

Early Learning Center



**Attendance Center for Kindergarteners in
Effingham Community Unit #40**

**Parent Handbook
2023-2024**

Effingham Unit #40 Kindergarten Handbook for Parents and Students

Early Learning Center
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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Early Learning! Our kindergarten staff hopes this will be a positive and productive year for your child. To help make the year go as smoothly as possible, this handbook has been prepared so that you can become familiar with Effingham Unit #40 policies and procedures, as well as the daily operations of the Early Learning Center.

The office at the Early Learning Center (ELC) is open from 7:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. The school day for ELC students is from 8:15 a.m. to 2:50 p.m. We encourage ELC students to arrive no sooner than 8:00 a.m. unless they are eating breakfast or when the first bus arrives. It is VERY IMPORTANT that children at ELC arrive by 8:15 a.m., or they will be considered tardy and miss the “building blocks” of our reading curriculum by not being there for the beginning of our school day.

I wish you and your child a wonderful experience at our schools. Do not hesitate to call me at any time if I can assist you in any way this school year. The best way to reach me is by calling 217-540-1460 at ELC. I look forward to a wonderful year with you and your child!

Jennifer Fox
Lacy Althoff

ABSENCES

Parent Responsibilities:

Parents have responsibility for requiring and promoting their child’s regular school attendance, the first step in achieving academic success. Unless the circumstances make it impossible, all requests for excused absences during a trip or vacation must be approved by the PRINCIPAL at least seven (7) days in advance of the absence. Please submit a written request. In any case, the parent/guardian must notify the TEACHER as soon as possible prior to the proposed absence.

Kindergarten Absence Notification Policy:

A parent/guardian must: (1) upon child’s enrollment, provide **telephone numbers** to the Building Principal and update them as necessary; and (2) authorize all absences and notify the school in advance or at the time of the child’s absence. Students are required to attend school daily unless they are ill. For students, parents must call the school by 9:00 a.m. to report any absences. Students are also required to be at school on time. If the child is not at school, phone calls will be made to the parents and all emergency contacts. If the school cannot reach anyone by phone, a home visit will be made by the principal, another district administrator, and/or School Resource Officer. Please schedule doctor/dentist appointments during school holidays or teacher institute days. If this is not possible, doctor appointments should be scheduled after 3:00 p.m. Refer to the Effingham Unit #40 School Handbook for additional excused/unexcused absence information.

ACCIDENTS – EMERGENCY INFORMATION

Despite our best efforts, accidents sometimes happen at school. If a serious accident occurs, parents/guardians will be called and asked to come to school for the child. If parents cannot be reached, the person designated at

registration, as “Person to Notify In Case of Emergency” will be called. If neither the parent nor the emergency contact can be reached, the child will be taken to the hospital.

It is important that all medical information in our computer system be accurate, as it is the school’s main source of information in any emergency. Parents should inform the school secretary immediately if the home address, home or work phone, designated emergency contact person, or any other data changes.

ASBETOS MANAGEMENT PLAN NOTIFICATION

The US EPA published their AHERA (Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act) Regulations in 1986. The federal regulation required that all local education agencies (LEA’s) have their buildings inspected for asbestos-containing building materials (ACBM), to have a written Asbestos Management Plan developed, and to institute an Asbestos Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Program to train in-house personnel how to properly manage and work around the ACBM in their buildings. This notification serves as the annual notification which is required to be sent to all school district employees, parents, groups and organizations to explain the Management Plans and any current relevant activities. The purpose of this Annual Notification is to explain the status and availability of the Asbestos Management Plan, to review recent asbestos-related activities in the school district, and to list the asbestos-related activities that are planned to take place in the upcoming calendar year. The Management Plans are available for review in the main office at all school buildings and at the Board Office, 2803 South Banker Street, Effingham, IL 62401. Questions pertaining to asbestos are to be directed to Todd Thoele at (217) 540-1500, the asbestos coordinator.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS

