



# Little Learners / Hive Time Parent Handbook



Revised Aug 2024

# Little Learners Preschool Big Lake Schools

## PHILOSOPHY AND GOALS

Little Learners provides a clean, safe, healthy environment where every child can develop emotionally, physically, intellectually and socially. The program encourages learning and growth through play. We believe that children grow at their own pace, and we support their development in ways that help them become confident in themselves as learners. It is our goal to create an environment and program where the child's natural desire to learn is stimulated through meaningful, appropriate and playful learning experiences; one that meets the needs of each child as an individual.

## STUDENT GOALS:

- Promoting a positive attitude toward learning.
- Building trust, security, and a positive self-esteem.
- Developing healthy social and emotional skills, including appreciation for people of different abilities and backgrounds.
- Promoting physical and emotional well-being.
- Building important early math and literacy knowledge.
- Encouraging creative thinking and problem solving.
- Respect toward self, others and the environment.

## WELCOME TO LITTLE LEARNERS PRESCHOOL!

Dear Parents,

We are happy to welcome you to the Big Lake Schools Little Learners Preschool! We believe that preschool years are a period of rapid growth for young children when skills, abilities and attitudes develop, which they carry with them their entire lives.

Little Learners is a school readiness preschool program delivered through Big Lake Schools Community Education Department. We serve children 3-5 years of age who reside in Big Lake and the surrounding communities. We offer a play-based early childhood curriculum that focuses on the needs of the "whole" child with an emphasis on social skills and early literacy development. Several classrooms provide inclusion opportunities for children with special needs and include teachers and support staff from Early Childhood Special Education.

Our staff shines at helping your child succeed! All of our teachers are licensed early childhood teachers with four year education degrees or higher.

Our program strives to offer the best in early education! That is why we have received the highest possible rating from Parent Aware – four stars!



Our preschool program is designed to provide an enriched environment in which your child can learn and develop in an atmosphere of love, warmth and acceptance. The program and the environment are the result of careful planning and structuring to meet individual and group goals.

This handbook contains program goals, policies, typical daily activities and other pertinent information. Please read these pages carefully, and save it for future reference. Feel free to ask questions about anything that is unclear.

Big Lake Early Childhood Programs  
763-262-3233

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# CONTACT INFORMATION

## Little Learners Preschool

**Office Hours:**

7 am - 3:30 pm

**Address:**

17901 205th Avenue  
Big Lake, MN 55309  
(located in Liberty Elementary)

**Phone:** 763-262-3233

**Fax:** 263-262-8185

**Email:**

[earlychildhood@biglakeschools.org](mailto:earlychildhood@biglakeschools.org)

**Hive Time-Child Care:**

Phone: 763-262-8284

**Email:**

[hivetime@biglakeschools.org](mailto:hivetime@biglakeschools.org)



## CURRICULUM & ASSESSMENT

The Little Learners Preschool program is structured around daily activities including outdoor play, nutritional snacks, stories, music and movement, teacher-directed small and large group activities, and child-directed time in learning centers. Learning centers include art and creativity, science, math and manipulatives, language and literacy center, block and building center, dramatic play, sensory center, and technology center. Lesson plans are focused on objectives derived from the Minnesota Early Childhood Indicators of Progress.

### LEARNING OBJECTIVES & ASSESSMENT

Program objectives center on helping children develop:

- Social skills
- Emotional regulation
- Early language and literacy foundations
- Early mathematics knowledge
- Fine motor development
- Creativity
- Critical thinking
- Problem solving
- Self-help skills

Individual student progress is monitored and planned for using ongoing assessment both formally and informally through observations, Teaching Strategies Gold, and performance-evaluated tasks.

## PROGRESS REPORTING

Progress is shared formally twice a year with families during parent/teacher conferences, and as needed informally through phone calls, emails, notes home and an end-of-year summary report.

### PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

These meetings are held three times a year:

- Before preschool starts in September (Getting to Know You Conferences)
- November (Fall Conference)
- March (Spring Conference)

## 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. Therefore, beyond parent/teacher conferences, we will do our best to make sure we are informing parents about what is happening at school. We ask that you do your best to carefully read information we send home to inform you about your child, your child's class, and other school events and activities.

### SEESAW

Each classroom will use a parent communication tool called SEESAW. This app allows teachers to share via a smart phone, iPad or other electronic device.

- Newsletters
- Calendars
- Classroom Activities
- Special Events
- Reminders

Your child's teachers will provide you with information on how to sign up to use this tool. We have found it to be an incredible resource for teacher and parent communication!

Parents are strongly encouraged to contact classroom teachers with any questions, comments, or concerns. If you are having any issues, changes in your family situation or routines, etc. please bring them to our attention as soon as possible so that we may better help your child succeed.



# EARLY CHILDHOOD CLASSES & EVENTS

## ECFE

Early Childhood Family Education Classes- Classes for families with children ages birth to before kindergarten entrance. Together, families engage in activities and experiences led by licensed staff that nurture children's development. Adults join together for a discussion group led by a licensed parent educator.

## ECFE & ME

Parent educators from our ECFE program are available to meet/talk with parents one-on-one through the ECFE & ME program. These highly trained educators can help answer any questions or concerns about child development and/or parenting. ECFE & Me visits are free. If you are interested, please contact your child's teacher for a referral.

# 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 to Big Lake's rapidly growing Early Childhood programs. Members help with special events, fund raising and providing programming input. The council meets 4-5 times throughout the school year.

If you would like to visit a meeting or serve on the council, please call our office at 763-262-3233 or email [biglakeecfepac@gmail.com](mailto:biglakeecfepac@gmail.com). We would love to have you join this important group!

# SEPARATION ANXIETY

We want all parents to know we expect that some children will struggle at first with separating from their parent (and some parents will struggle with separating from their child). Please know we are ready to deal with tears and our teachers are skilled at helping ease children's anxieties. Parents can help with this transition by reading and following the suggestions below.

## WAYS TO SAY GOOD-BYE

Saying goodbye can be the hardest part of having your child in preschool. Especially if this is your child's first group experience, separating the first few times may be difficult. This separation anxiety is a natural part of children's emotional development.

Remember, if your child cries, it's usually only for a short time. Your child's teacher can update you through the SEESAW app on how their day progresses.

Establish a routine for saying goodbye to your child and be consistent. Here are some ideas for saying good-bye:

- Tell your child in advance she/he will be going to school, and when she/he will be going.
- Tell your child what you will be doing while they are at school, and remind your child what they will be doing at school.
- Talk about activities your child will do after preschool.
- Show that you are comfortable about leaving them at school.
- Say a firm, loving, short goodbye when it's time for you to leave, and reassure them you will see them when preschool is over.

Remember, children will take their cues from you. The more calm, confident and relaxed you can be, the more comfortable they will be also.

# GUIDANCE & DISCIPLINE

## “BEE” YOUR BEST WAY!

We understand that young children need clear, simple, easily understandable expectations. So, as a precursor to the “Hornet Way” expectations used in grades K-12, we have developed the “Bee” Your Best Way. “Bee” Your Best Way, in conjunction with other Hive Five components, helps young children learn what they should do in regard to behavior. The children are taught these rules and are able to follow them successfully. If a child is struggling to follow “Bee” Your Best Way, positive behavior guidance techniques will be used to guide them back to more appropriate behavior.

## TAKE-A-BREAK & THE CALM DOWN SAFE SPACE

We recognize that young children are in the process of developing their self-control and self-regulation skills. We understand that young children may from time to time just need a break in order to regain their composure. Therefore, we have a safe space in each classroom for taking a break and calming down.

The idea of the safe space is not to be a punishment but rather to act as a safe place for a child to go where they can still remain a part of the group without being a distraction to the other children. The children are taught these are places to go to regain their self-control and they are free to rejoin the group when they feel they are ready.

