person who has agreed to assist in picking up children if the parent cannot take off from work or pick up the child within that time.

The following criteria will be considered in determining if a child will be sent home or if they should be kept at home:

1. The child has any of the following:
 - a. An oral temperature of 100 degrees or 99 degrees underarm, per instructions on the thermometer, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - b. Signs and symptoms of possible severe illness such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, a rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill
 - c. Inflammation of the eyes and/or discharge from the eyes (conjunctivitis)
 - d. A health-care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease, and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.
2. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in child-care center activities, including outdoor play. If a child cannot attend the regular outdoor play, he/she is not well enough to come to school that day.
3. The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff members can provide without compromising the other children's health, safety, and supervision. The ELCs are not licensed to provide Get-Well Care.

Uncontrolled diarrhea is defined as:

1. A diapered child's stool is:
 - i. Not contained in the diaper and/or
 - ii. Exceeds two or more stools above the normal for that child.
2. A toilet-trained child:
 - i. Has two or more abnormally loose stools and/or
 - ii. The diarrhea is causing soiled pants and clothing



Health Checks

We closely monitor children for changes in behavior or appearance that may indicate a change in a child's health. The sooner concerns or symptoms are identified, the sooner his or her health needs can be addressed. Early identification can also reduce the spread of illness or disease. Health checks will be administered daily. A visual or physical assessment of each child will be conducted by an ELC staff member each morning to identify potential concerns. Parents must sign documentation of the concerns when they are identified. (Example: a bruise on the forearm will be documented and initialed, showing the child came into the center with the bruise).

Absence and Exclusion

A parent must notify the center if a child is absent. Parents should notify the center director via email, including the illness's nature, mainly if it is a communicable disease and the anticipated return date.

Communicable Disease

It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to notify the center as soon as his/her child has been diagnosed by a health care professional with a communicable disease, such as conjunctivitis (pink eye), ringworm, head lice, measles, mumps, chicken pox, etc. The centers must report all communicable diseases deemed reportable by the Department of State Health Services to Child Care Licensing. Written notice must also be provided to the parents of all children in the classroom/group after becoming aware of the diagnosed communicable disease. We are required to keep the identity of the child(ren) confidential and will not be allowed to discuss or provide this information.

A sick child unable to participate in center activities in a meaningful way should be kept home to rest and recover until symptoms resolve. Keeping a sick child home also protects other children, staff, and visiting community members from contracting an illness that can be spread from person to person. Please keep in mind the following guidelines for attendance.

- COVID-19: Refer to the CFISD LEAD Safely plan for students who are experiencing symptoms, have tested positive, or have been in close contact with an individual who tested positive.
- Fever: A child must remain home with a fever equal to or $> 100^{\circ}$ F and may only return after he/she has been fever-free for 24 hours without fever-reducing medicine such as Tylenol or Motrin.
- Diarrhea/Vomiting: A child with diarrhea and/or vomiting must stay at home and may return to school only after being symptom-free for 24 hours.
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye): Following a diagnosis of pink eye, a child may return to school 24 hours after the first dose of prescribed medication has been administered.



Communicable Disease (Continued)

- Rashes: Common infectious diseases with rashes are most contagious in the early stages. A child with a suspicious rash must stay at home and may return to school after a healthcare provider has made a diagnosis and authorized the child's return to school in writing or symptoms have resolved entirely.
- Head lice (pediculosis): Children with active live lice may attend an ELC after treatment has eliminated all live lice. Head lice are common in school-aged children, so parents should routinely monitor children for live lice and teach the avoidance of behaviors that spread lice. Head lice do not jump or fly and are most commonly contracted by head-to-head touch.

If you take your child to a healthcare provider for an evaluation of illness or injury, please be sure to request a written letter stating when your child may return to school and any accommodations required upon his/her return.

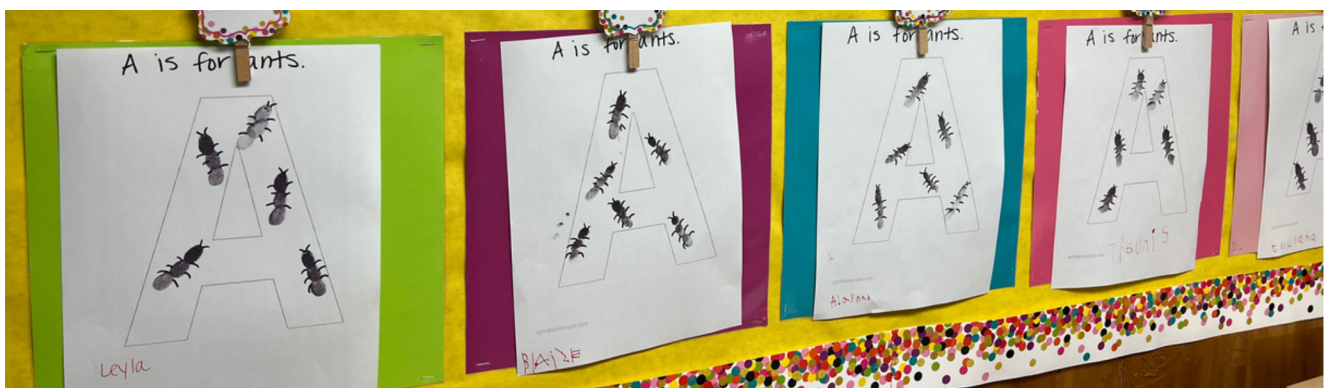
A healthy ELC community requires parents and staff to partner with each other. To prevent/minimize local outbreaks of contagious disease, parents must keep children with an illness that can be spread from person to person at home. ELC staff will exclude children with symptoms of a communicable illness from attending.

