Explorer Community School

Information Night

November 2026





Agenda

- Welcome
- School Overview
- Classroom Experience
- Parent Commitment
- Application Timeline

Small Group Break Out

- Curriculum / Enrichment
- Family Commitment
- General / Administration



School Overview

Our School



Our Community

What sets our school apart is the central role of our community.

We strive to be a community that:

- Celebrates our diversity
- Fosters a collaborative and supportive relationship among staff, parents, and children
- Inspires lifelong learning and leadership
- Encourages active participation and engagement by all



Administration

Explorer Community School shares principals with Emily Dickinson Elementary School. They are passionate and involved and enjoy working with our families and students.

Additionally, other resources and programs are shared between the two schools including specialist, special education, multi-language support, reading support and accelerated programs.



AMY LEE
School Principal



AZURE GROSSI
Associate Principal

Meet Our Teachers

Grades 1 & 2: *Christine McLaughlin (she/her)*

Grades 2 & 3: *Debra Shaw (she/her)*

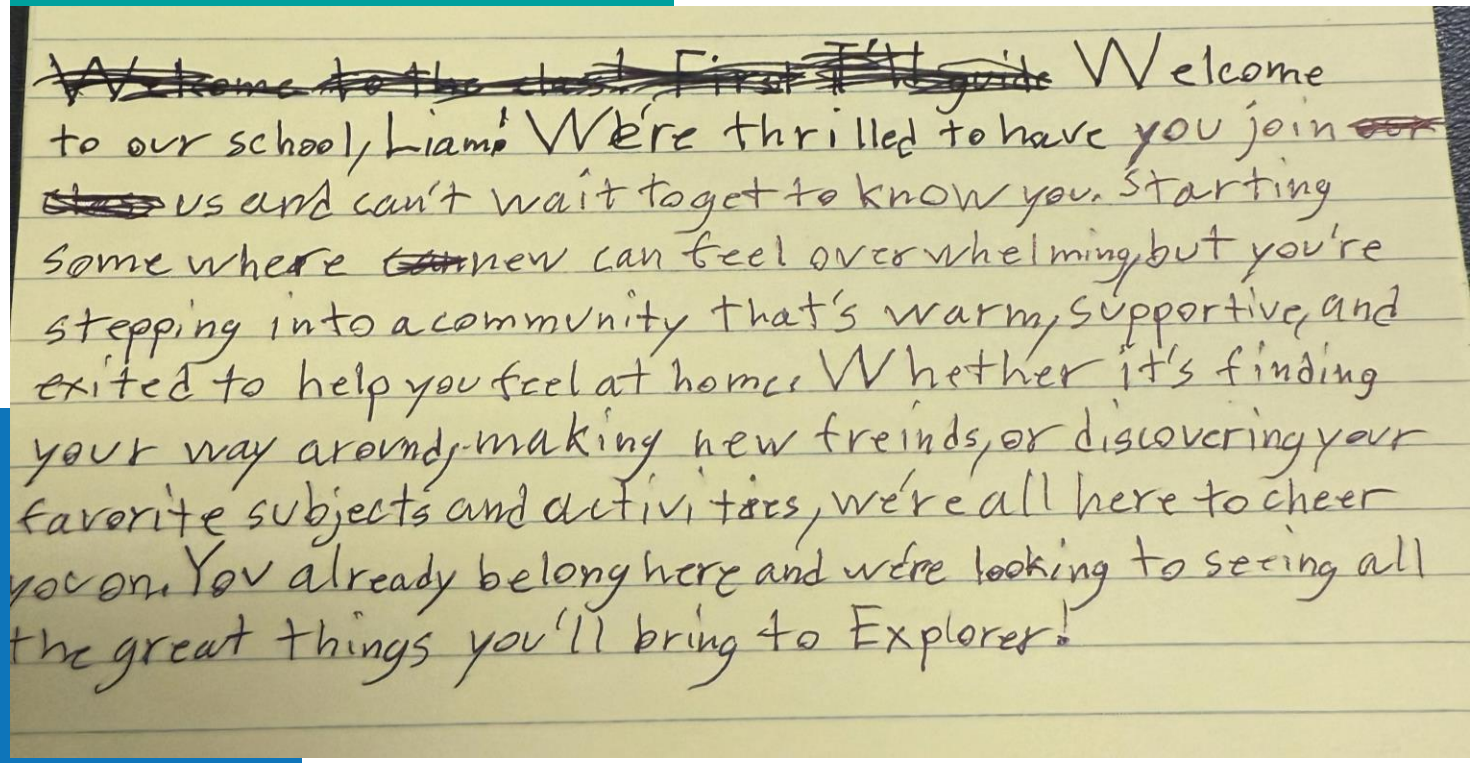
Grades 4 & 5: *Charli Harrington (they/she)*