We want all children to feel safe and accepted in the school environment, while guiding them towards the development of positive self-control. Self-control enables children to feel comfortable, valued and liked.

When self-control is absent and children are unable to regain it on their own, the following strategies may be suggested to meet the child’s needs:

- Redirection towards constructive activity
- Tutoring/modeling constructive social strategies, problem solving skills and empathy
- Providing immediate logical and natural consequences for unacceptable behavior

On rare instances, if a child is endangering self and/or others, he or she will be removed from the group. An adult will remain with the child until he or she is ready to reenter class. Parents will be informed of behavioral issues and the positive guidance methods used to help children with challenging behaviors. If issues with behavior persist, parents and teachers will meet as a team to develop an action plan for supporting the child’s positive behavior development. If a child is unable to be successful after continued support is in place we may reevaluate if the setting is the best fit for the child, and if necessary, ask parents to seek alternative programming.



# POLICIES & PROCEDURES

## ELIGIBILITY

Preschool is open to all children who are at least 3 years old by Sept. 1st of the current school year. Children are required to be independent in the bathroom, complete required immunizations, and participate in Early Childhood Screening. Children need to complete screening within 90 days of beginning our program. Please let us know if you have questions about any of these requirements or if your child has not yet been screened.

## TUITION PAYMENTS

Tuition is due the 1st of every month, and can be paid online at [biglake.ce.com](http://biglake.ce.com). If paying by check, please make it out to Little Learners Preschool and write your child's name on the memo line. Tuition will not be prorated for missed days including family vacations, snow days, sickness, etc. \$15.00 late fee assessed if payment is received after the 10th of the month. Scholarships are available if needed, contact our office for more information.

## ALLERGIES & MEDICATIONS

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

## 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 classes. Forms are available from the early childhood secretary. Please notify the secretary when your child has additional immunizations.

## FIRST AID & EMERGENCIES

If a minor injury or accident occurs the school nurse or a teacher qualified in first aid will administer treatment. We will notify parents verbally by calling or speaking to you in person, or by sending a note via email or home with your child. If an injury is more severe, we will follow procedures for medical emergency.

If your child is injured (more than a minor injury) or becomes ill during preschool, the student will be brought to the school nurse for further evaluation. We will contact you by calling your home, work, or the emergency number listed on your child's registration form.

In the event of an emergency at the Monticello Nuclear Generating Plant, students will be evacuated directly from Big Lake Schools to Princeton Schools. Parents/

guardians will be notified via email, text and/or television stations.

## ABSENCES

Please SEESAW message your child's teacher if your child won't be coming to class.

## ILLNESS

A child should remain home if he or she has any of the following:

- A contagious disease such as chickenpox, strep throat, pink eye, or impetigo
- Vomiting, diarrhea, upset stomach within the past 24 hours
- Draining ears or eyes that are reddened
- An undiagnosed rash
- Severe cough, sore throat, runny nose, or cold symptoms
- Lice, ringworm, or scabies
- A temperature of 100° or over (children should remain home for 24 hours after it decreases)
- 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.

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

### Announcements will be made via:

- Website - an announcement will be posted on the main district site
- Social Media - a post will be made on the district's Facebook page
- SEESAW - a message will be sent out to classes attending on the day a closure occurs.
- District Student Information System (IC): email/text message will be sent out.
- Local Media Outlets - WCCO 4, KSTP 5, FOX 9 KMSP and KARE 11

# POLICIES & PROCEDURES, CONT.

## SCHOOL DRILLS

We follow state guidelines for required fire, tornado, lock down and bus drills. We expect our students will have many questions and concerns when we are participating in these drills. We will do our best to help the children remain calm and explain the process. Parents will be notified when we participate in these drills so that you can further discuss this at home.

## DROPPING OFF & PICKING UP

When dropping off or picking up your child, families will use the “bus parking lot” on the east side of Liberty Elementary. Families will enter and drive down the far left of the parking lot in a single line and then circle back to drop their child off in front of the building doors. Teachers will meet all classes outside. Arrive no more than 5 minutes before your scheduled class time. A “how to” video will be sent out to all families in August.