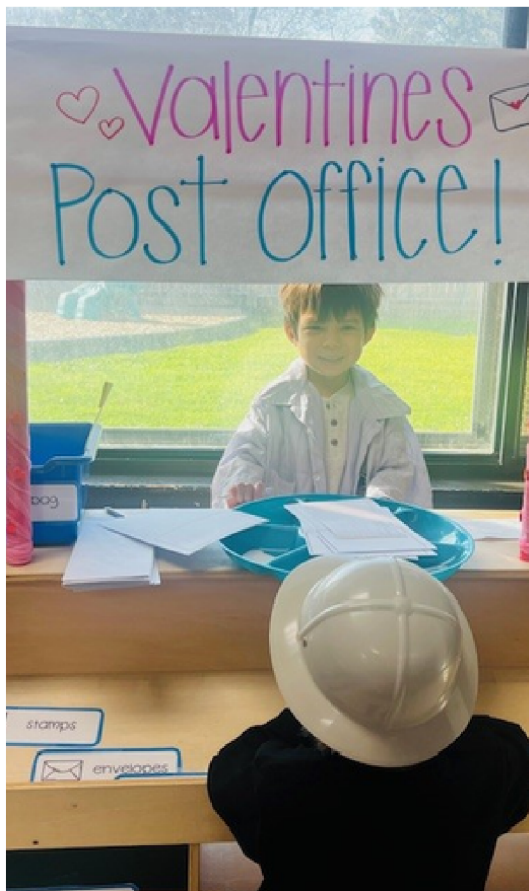
If a health concern persists, the director may request a doctor's note before returning to the center.

Written release from a physician must be presented before a child is allowed return after a contagious disease, extended illness, or surgery. The child must be able to fully participate in the child care center's daily scheduled activities upon return.

Medication

The ELCs do not maintain a school nurse or other health care professional but will provide the courtesy of medication administration. ELC staff members are trained in administering medication, First Aid/CPR, and defibrillator use. To ensure the health and safety of your child, all prescription and non-prescription medications (excluding topical ointment, insect repellent, or sunscreen) will only be administered by the center director or administrator. Parents must complete the center's medication authorization form for all prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications to be administered while their child is in care.





Medication will only be administered according to the following guidelines:

1. Medication will only be administered at 11:30 am and 3:30 pm. Exceptions will only be made for medical emergencies and lifesaving medications such as Asthma Breathing machines, Asthma Inhalers, and Epinephrine pens. We would recommend that you adjust the times you administer your medicine at home to fit into the center's schedule. For example, if the medication must be administered every 4 hours, administer the morning dose at 7:30 am. Parents are also welcome to come and administer medication to their child if their child requires medication to be administered outside our administration times.
2. All medication must be given to the center director to be locked in the center's medicine cabinet or secure location. The ELCs have a zero-tolerance policy regarding children possessing medication at any time (prescription or non-prescription) while attending the center.
3. All medications must be in their original container and include the prescribing physician's name and phone number.
4. All medication must be labeled with the child's full name and the date brought to the center.
5. Medication will not be administered to regulate fever. All medications will only be given according to the label/prescription directions and recommended dosages. Written documents from the prescribing physician must be provided for dispensing directions not recommended on the label.
6. The medication will only be administered to the child for whom it is intended or prescribed. Please be aware that the ELCs do not have unassigned epinephrine pens.
7. The medication will not be administered after its expiration date or the period noted on the prescription.
8. Parents must provide directions for administering and a physician's signature on a prescription form or letterhead stationery for any sample medicine dispensed by the physicians. The medication will not be administered in food or drink.

Topical Ointments

Before ELC staff can administer any non-prescription topical ointments (e.g., diaper cream, Orajel) to a child, the ELCs require written authorization signed by the parent/guardian. The parent/guardian should provide a completed Authorization for Administration of Medication form specifying the dosage and the time(s) the ointment should be administered, with any special instructions noted. The ointment must be labeled with the child's full name. Note: A doctor's signature is required if the topical ointment is not designated for children on the label.

Aerosol spray of any type may not be used for children while in the care of the ELCs.

Immunizations

Each Child enrolled or admitted to the early learning centers must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS). All immunizations required for the child's age must be completed by admission unless the child is exempt. We are required to maintain current immunization records for each child in our care. The parent is responsible for providing their child's ELC with a current shot record each time their child receives an immunization or when requested by the center. Since the risk of vaccine-preventable disease is increased in group settings, children who fall behind or are not current on their immunizations will not be allowed to attend the ELC until they receive their required immunization.

Exclusions from compliance are allowable individually for medical reasons and reasons of conscience, including religious belief. Parents must meet the criteria specified by DSHS and provide their Child's center with an original affidavit from DSHS to meet exemption requirements.

TB Tests

Requirements for tuberculosis screening and testing vary across the state. TB testing is not required at this time. If our regional Texas Department of State Health Services requires TB testing in the future, we must have documentation to indicate that each Child in care is free of active tuberculosis.