Students are welcome to celebrate birthdays within their classroom. Treats which can be served as individual portions are preferred. The Board of Education of Effingham Unit #40 School District is committed to providing a learning environment that supports and promotes wellness, good nutrition and an active lifestyle and recognizes the positive relationship between good nutrition, physical activity and the capacity of students to develop and learn. As such, we encourage parents to choose healthy options when providing birthday treats. Items such as 100% juice boxes, dried fruit, single serve applesauce, pretzels, reduced fat crackers, low-fat pudding cups, string cheese and granola bars are ideal. Students will not be allowed to hand out treats in other classrooms, as this procedure causes unnecessary disruptions. Games, party hats, decorations, helium balloons are best left to be given at home. We prefer to have the children not bring take-home treat bags. Students with summer birthdays are welcome to prearrange a date during the school term to celebrate their birthday. Please do not choose the last week of school for this celebration. **We also want to notify parents if they are taking photographs at a birthday party at school, those pictures cannot be posted on an outside media source, such as Facebook, if that picture contains images of other students in the classroom.** Do not send invitations to be handed out at school unless you invite every student in that class. If wanting to invite one or two students, please mail invitations from home. The school office cannot provide addresses or phone numbers due to privacy issues.

BREAKFAST & LUNCH

Breakfast and lunch are served daily at ELC. Cafeteria menus are sent home once a month. Unit 40 cafeterias operate by using the Cafeteria Billing System. This is a debit and credit system. At ELC, students will be issued a card with their student number. Students who lose or damage their card will be charged \$4.00 for a replacement. Parents will be notified when this happens. **Parents should send payment in a sealed envelope with their child’s name, student number and teacher’s name written on the outside.** Parents may deposit money on a monthly or weekly basis, the first school day of each week. Checks are preferred and should be made payable to Effingham Unit 40.

<i>Meal</i>	<i>Student</i>
Breakfast	\$2.60
Lunch	\$3.10
Extra Milk	\$.35

A report of student balances will be sent home every other Friday of each month. It is important that you review the balance. The principal also makes phone calls to remind parents of negative balances when it reaches an enlarged amount.

All bus children arriving at school prior to 8:00 a.m. will go immediately to the All Purpose Room. Breakfast is served from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. Talk to your kindergartener about eating breakfast at school. Sometimes a student sees other children eating and thinks he/she should do the same even if breakfast was eaten at home. Teachers cannot monitor this situation. We do have a breakfast supervisor at that time, but it is very hard for the cooks to monitor who should or should not be eating breakfast. We do not want to surprise parents with breakfast charges when they may not be aware that their child is eating at school. By the same token, we do not want the children to be hungry in the morning. If a child tells us he/she is supposed to eat, we usually let him/her eat and contact parents later if money is owed. Communication between parents, children and teachers is the key.

BUS SERVICE

All Unit #40 bus-riding students will be assigned to one bus stop at the beginning of their day and one stop at the end of their day which is not necessarily the same stop. Parents will be asked at registration to designate one pick-up location and one drop-off location for each child. A child may be picked up or dropped off at a stop along the same route that he/she normally rides. In order for the child to be picked up or dropped off at another stop along his/her route, a note must be sent to the school office the day before or that day so that the transportation department can be notified. Please refer to the Effingham Unit #40 School Handbook for all district bus information. Loss of bus privileges may last from one day to a school year. Notification is made to the Building Principal when the bus driver turns in a **Bus Conduct Notice**. This information is discussed with the student, and a copy is sent home to parents.

CHILD ABUSE

School personnel are mandated by law to report any suspected child abuse, including neglect. Referrals are made to the Department of Children and Family Services.

CLOTHING

Please make sure your child is dressed appropriately for recess at school. Children are taken outside most days unless it is raining or severely cold. Shirts advertising alcoholic beverages, tobacco products or violence, or those with obscene or questionable sayings will not be permitted. If clothing worn to school is found to be improper, parents will be called to have a change of clothing brought to school. Hats are not to be worn inside the school building.