## LATE PICK UP

If you do not pick up your child within 5 minutes of the end of class, your child will be escorted to our on-site Hive Time childcare program and you will be responsible for childcare fees. Please simply give us a call if you're running a few minutes late to avoid fees.

## BUSING

Midday busing is available for children who are 4 years old by Sept. 1st of the current school year. A child may be picked up or dropped off at one address only. Preschoolers are required to sit in the front seats and will be escorted by early childhood staff from the bus to the classroom and vice versa. Please visit our early childhood office for more information on busing fees and to register. Busing fees will be charged monthly with preschool tuition.

## CLOTHING & ACCESSORIES

We kindly ask that you dress your child in comfortable, durable, kid-friendly clothes that are outside-weather appropriate. We do many activities that may cause clothing to get messy or wet (despite encouraging the use of protective smocks). We also suggest the use of tennis shoes as our floors can be slippery. Please mark each removable clothing item with your child's name. **We will go outside to play everyday (weather permitting), so please ensure your child has appropriate outside gear.**

## TOYS FROM HOME

We ask that toys from home are not brought into the classroom. If items are brought, we will ask your child to leave the items in his/her backpack. If your child has something to share, please bring it to your child's

teacher. Toys and “prized possessions” seem to cause conflict in the classroom and bring out feelings that we don't want associated with children's early learning experiences.

## SNACKS

Parents are asked to supply a snack for the class a few times per year. Teachers will assign “Snack Days” to students and indicate the days on the class calendar and will be shared on SEESAW. Suggestions for snacks from our LANA curriculum will be given and parents are asked to provide enough snacks for 20 students and two to three teachers. In an effort to provide a healthy/safe snack avoid items such as cookies, chips, cake, and any products containing peanuts or other high allergens. Unable to provide a snack? No problem! Please just let the teacher know and we'll take care of it - no questions asked!

## CELEBRATION DAYS

In our desire to celebrate differences, embrace all people, and to prepare students for the diverse world, we are intentional about cultivating strong school families. This process starts with our students and families first! Our staff utilize Getting to Know You Days and Family Conferences to learn all about their students and families. Information collected may include such things as: what each student likes and dislikes, what the students strengths are, what their areas for growth are, their future goals, who makes up their family, important people in their lives, celebrations, and other information the teacher should know in order to set up the most welcoming, supportive, and engaging classroom environment possible.

Sharing and learning about each other, as well as having shared experiences is important when increasing awareness and accepting differences. When continuing to develop a classroom family, a grade level may decide to have a celebration connected to a changing season, a common experience, or a holiday. The focus of the celebration will be on a proactive trait like gratefulness, generosity, kindness, or just plain fun! All staff are responsible to ensure that any celebration has an educational purpose and is inclusive to all students. Families can decide to opt out of any community building celebration.

## BIRTHDAYS

Please let us know if your child would rather not have us acknowledge his/her special day. Save gifts, treats, etc. for home as it may create a disruption to the learning day.



# HIVE TIME CHILD CARE PROGRAM

## WHAT IS HIVE TIME?

Hive Time is an extension of our Little Learners program that offers before and/or after preschool childcare. Children must be toilet trained to be eligible for program.



## CLASSROOMS

Hive Time classrooms are located close to the Little Learners classrooms to help make transitioning between programs go smoothly for your child. Hive Time classrooms will follow all of the same program policies and procedures as the Little Learners program, which makes it easier for our learners to remember things like “rules” and helps them feel more secure.

Classrooms will follow Hive Time curriculum, which has been developed to connect to and enhance learning taking place in Little Learners classrooms.

## STAFF

All Hive Time staff members are caring, friendly and well-trained people who have experience and a genuine love for working with young children. They are under the direction of our CE Program Coordinator and Early Childhood Coordinator who ensure curriculum is fluid across both programs.