Vision and Hearing Screenings

Texas Department of State Health Services requires all children enrolled in licensed child care centers who are four years of age by September 1 of each year to be screened or have a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems. This examination must take place within 120 days of admission. Our ELCs do not maintain a school nurse or other health care professional on staff; therefore, all children meeting these requirements must provide documentation of screening/examination via the Vision Screening Form -60 from DSHA or a similar form, provided it includes at least the Child's name, Type of Screening, Date of the Screening, Screener and Screening Results to their center.

Ensuring Child Safety: Accidents and Injuries Protocol

At the Early Learning Centers (ELCs), the safety of your child continues to be our foremost concern. We have established comprehensive procedures and practices to guarantee a secure environment for the children under our care. In the event of an accident or injury, we follow a structured approach:

For Minor Accidents or Injuries:

(e.g., minor cuts, scratches, or bites from other children requiring first-aid treatment)

1. The child will be promptly assessed and attended to by a trained staff member.
2. First aid will be administered by a qualified staff member.
3. The supervising caregiver/teacher will complete an Ouch Report, documenting the incident.
4. Details of the incident will be communicated to the parent during the child's pickup.
5. A copy of the Ouch Report will be securely filed in the child's record for future reference.

For Critical Illness or Severe Injuries Requiring Immediate Medical Attention:

1. A staff member will perform an immediate assessment of the child.
2. First aid treatment or CPR will be administered if deemed necessary.
3. If the injury is of a nature that poses a substantial risk of death, disfigurement, bodily injury, or any observable impairment to the child's growth, development, or functioning, emergency services will be promptly notified.
4. Parents or designated emergency contacts will be immediately informed.

In cases where the injury is effectively managed with first aid, parents will be consulted to determine whether they wish to have emergency services contacted.

If deemed necessary, and in consultation with parents, the child will be transported to the nearest emergency room or clinic via an emergency vehicle.

Please note:

Our staff members will assess each situation to determine the appropriate course of action.

Please inform your child's center of any changes in your contact information or emergency contacts.

Accident and Injury Reports

Parents will be asked to complete emergency information at the time of enrollment. If a child sustains an injury (e.g., scraped knee), an accident/incident report will be completed describing the injury, first aid given, and action taken by the staff member to prevent further injury. A copy of the accident/injury report will be provided to the parent/guardian.





STAFFING

Each ELC is staffed with a Director that meets Texas Child Care Licensing Director qualifications. The center director supervises the center's daily operations, the staff, and the curriculum.

All ELC staff members are employees of CFISD and meet CFISD and Texas Child Care Licensing qualifications. Each ELC classroom is staffed with a lead instructor and/or a child care aide based upon the ratio requirements of the children in care. The ELCs may also be staffed with part-time staff members who assist with the opening/closing of the center, staff lunch breaks, provide classroom support, and maintain the center's cleanliness.

The ELCs strive to provide consistency in each classroom and try to avoid staffing changes but do reserve the right to make changes at any time to accommodate the program needs and/or adjust to staff changes.

CHILD ABUSE

All ELC staff members are trained annually in recognizing, preventing, and reporting child abuse, neglect, and abusive head trauma. All ELC staff members follow the Texas Education Code and are legally required to report any suspected cases of abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services. The call is typically made immediately but must be made no later than 48 hours after the staff member first suspects the incident. For more information on obtaining assistance, intervention, and procedures for reporting suspected child abuse, please visit www.tea.texas.gov or www.dfps.state.tx.us/Prevention_and_Early_Intervention/. You may also contact the Texas abuse hotline at 1-800-252-5400.



DAILY OPERATION AND ACTIVITIES

Curriculum

Our goal is to provide your child(ren) with a nurturing, safe, and clean environment that encourages them to grow as unique individuals. Below is an overview of the ELC curriculum.

Frog Street Infant is designed around the latest early brain research to foster essential growth and build a strong learning foundation.

Frog Street Toddler/Two's is developed according to the latest early brain research, and it is designed to foster essential growth, meet the needs of all learners, and embrace the joy of learning each day.

Frog Street Threes meets the specific needs of three-year-olds in crucial areas of development:

1. **Social Bridge**
 - a. Interactive play
 - b. Sharing
 - c. Caring
 - d. Following through on commitments
2. **Literacy Development**
 - a. Engaging read-alouds
 - b. Vocabulary development
 - c. Formal introduction to the alphabet
 - d. Phonological awareness
 - e. Writing and fine motor skills
3. **Foundational Math**
 - a. Attributes
 - b. Classification
 - c. Patterns
 - d. One-to-one correspondence
 - e. Order
 - f. Numeration
 - g. STEAM
 - h. Logical reasoning & problem-solving

CFISD Pre-K Curriculum for Fours

The ELC Fours curriculum is aligned with the CFISD Pre-K curriculum and supports effective teaching practices and opportunities for child discovery through play. Our fours program follows the State Guidelines, providing a challenging but achievable curriculum that actively engages children in thinking, reasoning, and communicating. Children respond to the challenge and acquire important skills and concepts with teacher direction and guidance. Our goal is to provide a seamless transition into kindergarten.

While all ELCs implement the same curriculum, the daily schedules and activities will vary from center to center. We encourage each parent to view the daily schedules at their child's center and classroom to be familiar with the center's procedures. Feel free to speak with your center director if you have questions regarding the curriculum and schedule.