Students do not have to wear expensive clothes. Clean, neat clothing is what needs to be worn. It is recommended that female students wear shorts under their dresses and skirts for playground purposes. We also do not recommend children wearing flip-flops or clogs to school. Loose fitting shoes make it difficult to run, climb and walk on the playground.

COMPUTERS

Parents complete an "Acceptable Use of Electronic Networks" form during registration.

DISCIPLINE

See attached sheets at the end of this booklet.

EARLY DISMISSAL FOR EMERGENCY

From time to time, there will be early dismissals, school closures due to weather and other events unforeseen and not included in a school calendar. In the event of such circumstances, the school will provide information to the radio stations. We urge you to tune to WCRC-FM (95.7), WXF-FM (97.9) or WKJT-FM (102.3), especially during bad weather, to find out the latest information on school cancellations. Cancellations may also be followed on the district website at unit40.org. Please refer to the Effingham Unit #40 School Handbook for further information.

Effingham Unit #40 also participates in "School Messenger". This program allows Unit 40 to contact all parents in an emergency situation. At registration, parents/guardians are asked to list the phone numbers at which they can be contacted during the school day. If the "School Messenger" phone number provided at registration should change after school has begun, it is extremely important that a parent/guardian contact the school with an updated phone number.

FIELD TRIP

In order to provide consistency and uniformity on field trips, the following guidelines are listed.

- The classroom teacher will choose chaperones, **as needed**, to accompany the class on the field trip.
- All chaperones are to ride the school bus with students to and from the field trip destination. Chaperones are to assist with the student supervision from the beginning of the field trip until the end. Chaperones should not use tobacco products during the trip. We must set a healthy and positive example for the children.
- All chaperones must have attended the Unit #40 volunteer training.
- Younger children are not allowed to accompany parents on the field trip.
- Parents are strongly discouraged from attending separately in a vehicle so that the numbers are kept to a minimum at the field trip destination.
- If students bring their own lunch, the lunch must have food that does not require refrigeration.
- Each child must have a parental permission form signed by parent or guardian.
- Students are not allowed to be picked up from the field trip location except under extreme situations such as illness or a family emergency.

GRADING & STUDENT RECORDS for KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

For kindergarten students, homework may be sent home at the discretion of the teacher but will be kept to a minimum. Homework is intended to reinforce skills that are taught in the classroom as well as develop the “homework habit”. A kindergarten report card is issued four times a year at the end of each quarter. The calendar is available on the Unit #40 website.

HEALTH INFORMATION

Sick Children

We need your help. If your child appears to be ill or does not feel well, please let him/her stay home from school. Keeping your child at home when he/she is ill helps to prevent the spread of cold, flu, etc., to the other children. Often during the year children become ill at school. If a child’s temperature reaches 100.4 degrees, if he/she has diarrhea, and/or if the child is vomiting, a health risk exists for other children. Since our schools are not equipped with sickroom facilities, parents will be called at home or at work. If you cannot pick your child up, please make arrangements to have someone else pick him/her up as soon as possible. Please stop by the office to sign out the child before taking him/her home. **A child must be fever-free for 24 hours before he/she is allowed back to school.**

Medication

Parents and guardians have the primary responsibility for administering medication to their children. Administering medication during school hours or during school-related activities is discouraged unless it is necessary for the critical health and well being of the student. Non-prescription medication will not be given to children (example: aspirin, cough medicine, etc.) at any time by any of the kindergarten personnel. In order for prescription medication to be administered at school, the student’s parent and physician must complete the school district’s “Doctor’s Medication Authorization Form” picked up at registration or from the school’s office. Additional medical information is available in the District Handbook.

LOCKED DOOR POLICY

As of the 2006/2007 school year, it has been a district-wide policy that all doors of all schools are locked down during the school day. At ELC, doors are locked from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. This policy was enacted as a safety precaution for students. If you come to ELC during “lock down” hours, please enter the front doors and then push the button located next to the interior doors. Be prepared to state your name and purpose for coming to the school.