## DAYS/HOURS OF OPERATION

Hive Time is open from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. Please be aware that our preschool calendar has several additional “Preschool” non-school days beyond those for students K-12. These days are clearly marked on the LL calendar and on the district-wide printed calendar. Non-school days are billed separately and parents must register by the 20th of the month prior. Hive Time is closed for most holidays including Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas, New Years, Presidents Day, Good Friday, Memorial Day, Juneteenth and July 4. Summer care is also available. See current “Rates and Dates” sheet for exact dates.

## CONTRACT OPTIONS

**Consistent Contract:** This is best for families who will use Hive Time on the same exact days every week. Taking a vacation? No problem! Just provide written notification by the 20th of the month prior and we won’t bill you for those days. Our program considers a vacation to be a minimum of 5 consecutive days (maximum of 10 total vacation days per season).

**Pick Your Day Contract:** (Available for Summer Care only). This is best suited for families who have a variable weekly/monthly schedule. With this option, families must submit a calendar indicating days Hive Time is needed by the 20th of the month prior. Late submissions will not be accepted. With either option, families are required to sign up for at least one day of care per week.

## CONTRACT CHANGES/WITHDRAWAL

Contracts can be changed online or by submitting a change in writing. The first contract change is free; each additional change incurs a \$15 fee. Due to staff/child ratio requirements, we are unable to accommodate “drop in’s” or late schedule requests. Parents are responsible for entering schedules two weeks in advance. We will NOT be approving any drop in requests. Changes involving additional care or different times of day will be accepted only if space is available. Contract changes may take effect two weeks from the day the billing office receives the request. For withdrawal, we must receive notice at least two weeks before your child’s last planned attendance day. You are responsible for fees based on the current contract until the new contract goes into effect.

## REGISTRATION PROCESS

School year registration opens the same day as Little Learners Preschool in March and due by August 1. Summer registration opens in Feb. and due by May 1. There is a \$35 nonrefundable reg. fee for each contract period (school year and summer). Late registrations incur a \$25 late fee and may be held up to two weeks. Hive Time is an extension of our Little Learners program, participants MUST have a current enrollment Little Learners in order to register in Hive Time during school year. Refer to Rates and Dates sheet for additional information.

## RATES/DATES

See current school year/summer session “Rates and Dates” sheet for detailed information.

## HIVE TIME BILLING

Hive Time utilizes the same account used for preschool; however, billing is processed separately. Billing options include:

- **Monthly:** invoices emailed on the 25th of each month prior and due by the 1st of each month
- **Auto-Pay:** monthly payments will be processed on the 1st of the month
- **Self-Pay:** available for families needing to setup a special payment plan (please contact our office)

Any days added outside of contracted days will be billed separately. Payments received after the 10th of the month will be subject to a \$15 late fee.

# HIVE TIME CHILD CARE PROGRAM

## HIVE TIME BILLING...CONT'D

You are responsible for all costs incurred for your contracted days whether your child attends or not, unless we have received a contract change/withdrawal request with sufficient notice.

Hive Time charges a \$30 processing fee for all bank-returned checks. If a check is returned, you must make a cash, money order or credit card payment within three days of notice. Failure to make payment on uncollected checks could result in termination of childcare services.

An outstanding balance over 10 business days may result in the termination of care. Any balance over 60 days outstanding will be forwarded to a district-approved collection agency for recovery. If forwarded, collection fees may be added to the current balance.

## FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

### Parent Aware Pathway Early Learning

**Scholarships** provide income eligible families financial support to attend a high quality early care and education program. Parents whose children qualify for the Free and Reduced Lunch Program, Child and Adult Care Food Program, Head Start, Minnesota Family Investment Program, Child Care Assistance Programs, Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, or placement in foster care are encouraged to apply.

**County Childcare Assistance** is accepted for our program. Contact Sherburne County Health and Human Services at 763-765-4000 to find out if you qualify. Written authorization for families receiving financial assistance must be received by Hive Time before childcare can begin. If financial assistance is cancelled, you will be responsible for all expenses incurred. If you receive financial assistance, you assume responsibility for fulfilling county requirements (provide information and child care schedules, submit timely reports and make payments not covered by the assistance program).