Children with Special Needs

While the ELCs do not provide special education services, staff members at the center work closely with parents to meet the needs of children in our care. If requested accommodations for a child create an undue burden or fundamentally alter the program, the ELC may not be suitable for child care.

If a parent believes their child requires special education services, they may contact the Special Education Department at 281-897-6400 to learn more about eligibility requirements and the referral process.

Classroom Assignment and Transitions

Children are assigned to their classrooms by age and developmental level:

- Infants and Toddlers will be assigned to classrooms based on their age, developmental level, and availability in each classroom. All children in the toddler room must be at least 12 months old, able to walk without assistance, and weaned from pacifiers and bottles.
- Children must be potty trained to move up to the 3-year-old classroom.
- Children ages Two to Four will be assigned to classrooms based on their age on September 1st of the current school year. However, adjustments may be made by the director based on the needs of the children and classroom ratios.
- Children eligible to enter kindergarten per state guidelines (5 years old by September 1st) are encouraged to enroll in the elementary school they are zoned to. Parents who wish to have their child "held back" for personal reasons must talk to the center director.



Meals and Snacks

Breakfast is provided at all ELC locations between 6:00-8:00 am. Children should arrive at the center by 7:45 am to receive breakfast. This will give them adequate time to eat breakfast before the morning activities begin at 8:00 am. Children arriving after 7:45 am can eat during morning snack time.

Morning and afternoon snacks are served at all locations. We serve nutritious snacks with at least one serving from the milk, fruit, vegetable, or grain group.

Lunches are provided at ELC 1 and ELC 2, Monday - Thursday. Children must bring their own lunch on Fridays. Children attending the portable ELC locations (Andre', Barker, & Telge) must bring their lunches daily as the portable buildings are not equipped with full-service kitchens. Food items that require heating or refrigeration are not permitted. Food items that need to remain warm may be stored in a thermos or aluminum foil to keep items warm while stored in lunch boxes. Ice packs may be used in lunch bags/boxes to keep items cool. To ensure the safety of the children in our care, glass bottles/containers are not permitted at any ELC location.

Lunch and snack menus are posted at each center. Parents are welcome to review the menu and send their child an alternative breakfast/lunch/snack any day. No discounts will be given to anyone who provides alternative meals for their child/children. Parents choosing to provide meals or snacks from home are responsible for the nutritional value and for meeting the daily food needs of their child/children.



*If a child at one of the portable locations does not bring their lunch, parents will be contacted to bring a lunch. If the parents cannot be reached or bring a lunch, staff members will make special arrangements to obtain lunch for the child. The child's account will then be charged **\$6.00 per lunch**.

Special Dietary Needs

Please speak with your center's director if your child has special dietary needs to discuss whether this need may be accommodated within the center's regular routines and schedule.

Food Allergies

All ELCs are peanut-free facilities. We do not serve items that contain any peanuts ingredients. Please do not send your child to school with any products that contain nuts, such as peanut butter, peanuts, or peanut products.

We recognize that food allergies are common among infants and young children. Food allergies differ from special dietary needs as food allergies are severe and life-threatening. All children with a food allergy diagnosed by a healthcare professional must have an individualized emergency plan. The emergency plan must include a list of food the child is allergic to, possible symptoms if exposed to the food on the list, and the steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction. Please note that the ELCs do not have unassigned epinephrine pens. We must also post a list of all children with food allergies that require an emergency plan in each room where the child may spend time and in the food prep areas. All ELC employees who prepare or serve food will be made aware of each child's food allergy and trained to handle food-related medical emergencies. Please see your center director for the Emergency Allergy Form if your child has a diagnosed food allergy. This form must be prepared and signed by a healthcare professional.

School Clothes

Each day, children should wear comfortable, seasonable, and manageable clothing. Staff members will do their best to ensure clothing is protected during lessons. Still, please remember that we are an early learning center with many opportunities to participate in outdoor play and creative and messy lessons.

- Children must wear shoes at all times while at the center.
- Closed-toed shoes/tennis shoes are recommended for safety while on the playground. (Please, no flip-flops or western boots, except on Western dress-up days)
- Please provide simple clothing that is free from complicated fasteners.
- Please label all clothing, including coats and jackets, with your child's first name and last initial.
- Pajamas are not allowed except on Pajama Days.
- Shorts should be worn under any skirt or dress.
- Parents must provide at least two complete clothing changes for each child, including underwear and socks. Parents must remember to rotate the clothing out as the seasons change and their child grows.

Personal Items

Children should leave personal belongings at home. Each child is assigned a "cubby" labeled with their name to keep their belongings. Changes in clothes, jackets, and blankets will be held in the cubby area. Small stuffed animals are allowed for children 13 months and above during nap time. All personal belongings should be labeled with the child's first name and Last Name Initial.

Due to limited storage space at the centers, ELCs will not store diaper bags, backpacks, backpacks, or car seats.

Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activity

Research has shown that learning in young children results from the interaction between the child's thoughts and experiences with materials, ideas, and people. The quality of these interactions is enhanced by providing structure and various opportunities to practice and explore new skills.

Play is an essential part of childhood. It's exciting to see children in their natural environment – exploring their surroundings, curious about what's around them, and finding joy in seeing new things.