LOST AND FOUND

Articles are kept for a period of time after being found. These may be re-claimed by describing the lost article. Articles left at the end of the year will be gathered and given to a local charity. To help safeguard your child’s belongings, please label all possessions and clothing with your child’s name.

MULTI-TIER SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT

Our district implements Multi-Tier Systems of Support (MTSS) which is based on the premise of intervening early to prevent failure and to maximize the effectiveness of grade level curriculum and instruction. Providing every P-12 student differentiated, high-quality instruction matched to their specific needs to be successful in our education system through a system of support for academic, behavioral and social-emotional student needs. MTSS is grounded in the belief that ALL students can learn and achieve high standards. A comprehensive system of tiered interventions is essential for addressing the full range of students' academic and behavioral needs. Collaboration among educators, families, and communities is the foundation of effective problem solving. For additional information regarding MTSS in your child's school, please contact the school.

NON-CUSTODIAL PARENTS

In divorce cases, both parents have all the rights of the Act, unless a state law or court order provides for the contrary. However, a non-custodial parent cannot violate a specified visitation court order by actually visiting with the child on school grounds or by physically removing the child from school grounds. In joint custody judgments, both parents will always have equal rights and privileges regarding the child's educational progress. If a child is not residing with a parent who has joint custody and he/she wants a copy of the child's reports, calendar of events, etc., that parent should request the information from the child's teacher in writing. We also would appreciate self-addressed stamped envelopes, and the teacher would gladly mail all classroom information to the other parents.

PARENT DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

At ELC, children coming to school by car should be **dropped off at the front door**. During the first days of school, there will be a teacher to help the child out of the car and direct him/her where to go. When children become familiar with the drop off routine, they will be expected to exit the car on their own. If you need to come inside with your child, you MUST park your car in the parking lot or along the street. Do not park on the blacktop in front of the school. **We strongly encourage parents of children at ELC to not drop off students any sooner than 7:45 a.m. but by 8:15 a.m.**

PARENT PICK-UP PROCEDURES

You must send a note to the teacher in the morning when your child will be Parent Pick-Up. **We cannot take your child's word that he/she will be Parent Pick-Up. We MUST have a note or a phone call.** No child may be picked up by a person other than a parent/guardian during the school day without a written note, signed by the parent/guardian. A note must also be sent when a child who usually rides a bus will be picked up after school. For the child's safety, please indicate in the note WHO will be picking up the child.

At ELC, parent pick-up time is 3:00 p.m. Class ends at 2:45 p.m. Please wait to get in line with all the other vehicles for Parent Pick-Up, and your child will be put in your car as you drive up. **DO NOT park your car and come into school to pick up your child.** Bus pickup begins at 2:50 p.m. in the same area. Please wait to get in line with all the other vehicles for parent pick-up. A teacher will escort each child to his/her car. Please display the visor card provided by your child's teacher.

If you plan to pick up your child **before** dismissal, please send a note in the morning or call in. **For your child's safety, please come in to the office to sign your child out.** When you sign your child out, we have a record of who picked up the child. This saves a lot of confusion if the child is not on his/her regular bus, does not get off at the regular bus stop, or some adult or sibling does not know where a child is after school.

PETS AT SCHOOL

Children will be allowed to show a pet at school if the parent brings the pet. We would prefer this pet be related to a class theme, and the final decision will be left up to the teacher. Pets are not allowed on the bus. Also, for the children's safety, pets can only be shown outside. They are not allowed in the buildings due to accidents and allergies.

PLAYING OUTSIDE

Local medical authorities have advised us that the cold air associated with Illinois winters does not by itself present a health hazard to normal healthy children who are **properly dressed**, and that we should encourage children to play outside during the winter months. Please be sure children are appropriately dressed for the season. Put your child's name on all hats, gloves, scarves, warm winter coats, and boots. All students will go outside for play periods when the outside temperature is not extreme.