**Additional Resources:** we understand that short-term financial hardships occur and we may be able to assist you. Please call our office to talk about available options.



## LATE PICK UP PROCEDURE & FEE

If your child isn't picked up by the end of your scheduled day at either 2:45/3:15pm or 6:00 pm (when Hive Time closes), a staff member will call you and any other person(s) listed on your authorized pick up list. If no one answers or the child isn't picked up by 6:30 p.m., local authorities will be called and your child will be put into their custody. An automatic fee of \$1 per minute per child will be incurred for pick ups after 3:15pm or 6:00 pm. If continued late pick ups occur, removal from the program may occur.

## MEALS

Just like other childcare options, Hive Time will provide breakfast, lunch and snacks on school days (depending on what time your child is in our care). A light breakfast option is available for children dropped off before 7:15 a.m. Snacks are provided mid-morning and mid-afternoon. Lunch is provided for children in our care during the afternoon (11:00am-12:00pm). We kindly ask that food from home is not brought to school (unless on a non-school day). Accommodations will be made for children with allergy or dietary restrictions. **A lunch from home is needed on non-school days (when K-12 students do not have school).** We will let you know of these days in advance.

## ABSENCES

Fees are not refunded for sick days or other absences. If an illness extends beyond 5 consecutive days, contact the Hive Time billing office. Credit may be given if a medical certificate from a physician is provided indicating the extended absence was due to an illness. All parents are responsible for paying for time reserved, not time used. If you choose for your child not to attend on a day scheduled for care, you are still responsible for that day's charges.

## SPECIAL NEEDS

Hive Time may be able to provide long-term one-on-one assistance for students provided the student receives one-on-one student support in the classroom and/or has a behavior plan developed by the early childhood team and additional care has been deemed necessary upon review by the staff. However, the child's start date in Hive Time may be delayed until additional staff can be hired with the skills necessary to meet the child's needs. Information regarding a student's needs will not be used to prohibit a child's enrollment in Hive Time; unless it is determined they will need significant assistance beyond program capabilities. Parents must provide a written schedule that indicates drop off/pick up times specific for your child at least two weeks in advance in order for Hive Time to staff appropriately.

# ONLINE ACCOUNT MANAGEMENT

Go to <https://biglake.ce.eleyo.com/> and sign in to your account. From here you are able to:

1. Register for a new Hive Time and/or Little Learners contract
2. Make payments & review invoices
3. Manage Authorized Pickups
4. Change your schedule
5. Add Non-School Days/Early Release
6. Withdraw from the program

Each number above references where to access items in the online portal pictured below. Items 4-6 can be accessed only after selecting a contract indicated by the arrow below.

## Adding Authorized Pickups

Login to your account to access your Dashboard. Under Your Accounts select on your Hive Time and/or Little Learners account > select Manage Authorized Pickups button on the left side and add additional people you are allowing to pick up your child.

## Contract Change or Withdrawal

Login to your account to access Your Dashboard. Under Current and Upcoming Contracts, select on the contract you would like to change and then on the left side choose your option (such as Withdraw Contract).

## Schedule Change:

Login to your account to access Your Dashboard. Under Your Accounts select on your Hive Time and/or Little Learners account > select on the contract you would like to change under Current and Upcoming Contracts > select the Change Schedule button on the left. You will be able to add/remove dates and submit for approval. You will need to do this for each child's contract individually.

## Year-End Tax Statements

The Federal Tax ID number and total fees paid for the calendar year is available in a PDF document through the online billing system. This document is available after January 1st for the previous tax year.

## Dependent Care/Flex Reimbursement Forms

Receipts and invoices are easily downloaded by selecting Your History in the footer of your account and can be submitted with your form to your provider.

## Mobile Devices

If using a mobile device, use the Compass icon on the left to access Your Dashboard and view the same items explained above.