The Benefits of Indoor/Outdoor Play

- Improves physical development
- Enhances social skills
- Promotes collaboration
- Increases imagination
- Supports STEM skills
- Provides opportunities for hands-on learning
- Reduces stress levels
- Promotes better sleep

"Playing outdoors has benefits for both young children and educators. It's a refreshing pause in the day's schedule—time to look, listen, explore, observe, move, and let loose. Time spent outside can lead to better physical and mental health, improved sleep, and cognitive, social, and emotional gains for young children.

The ELCs provide a balance of active and quiet play (structured and unstructured) that incorporates group and individual activities, both indoors and outdoors. These activities include gross motor, music and movement, yoga, brain breaks, active calming, breathing techniques, dramatic play, sensory play, and self-selected play. Children engage in these activities using various materials, including existing playground structures, trikes, balls, parachutes, etc.

Please see your center director for a detailed list of activities.

Recommended Clothing and Footwear

Outfits and shoes that allow children to participate freely and safely in all physical activities, such as soft, stretchy, comfortable fabrics and light, closed-toe shoes.





Recess/Outdoor Play Guidelines

Child Care Licensing guidelines require that all children receive morning and afternoon opportunities for outdoor play totaling 90 minutes. All children, including infants, will be provided outdoor time during the day.

The length of outdoor time will be based on the weather/ozone conditions for the area. Outdoor times will vary from fifteen to thirty minutes, depending upon the conditions. We may also adjust the times the children go outside to a later time during the cooler months or earlier during the warmer months.

ELC staff will also utilize the following guidelines: Children are to remain inside if the wind chill/temperature is below 45° F. Children will participate in outside activities if the wind chill/temperature is at or above 45° and outside conditions are sunny. Please ensure your child is wearing warm clothing or has a coat in their cubby, as we cannot leave children inside while their class is participating in outdoor time or when we practice our emergency drills.

If the heat index/temperature is at or above 95° F, children will be taken outside for shorter periods at the director's discretion. Water will be provided before and after going out. Parents are encouraged to apply sunscreen lotion at home and send hats. Only insect-repellent wipes and insect-repellent pump sprays will be permitted.

ELC Directors and their designees will use their knowledge of early childhood practices and personal judgment when determining outdoor times and durations. If outdoor play is not possible due to weather, children will participate in indoor physical activities such as yoga, stretching, dancing, or other activities promoting gross motor skills.



Discipline and Guidance

We strive for a classroom setting that allows children to explore their environment through consistent, age-appropriate positive reinforcement. Our goal is to equip each child with the social-emotional and communication skills to manage themselves, resolve conflict and develop healthy behavior. Our guidance techniques will be consistent for each child and appropriate for that child's individual level of understanding. The techniques will be directed toward teaching each child appropriate behavior and self-control. We will also focus on building self-esteem by using positive praise and encouragement of appropriate behavior. We will use redirection, model appropriate behavior, and remind the children of behavior expectations daily using clear, positive statements.

Behavior Concerns

We will make every effort to work with the parents of children who experience behavioral difficulties while in our care. We are here to serve and protect all of our children. Children displaying disruptive or inappropriate behavior that significantly impacts the education or well-being of another child or staff member will require collaboration between the center staff and parents, and the following steps will be taken.

Initial Conference

The director will meet with the child's parent(s) in person or via phone to discuss the concern. The parents and center staff will collaborate to establish goals and create a plan for student success.

Follow-up Conference

If the targeted behavior continues after the plan has been implemented, the parent and director will hold a follow-up meeting. Another attempt will be made to outline new approaches to the concern and discuss the next steps if progress is not apparent.

Suspension

When the previous attempts have been followed and no progress has been made toward improving the behavior, the child may be suspended from the program for one to three days.

Severe Disruptive Behavior

If a child exhibits aggressive behaviors that involve harming themselves, other children, or ELC staff members, the parent will be called to remove the child from the center for the remainder of the day. The parent must come within one hour of being called to pick up the child. If the parent cannot pick up the child, they must make other arrangements for the child to be picked up within that hour. Failure to pick up the child will result in the child being suspended for the next school day or more.

Biting Policy

Biting is common for young children, particularly during the toddler period. We understand the issue of biting is uncomfortable and difficult, but children who bite are experiencing a short-term phase in child development. During infancy, children learn through their senses, exploring the world through tasting, touching, smelling, seeing, and hearing. For toddlers, biting is an impulsive way of communicating their feelings and desires. However, biting can cause more damage than hitting because young children's jaw muscles are more powerful than their arm muscles. We strive to provide an environment that is developmentally appropriate and supervise all children while they are working and playing. If biting occurs, staff will pay close attention to why a child is biting (teething, frustration, seeking attention, tiredness, etc.) and work with the parents through this phase.

When Biting Occurs:

- For the child that is bitten:
 1. The child will be assessed by an ELC staff member, and First Aid will be administered.
 2. If the skin is broken, the bite area will be cleaned and covered with a bandage.
 3. The biting will be documented on the child's daily sheet or on an "Ouch Report," and parents will be notified at pick up.
- For the biter:
 1. The teacher will remove the child from the area and appropriately redirect him or her.
 2. The teacher will conduct mini-lessons on appropriate social behaviors.
 3. The incident will be documented on that child's daily sheet or an incident report, and a copy will be placed in the child's file.
 4. Parents will be notified of the incident.