Other weather conditions, such as wind chill factor, will be taken into consideration when deciding whether or not children will go outside. We will use the following guideline when determining whether or not to go outside. If the actual air temperature or the wind chill factor is below 20 degrees Fahrenheit, we will stay inside. In changeable weather, please send a jacket even though it may be warm at the end of the day. Some recesses are early when it is still quite chilly.

If a child is recovering from a serious respiratory illness a parent may request that the child remain inside for a few days. **Requests for children to remain indoors for extended periods of time require a doctor's verification.**

TOWELS FOR REST TIME

Each child must bring a regular size bath size towel with his/her name on it for rest time. Teachers will send the towel home occasionally to be laundered. Children will rest after lunch for a short time.

TOYS

Please **DO NOT** send toys with your child, unless requested by a teacher for a special day. Many times the pieces become broken, and the child gets upset. It is very difficult to identify the toys that children think they bring.

VISITORS

You are always welcome at the school. However, visitors to school are required by state law to report to the office whenever they enter a school building. We will have a place for you to sign in and sign out when entering and leaving the building.

- All volunteers must sign in and sign out in the office when they come in and go from the building. **If you bring your child to school after 8:15 a.m., you must sign in at the office. This is very important for attendance records.**
- If you come in for any other reason, you must sign in and out.
- If you wish to have a conference with your child's teacher, please call to set up an appointment.

VOLUNTEER PROGRAMS

All volunteers and field trip chaperones in Unit #40 schools must go through the district volunteer training and background check procedures.

Early Learning Center "High Five" Behavior

In the Hallway:

- 1) Walk slowly and safely.
- 2) Hands are behind back.
- 3) Follow the person in front of you.
- 4) Stay quiet.
- 5) Go directly to your destination.

In the Classroom:

- 1) Keep hands and feet to self.
- 2) Use kind words.
- 3) Follow directions.
- 4) Raise hands.
- 5) Be ready to work.

In the Lunchroom:

- 1) Walk to your table and stay seated.
- 2) Eat quietly.
- 3) Wait your turn.
- 4) Use manners.
- 5) Clean up your area.

Bus

- 1) Line up single file at the bus door.
- 2) Stay seated and wait your turn to enter and exit.
- 3) Listen to the driver.
- 4) Use appropriate language.
- 5) Keep backpack on your back and your hands to yourself.

Please take note.....the bus rules will be reviewed at the beginning of the school year and again in January to refresh the children's memory of those important rules of being a safe bus rider!

Building Rules, Cafeteria Procedures, and Playground Rules

General Building Rules:

- 1) Do not bring candy, toys, or electronics in the building unless the teacher has given permission for a special event.
- 2) Show respect for the teachers and other students in the class.
- 3) Be quiet and walk in the hallway.
- 4) Take care of our school building. Any abuse or misuse of school property is not tolerated.

Cafeteria Procedures:

- 1) Quiet, indoor talking is permitted.
- 2) Students should raise their hand for supervisor attention.
- 3) Manners are expected at all times.
- 4) Students are expected to follow the supervisor's directions at all times.

Playground Rules

- 1) Students will keep hands and feet to themselves. (Fighting, pretend fighting, pushing, hitting and kicking are not allowed.)
- 2) Students will slide down the slide sitting only, never climbing up the slide.
- 3) Students will not jump from the swings or off of the equipment.
- 4) Students will only run on the grass.
- 5) When the whistle is blown 3 times, children are to line up and will walk into the school in an orderly fashion.
- 6) Students will stay off the fence.
- 7) All balls and playground toys will be used in the grass or on the concrete.

Early Learning Center Discipline

A goal of Effingham Unit #40 schools is to teach students self-discipline. Children are expected to follow rules and be good citizens. They have rights, but they also have responsibilities. Positive behavior will be rewarded. Inappropriate behavior will be dealt with consistently and effectively.