Explorer Community School Teachers

Student Perspective

- Jasmine (2nd Grade)
- Dylan (2nd Grade)
- Lashika (3rd Grade)
- Riley (4th Grade)
- Adhrit (5th Grade)
- Zadie (Alumni)
- Maya (Alumni)


Welcome to our school, Liam! We're thrilled to have you join us and can't wait to get to know you. Starting somewhere new can feel overwhelming, but you're stepping into a community that's warm, supportive, and excited to help you feel at home. Whether it's finding your way around, making new freinds, or discovering your favorite subjects and activities, we're all here to cheer you on. You already belong here and we're looking to seeing all the great things you'll bring to Explorer!

1. Please introduce yourself.
2. What do you love about Explorer?
3. How have you grown over your time at Explorer?

About Explorer

Explorer Community School is designed to is to create a learning partnership among children, staff and parents.

What We Are

- LWSD public school – required to follow district and state policies & Common Core State Standards
- Inclusive – all students are welcome
- A highly involved parent community
- An engaged, close-knit community



What We Are Not

- A private school
- Montessori-based curriculum
- Curriculum independently leveled by student
- A school with a smaller student-teacher ratio than neighborhood schools

Academic Recognition

Washington State School Recognition Program recognized Explorer for:

- Achievement in ELA
- Achievement in Math



About Explorer

Community schools have been a part of the Lake Washington School District since the 1970s. Founded in 1996, Explorer Community School is located on the campus of Emily Dickinson Elementary and is a public elementary school staffed by certified teachers responsible for meeting the district's established academic goals. Explorer is also a "learning community" with a specific mission and vision:

Our mission is to create a learning partnership among **children, staff, and parents**.

Vision

Our school community aims to inspire a life-long passion for learning in an atmosphere of fun, trust, and respect. Our focus is the **social, academic, and emotional growth** of children, enabling them to build their own future and positively impact their world. We strive to provide opportunities for each child to realize his or her own individual potential and to foster an atmosphere of cooperation and trust.





Classroom Experience

Explorer Classroom



SMALL SCHOOL COMMUNITY

Explorer can accommodate up to 72 students each year, 1st through 5th grade, with the same class sizes as your neighborhood school. This small school size encourages a strong community between students, staff, and parents!



MULTI-AGE CLASSROOMS

While teachers follow district curriculum and Common Core Standards, multi-age classes allow for older students to develop leadership skills & model more sophisticated thinking.



STUDENT RESPONSIBILITY

Classrooms are set up to develop student independence, collaboration, and leadership skills.

Curriculum

- Common Core State Standards are taught through the Lake Washington School District curriculum
- Math is taught by grade level
- Science & Social Studies are taught on an annual rotation



Enrichment Programs



FRIDAY CHOICE & EXPLORATIONS

2x per month / 3 Fridays in April

Hour-long school-wide parent-led enrichment activity.

(examples: programming, art projects, gardening, science experiments, cryptography, magic tricks, etc.)



EXPLORER TIME

Weekly

Hour-long all-school activity time. Students in 1st-5th grade sing songs, perform skits, share presentations, & engage in multi-age group activities like STEAM and team building.



ART SMART

2x per month

Parent-led art lessons designed to bring visual arts education into the classroom. Projects are saved and displayed throughout the year and displayed at an Artwalk and in an end-of-year portfolio.



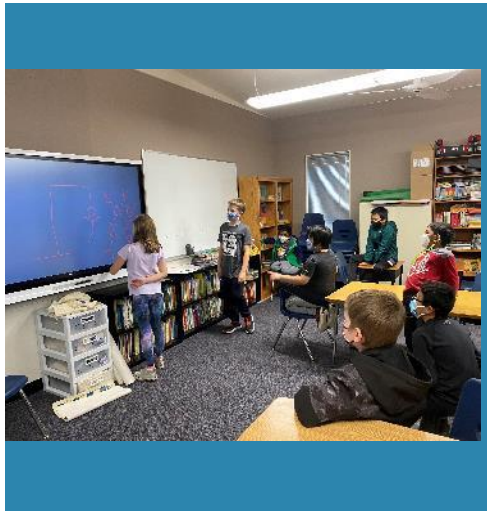
FIELD TRIPS

Monthly

Class field trips or educational learning experiences. Parents volunteer to drive and chaperone field trips.

(examples: aquarium, plays, museums, farms, etc.)

Enrichment Programs



PASSPORT

Monthly

Geography program where students study places & cultures around the world.