If Biting Continues:

1. The biter will be shadowed or kept close to a staff member in an attempt to prevent further biting incidents.
2. The biter will be observed by an ELC staff member to determine the cause of the biting (teething, communication, frustration, etc.)
3. The director will meet with the parents to discuss observations and solutions.
4. The child will be praised for demonstrating appropriate behaviors.

If Biting Becomes Excessive:

- Step #1 - If a child bites 3 or more times in a one-week period in which the skin of another child or ELC staff member is broken, bruised, or left with teeth marks, a conference will be required with the child's parents to discuss the child's behavior and how the behavior may be modified.
- Step #2 - If the child bites 3 or more times within one week in which the skin of another child or ELC staff member is broken, bruised, or left with teeth marks, the child may be suspended for up to 2 school days.
- Step #3 - If a child bites 3 or more times in a one-week period in which the skin of another child or ELC staff member is broken, bruised, or left with teeth marks, the parents will be asked to make other child care arrangements for their child.
- If a child bites twice within 1 school day, the child must be picked up from the center for the remainder of the day.
- If a child bites twice within a 4-hour period, the child will be suspended for the next day.
- Children enrolled in the Three or Four-year-old classes who bite another child or ELC staff member, leaving teeth marks, broken skin, or a bruise may be required to be picked up from the center for the remainder of the day.

Infant Care

Parents must provide the following daily and when requested:

- Bottles/Formula
- Change of Clothing
- Baby Wipes
- Baby Food
- Pacifier (must be on a clip)
- Bibs
- Disposable Diapers (No cloth diapers)
- Bottle Bags only (No diaper bags or backpacks)

Pertinent information about your child must be filled out on our daily sheet. Infant parents must provide an updated feeding schedule once a month.

- **All items must be labeled with the child's first name and last name initial:** (i.e., clothing, pacifier, food, bottles, bottle caps, blankets, diapers, etc.) Please note: that glass bottles are not permitted in the facility for safety reasons.
- Parents may provide breast milk for their children. You may use our infant room facilities if you wish to breastfeed your child.

Due to health reasons, children are not permitted to bring sippy cups to the programs or store used sippy cups in their cubbies or refrigerators. Please keep these types of items at home. If a child has a special dietary need, the parent must visit with the center director to discuss reasonable accommodations and ensure the accommodations can be met within the center's regular routines.

Feeding

Breast milk is the best source of infant nutrition; therefore, breastfeeding will be allowed and encouraged for new parents. Parents are welcome to breastfeed their child in the infant classroom in the comfort of the rocker. Our ELC facilities do not have private areas or nursing rooms.

All bottles must be premade. All bottles must be labeled with the infant's **first name and last initial**, and date on the milk. We will warm the bottle with water and feed the child as instructed.

Once a child eats table food, lunch will be provided at ELC 1 and ELC 2, except on Fridays. Parents must provide lunch for children enrolled at the portable building locations. Parents are responsible for ensuring that all meals meet the required nutritional standards for their children. Please see the Meals and Snacks section for more information.

An updated Infant Information Sheet will be required for all infants 0-17 months. The sheet must be updated at least every 30 days or whenever changes occur.



Infant Safe Sleep

Infants 12 months or younger are required to sleep on their backs. If the infant can roll over on their own, they can choose a sleeping position that is comfortable for them. Infants may not have blankets, toys, bedding, or any loose items in the crib. Infants cannot sleep in restrictive devices, such as high chairs, bouncers, swings, car seats, etc.

Safe Sleep Policy

ELC staff will follow all Texas Child Care Licensing rules relating to Basic Requirements for Infants relating to sleep requirements and restrictions, sleep positioning, crib requirements, and restrictions, including mattresses, bedding, blankets, toys, and restrictive devices. This includes but is not limited to the following:

- All infants sleep on their backs in a crib on a firm mattress.
- For infants younger than 12 months of age, cribs will be bare except for the tight-fitting sheet.
- No soft or loose bedding, such as blankets or quilts, stuffed animals, bumper pads, pillows, etc., will be allowed.
- Infants will be placed in sleep sacks if needed; swaddling is not allowed.
- Infants will be allowed a pacifier, but it cannot be attached to a stuffed animal or a string attached to clothing.
- If the infant falls asleep in a restrictive device other than a bouncer/swing, the infant will immediately be moved to a crib.

Infants will have the opportunity for tummy time several times per day.

More information on safe sleep practices can be found at:

<http://www.healthychildren.org/English/ages-stages/baby/sleep/Pages/A-Parents-Guide-to-Safe-Sleep.aspx>

Toddler and Two's Care

Parents must provide the following daily and when requested:

- A change of clothing, including socks (at least 2 sets)
- Baby Wipes
- Disposable diapers or pull-ups (no cloth diapers)

Please label all items with your child's first name and last initial.

The center will provide cots and sippy cups. No sippy cups may be brought from home to ensure the health and safety of all children in our care.



Self-Toileting Skills/Potty Training

We aim to have children potty trained when they enter the Three-year-old classroom. The ELCs begin self-toileting skills or “potty training” in the Two-year-old classroom. Our staff is trained to be sensitive to the needs of our children as they learn these skills. If you are interested in potty training, please discuss it with your child’s teacher or the center director so she may look for signs of readiness. Once teachers and parents begin working together during this important developmental milestone, you will receive a daily summary informing you of your child’s progress.