Classroom teachers and staff will explain school and class rules to all students. We would appreciate it if parents would discuss this at home also. It is important that a strong partnership is formed between parents and the school regarding discipline at home and discipline at school. We expect parents to follow through with supporting our discipline efforts at school. If a student does not follow the rules, classroom consequences will be followed. If this does not change the behavior, or if the behavior is very serious, the building principal will be notified.

At the Early Learning Center in response to the federally mandated program “Response to Intervention,” we have implemented the “High Five Behavior” program. This program explains and teaches appropriate behavior to students within the various locations at school and on the bus. Behaviors are explicitly modeled, practiced, and reviewed at the beginning of the school year and after winter break, as well as being embedded in the daily expectations throughout the entire year. The program is intended to be proactive and positive. Students earn high five tickets for positive choices and modeling the expected behaviors which they may spend in a weekly shopping trip to the High Five store. Other high five rewards include special treats and assemblies throughout the year. This process also includes the use of a School Conduct Notice and Warning Slip form that address both major and minor infractions.

Each teacher (or other school personnel when students are under his/her charge) is authorized to impose the building level disciplinary measures outlined in the “disciplinary techniques” section of this document. District administration along with the Board of Education may also impose suspension, expulsion, or in-school suspension, whichever is appropriate and in accordance with the policies and rules on student discipline. Teachers, other certified employees, and other persons providing a related service for or with respect to a student, may use reasonable force as needed to maintain safety for other students, school personnel, or other persons, for the purpose of self-defense or defense of property. The behavior expected from students at school is a combination of common courtesy and safety considerations. The following behaviors **will not be tolerated** at the Early Learning Center:

1. Placing hands, feet, etc. on another person in a disrespectful manner (including but not limited to slapping, hair pulling, pinching, kicking, biting, head butting, spitting, wrestling, punching, or fighting in any manner.)
2. Possessing any controlled substance, look-a-like drug, designer drug, unauthorized medication, drug paraphernalia, tobacco, tobacco products or syringes not required for authorized medical purposes or supervised use
3. Vandalizing or destroying school property (including but not limited to throwing objects)
4. Possessing dangerous objects or weapons (including but not limited to knives, guns, or look-a-like representations of such items, matches, and lighters, etc.)
5. Physical abuse, severe profanity, willful defiance, or inappropriate hand gestures toward others
6. Theft of any classroom objects or property of others.
7. **Bullying will not be tolerated.** This is defined as any form or type of aggressive behavior that does physical or psychological harm to someone else and/or urging other students to engage in such conduct. Prohibited aggressive behavior includes, without limitation, the use of violence, force, noise, coercion, threats, intimidation, fear, bullying, or other comparable conduct. Juvenile authorities including the School Resource Officer will be notified whenever the conduct involves illegal drugs (controlled substances), look-alike drugs, alcohol, weapons or look-alike weapons.
8. Wearing clothing or accessories that are inappropriate or cause disruption in a school setting or impose safety concerns

The previously listed behaviors will be dealt with using the following list of disciplinary techniques:

- Reflective Listening
- Time away (in or out of the classroom)
- Withholding privileges (including but not limited to loss of recess)
- Parent contact (call, letter, e-mail, etc.)
- Behavior chart

Depending upon the severity of the discipline issue, or if there is no improvement in the child’s behavior, the child will be referred to the building administrator and the following action may be taken:

- Counseling Referral
- Temporary removal from classroom to the office
- Paying for or replacing damaged or stolen property
- Remaining after school including “late stays” (parent/guardian will be responsible for picking up their child)

- Loss of field trips and/or special events hosted at the schools
- In/Out of school suspension
- Suspension of bus privileges (bus conduct notices only)
- Contact of School Resource Officer

***Important Note:** Violation of items 2 or 4 could result in suspension or expulsion from school as per the District Discipline Code.