FAMILY CAMP & FALL RETREAT

Annually

A 1-day event in the fall and 2-day, overnight camp in June designed to build community among teachers, parents, and students and offer learning opportunities outside the classroom. Families participate in songs, games, and community-building activities.



MARKETPLACE

Annually

Students learn about business & marketing while creating a product or service to sell to classmates and families using Explorer Bucks.



SOCIALS & COMMUNITY EVENTS

School community events are held throughout the year as a way for families and students to get to know each other.

(examples: First day tea, After drop off coffees, Fall social, Spring social, etc.)

A week in the life of an Explorer student

Kelly is in 3rd Grade and is in Ms. Shaw's Class

MONDAY

1:1 Writing Session

Kelly meets with Susan, a parent volunteer, to review her writing and help incorporate transitions into her personal narrative.



WEDNESDAY

Explorer Time

Kelly joins her multi-age group and works together to brainstorm design ideas for the scarecrow that will be added to the school garden.



TUESDAY

Math Support

Kelly and her same grade peers are taught a new math concept by Ms. Shaw, then have time to work independently to solidify the concept. A parent volunteer is there to help if she has any questions & to review concepts with her while the teacher is working with the other grade.



A week in the life of an Explorer student

Kelly is in 3rd Grade and is in Ms. Shaw's Class



THURSDAY

Passport

Teachers lead students in a lesson that was prepared by the parent Passport Committee about the countries of South America.



FRIDAY

Friday Choice

Kelly joins 7 other kids in a parent-led lesson on how to draw Harry Potter. She is thrilled to take her drawing home to show her parents!



SATURDAY

Fall Social Event

Kelly, her parents, and her little brother, Will, meet up with other Explorer families for fun and games at the park for the school Fall social event.



Parent Commitment

Parents Play a Vital Role at Explorer

To be able to provide those enrichment experiences parents commit to (per child enrolled):

Parent Support	Description	Cadence
In-class volunteering	• Work as a personal tutor/mentor on a regular basis • Provide teacher support with classroom organization, filing and/or copying • Help teachers with special projects as needed	1 hour per week
Committee Work	• Participate in your assigned committee work (e.g. Safe departure) • You will be able to indicate your preferences from a provided list of options	3-12 hours per month
Attend Monthly Parent Meeting	• Parents and teachers meet monthly to discuss items related to school/classes	1x per month
Friday Choice & Explorations	• Plan and teach (1) Friday Choice activity to a small group of students • 4th grade families should also teach (1) Exploration	1x per year
Field Trip Driver & Chaperone	• Serve as field trip chaperones and drivers (meet minimum insurance policy) • Each family is to drive and chaperone a minimum of twice per year	2x per year
Support occasional school or campus-wide events	• Support events such as garden party, fun run or other periodic events that arise	Ad-hoc
Financial Support	• Requested Support of $300-400 per child enrolled in the school to fund field trips, student camp, socials, school supplies, etc..	1x per year



Parent Volunteering in the Classroom

Volunteering is a BIG part of what makes Explorer so successful. Students enjoy when parents come in and parents make a huge impact on the lives of the students and the teachers. Parent volunteering helps to free up teachers for more meaningful tasks.

- Work with small groups of kids (example: guiding an activity for reading, math groups, writing review)
- 1-on-1 (example: math review work)
- Clerical Work (copying, filing, etc.)

Example Classroom Volunteer Schedule

Ms. Shaw's Classroom Volunteers 2025-26 (1st Semester)

MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY
SEL 9:05-9:30	SEL 9:05-9:30	SEL 9:05-9:30	SEL 9:05-9:30	SEL 9:05-9:30
PE 9:30-10:00	Library 9:30-10:00	Music 9:30-10:00	PE 9:30-10:00	Library 9:30-10:00
Word Work 10:00-10:35	Word Work 10:00-10:35	Word Work 10:00-10:35	Word Work 10:00-10:35	Word Work 10:00-10:35
Snack & Recess 10:35-11:05	Snack & Recess 10:35-11:05	Snack & Recess 10:35-11:10	Snack & Recess 10:35-11:05	Snack & Recess 10:35-11:05
Math 11:05-12:15	**Math 11:05-12:15**	**Math 11:05-12:15**	**Math 11:05-12:15**	**Math 11:05-12:15**
1) Rita 11:05-11:55	**1) Cheryl Jones**	**1) Erica Rickard**	**1) Rita 11:05-11:55**	**1) Mariana Mihova** **2) Rita 11:05-11:55**
Lunch/Recess 12:20-1:15	Lunch/Recess 12:20-1:15	Lunch/Recess 12:20-1:15	Lunch/Recess 12:20-1:15	Lunch/Recess 12:20-1:15
DEAR 1:15-1:30	DEAR 1:15-1:30	Explorer Time 1:00-2:05	DEAR 1:15-1:30	DEAR 1:15-1:30
Reading 1:30-2:20	Reading 1:30-2:20		Reading 1:30-2:20	Fun Friday & Closing 1:30-2:20
Recess 2:20-2:35	Recess 2:20-2:35	LEAP	Recess 2:20-2:35	Recess 2:20-2:35
Writing 2:35-3:20	Writing 2:35-3:20		**Writing 2:35-3:20**	Artsmart/Friday Choice 2:40-3:40
1) Fidan Howell (as needed)			**1) Shallu Kapila (as needed)**	
Closing 3:20-3:40	Closing 3:20-3:40		Closing 3:20-3:40	