All children must be potty trained before entering the three-year-old classroom.

Nap Time

Child Care Regulation guidelines require supervised rest or sleep after the noon meal. This usually takes place between 12:00-2:00 p.m. All children 12 months and older will be provided with a cot during this time. Children can bring a soft pillow and blanket/combination set. The pillow/blanket combination set must be able to fold in half and fit within the cot space. For examples of appropriate sets, please see the director at your center.

- Cot sizes are:
 - Toddlers and 2’s - 42 inches x 21 inches.
 - 3’s and Pre-K - 52 inches x 21 inches.

Parents must label all items sent with their child, as we want to ensure they are kept separate. If a child is not sleepy or is “growing out” of a nap, we must have them rest for at least one hour. After this initial hour, if the child is not sleeping, he/she will be given an alternative quiet activity. The children must remain on their cots even if they are not sleeping. We ask that parents talk with their children about this needed rest time and how rest is important for their growing bodies.

Photographs

Photographs of the children participating in activities and events will be taken throughout the year. These photographs may be utilized for end-of-the-year events/items and posted on the center’s Google Classroom and the district’s social media accounts. The photographs will be the property of CFISD and the ELCs. If a parent does not wish for their child to be photographed, they may indicate this preference during registration.



Birthdays/Holidays/Celebrations

Birthdays are special times for our children, and we want to help make them memorable. We are happy to replace one of our snack times with birthday items (i.e., cupcakes) and have a “mini-celebration” to make the day extra special. Please inform the instructor in advance if you want to send a treat and if you plan to be present.

All treats parents provide must be store-bought, and any food prepared at home will not be served to other children.

To be fair to all involved, if parents send favors or invitations for children at the center, they should be provided for each child in the class. Staff members can distribute any favors or invitations provided by parents.

Throughout the year, we will have many celebrations. We encourage all our parents to participate as appropriate to support the events related to their child’s education. Instructors may place a sign-up list by the door to have parents send donated items for the event.

Animals

Pets are only permitted at the center if it is part of the specific planned activity with notice to all involved. Please do not bring pets to the center to visit or during drop-off/pick-up for health reasons and Child Care Regulation compliance.

Parent–Staff Relationship

Parents are encouraged to get to know the personnel working at their child’s center. We recognize that a positive relationship with the family is vital to the growth and development of the child. Our staff members serve as resources for child development and instructors for the children. We want parents to feel comfortable sharing any ideas or concerns with the ELC Director at any time. If you need to discuss your child’s progress or concerns at length, please schedule a meeting or conference with your child’s teacher and/or the center director. In addition, the staff members or director may ask to speak with you should concerns arise with your child participating in the program. If you have any questions regarding our parent handbook, please get in touch with the director of your child’s center or the Community Programs department.

Customer service is essential as we know you have a choice in child care centers. ELC staff members must maintain a professional “educator-to-parent” relationship with all families served by the centers. Staff members cannot provide parents with personal contact numbers or personal social media accounts. Parents may use the center’s phone number or email address to communicate with the center. Staff members cannot provide babysitting services to children from their center. Staff members may share information with those from other centers if a parent is seeking assistance.



Visitation

Parents can visit the program anytime during operating hours to observe their child, the building, premises, equipment, and program activities. Parents must sign in as a visitor before participating in center activities and events. It is not recommended for parents to linger in the classroom, as it may hinder the independence and growth of the child. All visitors are asked to refrain from correcting or disciplining any child within the center. This would include lunch visits and similar.

Volunteers

If a person wishes to volunteer at one of the Early Learning Centers, spend time regularly in the center, or assist with activities, they must complete the volunteer process. The process includes a volunteer application, a background check, and a brief orientation to the center with the director. Volunteers are not allowed to be responsible for a group of children and are never left alone with a child. They may provide extra support to the regular on-goings of the center.

Available for Review

- A copy of the Minimum Standards for Child Care Licensing may be accessed online via the DFPS website.
- The most recent Licensing Inspection Report is always posted at the center's entrance and is available on the DFPS website. Parents may contact the following as stated.

Child Care Licensing Contact Number: 713-940-3009

DFPS Child Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

DFPS website: www.dfps.state.tx.us

Parents will be notified in writing if there are any changes in guidelines or procedures throughout the year.

HEALTH AND SAFETY PROTOCOLS

The ELCs will continue to follow health and safety protocols outlined in the CFISD Lead Safety Plan, including but not limited to the following:

- Children and staff must self-screen daily before entering the center for symptoms of COVID-19 and should only report to work or school once symptoms resolve.
- Children at the center who show symptoms of COVID-19 will be evaluated by ELC staff to determine whether the child can remain in the program.
- High-touch surfaces will be disinfected with a hospital-grade/EPA-registered disinfectant.
- Children, staff, and parents will be reminded of good hygiene practices, including frequent handwashing, using hand sanitizer, and covering coughs and sneezes.
- Face masks are optional for all children and staff.

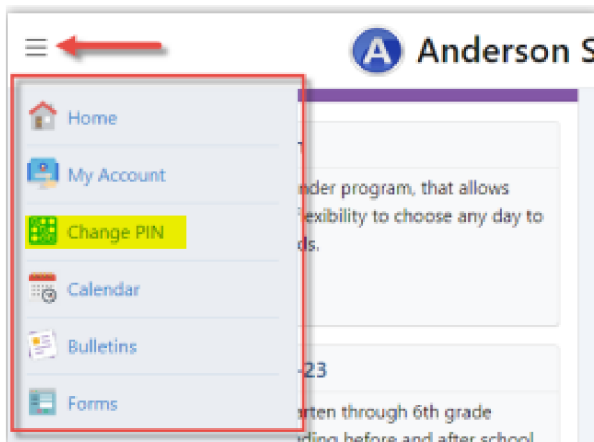


Release of Children - EZ Child Track

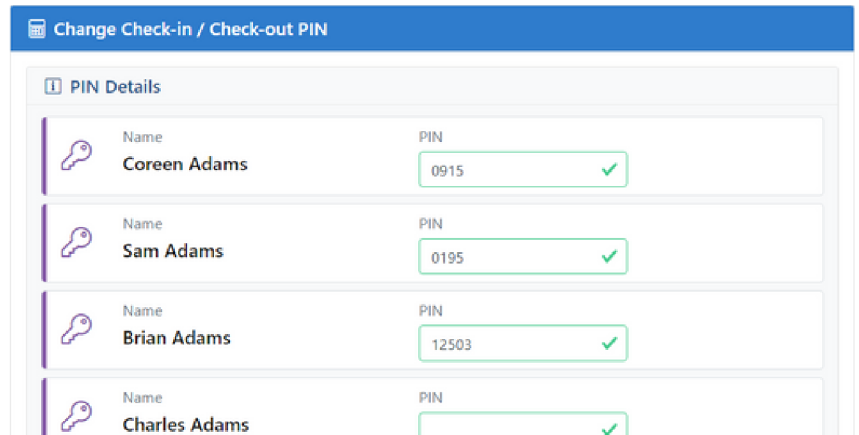
Parents/guardians must set up a pin for themselves and each person authorized to pick up their child to allow for a more secure check-in and check-out process. All pin codes must be unique to each person authorized to pick them up and cannot be the same as another user. We recommend using the last digits of the driver's license or the phone number of the person authorized to pick up. Please see the instructions below on how to set up the pin code.

PIN Code Directions

- Login to the EZChildtrack parent portal
- www.ezchildtrack.com/cfisdelc/parent
- Click the menu bar in top left corner
- Click "Change Pin"
- Type in the pin code for each person authorized to pick up and click to save



Parent Portal Menu



Release of Children - Legal Documents

In the absence of a court order to the contrary, a child will generally be released to either parent or legal guardian of the student unless parents/guardians provide conflicting directives to the center regarding the child's release. In the event there are conflicting directives from parents/guardians with equal rights and access to the student, the center will generally maintain the status quo of the child (i.e., send the child home the same way the student usually goes home each day) and allow the parties to seek legal intervention to resolve the conflict. If there is a custody order designating periods of possession for a child, the center must observe these possession periods in its release of the child. It will require parents/guardians to coordinate with one another outside the center and provide appropriate written authorization for any variation from the court-ordered possession periods.



Emergency Preparedness Plan

Each ELC has its unique plan to address the types of emergencies most likely to occur in our area. An emergency preparedness plan is designed to ensure the safety of children during an emergency by addressing staff responsibility and facility readiness concerning emergency evacuation, relocation, and sheltering/lock-down. The plan is specific and addresses the evacuation of the children and caregivers to a designated safe area in an emergency such as a fire or gas leak. The relocation of the children and caregivers to an established, alternate shelter in an emergency such as a flood or hurricane, and the sheltering and lock-down of children and caregivers within the center to temporarily protect them from situations such as a tornado, volatile person on the premises, or an endangering person in the area.

Please see your center director for more detailed information on your center's evacuation, relocation, and sheltering/lock-down plans. Each center will practice fire drills at least once every month and sheltering and lock-down drills at least four times a calendar year. All children and staff must participate in our emergency preparedness plan and exercises.

In an evacuation emergency, children may be relocated to the nearest transportation facility or elementary school. To ensure our children's and staff's safety, all children may be moved to the designated safe location before parental notice. All parents will be notified via School Messenger, Remind APP, email, or phone call. Please ensure we have your current contact information at all times or whenever a change occurs.

Cancellation/Dismissal Policy

We understand that some children may experience difficulty adapting to a classroom setting and rules for behavior. We will work closely with you and keep you informed of your child's early learning experience; however, if your child is unable to respond to our guidance techniques despite the efforts of staff and/or parents to stop the behavior, we reserve the right to terminate services from our CFISD Early Learning Centers at any time. We also reserve the right to dismiss your child from our program for the following reasons:

- Non-Payment of childcare or late fees and/or recurring late payments
- Failure to comply with the policies outlined in the parent handbook
- A parent or grandparent is no longer an employee of CFISD
- The ELC is not able to meet the needs of your child without fundamentally altering the program
- Frequent late pickups after 5:31 pm (3 or more)
- Physical and/or verbal aggression towards ELC staff or children by a parent or child

If dismissal from the program is warranted, parents will be responsible for all final payments through the end of the week in which such dismissal occurs.

Voluntary Cancellation

To withdraw a child from the program, a two-week written notice via email must be sent to earlylearningcenter@cfisd.net and the ELC director. Parents are responsible for the tuition for those two weeks, regardless of whether or not the child attends.