Correcting at home: (Due the following school day)

Monday: 1) Angela Angelevska (Anja)

Wednesday: 1) Anusha Varadarajan (Aadhira)

Friday: 1) Tz Rung Chen (Alina)

Clerical Wednesday: *Arrange 1 hour slot with Ms. Shaw*

Clerical Friday: *Arrange 1 hour slot with Ms. Shaw (before 1pm)*

Field Trips:

1) Saruabh Sharma (Reyansh)

1) Galyna Muzychyn

1) Ariel Moshe

2) Lorie Tais

Artsmart:

1) Namitha (Mythili)

2) Fidan (Jacob)

Room Parents:

1) Rayma (Deera)

2) Tz Rung (Alina)

Parent Committees

Parents at Explorer join committee groups to help plan and manage school events and activities. They are the backbone and support for our school. Committee work is done at home or at school.

- Average 1-4 hours per month
- Helps our school be successful
- Our students benefit and love the work and ideas the committees plan

On Campus

- Art Smart
- Safety Departure

Mainly At Home

- Passport
- Events
- Community Service
- Newsletter
- Math Challenge
- Fundraising
- Yearbook
- Field Trips



Parent Perspective

INSIDE A MONTH AT EXPLORER

Current Parent Perspective

In-classroom Volunteering

Weekly you join your student's class to help with your preassigned duty such as writing or math support.



After Drop Off Coffee Chat

On the last Friday of the month, you can choose to join other parents after drop off for coffee and chatting at Cypress Coffee.



Parent Meeting

On the 3rd Tuesday of the month, you join other parents and hear updates from the teachers and committees.



Committee Coordination

Throughout the month you may collaborate with your assigned committee to complete support tasks for the school.



Friday Choice

One time per school year, you lead a small group of students in an enrichment activity of your choice.

Field Trip Driver & Chaperone

Two times during the year you sign up to drive and chaperone a grouop of students for your child's class field trip.

Recommended Annual Donations

- Expected 2027-28 school year donation of $300-$350 per child enrolled in the school
    - Activities and supplies (covers field trips, socials, school supplies (teacher purchases, not parents), student family camp costs & all enrichment activities your child participates in during the year)
- Donations do not cover it all, we also depend on
    - Passive fundraisers (i.e., Employer matching)
    - Fundraising events (Mariner's, Donuts, MOD Pizza)



Questions to Consider

- Is your student capable of working independently in a multi-aged classroom when needed?
- Are you able to provide transportation with minimum insurance requirements?
- Are you interested in actively participating in your child's education and offering support to other students as well?
- Can your family commit to dedicating 1-2 hours per week for in-class volunteering, committee work, and occasional requests (e.g., Friday choice, field trips)? *(no childcare provided for younger siblings)*
- Can your family commit to driving and chaperoning 2 field trips a year?
- Are you able to commit to your family's attendance at both our full-day fall retreat and overnight spring retreat?
- Are you enthusiastic about being part of an engaged parent community?
- What about Explorer most appeals to you?





Next Steps

Application Timeline

- November 1, 2026 – online application opens at 8:00 a.m.
- December 1, 2026 – online applications due by 11:59 p.m.
- January 4-8, 2027 – lottery held at district
- January 15, 2027 – notification to families
- January 29, 2027 – acceptance deadline

How to Apply

Students currently enrolled at LWSD must apply through Parent Square

Private or homeschool student application is at https://www.Lwsd.Org/school/choice-schools









Small Group Break Out

Curriculum / Enrichment
- Teachers
- 1/2 Classroom (right)

Family Commitment
- Parent Volunteers
- 2/3 classroom (middle)

General / Administration
- Principal & Associate Principal
- 4/5 classroom (left)



THANK YOU

Questions?

Contact Michelle Hlaing at ozgirl.caliboy@gmail.com