

Parent Handbook



South Bend
Early Learning Center

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Parent Handbook

Table of Contents

Welcome Letter.....Page 3

Administration..... Page 4

Program Information..... Page 4

Program Payments.....Page 4

Program Fees.....Page 4

Programs for Children Birth to Three.....Page 5

General Information & Frequently Asked Questions.....Pages 6-19

Do I really need to have all the paperwork done before my child can start school?.....page 6

What happens if my child has to be absent from school?.....page 6

Are there any medical requirements or recommendations?.....page 6

Pick up & Drop off information..... page 7

How will I know what is going on at the center?.....page 7

Can I come to my child classroom to help or visit?.....page 8

What are the qualifications of the staff?.....page 8

What are the hours of the centers?.....page 8

What should my child bring to school? Or not bring to school?.....page 9

What about my child's birthday? Can I bring treats?.....page 9

What is the center's policy on pets visiting the classrooms?.....page 10

What meals are served at the center?.....page 10

*My child won't drink milk because I think she is allergic to it OR because he doesn't like it.
Do you have to serve them milk?.....page 10*

What are the hand washing requirements?.....page 10

What do I need to know about potty training & other toileting rules?.....page 10

What is the center's policy on discipline or behavior guidance?.....page 11

What are the center's rules around reporting suspected abuse or neglect?.....page 11

What is the center's illness policy?.....page 12

How will I know if there are any communicable diseases at the center?.....page 13

What about medications?.....page 13

Is there transportation available for my child to come to school?.....page 13

What if my child gets hurt at school? What do I need to know?.....page 14

Do you practice emergency drills at the center?.....page 15

How can I find out about weather delays or closures?.....page 15

What do I need to know about family nights and other activities offered by the center?.....page 16

What about parent-teacher conferences & open houses?.....page 16

What do I do if I am unhappy about something? How do I file a complaint?..... page 17
Help! My child does not want to come to school. What should I do?.....page 17
A few words about biting...and other aggressive behaviors.....page 19

South Bend School District

EARLY LEARNING CENTER
PO Box 437
South Bend, WA 98586
360-875-5327

Dear Parents,

Welcome and thank you for choosing the South Bend Early Learning Center for your child's early childhood experience. It is our pleasure to serve you, and our desire to provide the highest quality program possible for your family. We strive to provide a positive atmosphere that promotes physical, intellectual, and emotional growth of the children, as well as fun opportunities for your family to share, learn and grow together.

To ensure that the children feel good about themselves, and to fully prepare them for entrance into kindergarten, we provide guidance and schedules that include large and small group activities where children learn to cooperate, listen and share; self-selected activities which stimulate cognitive (thinking power) growth and creativity; outdoor activities for strong physical development; and, activities that promote healthy social and emotional development.

The Early Learning Center is licensed by the state of Washington and endorsed by the Washington State Department of Early Learning. We admit all children regardless of race, creed, color, national origin, sex, marital status or sexual orientation of parents, sensory, mental or physical disability, or the use of a trained dog guides or service animals.

We are excited to get to know you and your child, and look forward to a wonderful year of learning and fun with you and your family.

Sincerely,

The Staff of the Early Learning Center

ADMINISTRATION

Laurie May, Program Director
875-5327, option 1
lmay@southbendschools.org

Jon Tienhaara , Superintendent
875-6041, option 4
jontienhaara@southbendschools.org

PROGRAM INFORMATION

South Bend School District offers the following programs:

- **Half-Day Preschool:** classes are held for three- and four-year-old children Monday through Thursday. Classes are held 8:00-11:00 or 12:00-3:00.
(Note: children must turn three or four by August 31st of the school year to qualify for half-day three and four year old classes. We do not put children into a class they are not age qualified for under any circumstances.)
- **Full-day Preschool** for four-year-old children Monday through Friday, 8:00-3:00. Four year old children must be four by August 31st of the current school year.
- **Junior Preschool:** Half-day classes are available for children who turn three after September 1st of the school year. Classes are held on Mondays through Wednesday, 8:30 - 10:30 This program is open to South Bend residents or families who have students enrolled in South Bend's K-12.
- **Multiple free programs** for families with children pregnancy to three. Please see page 6 of this handbook for additional information.

Program fee information is available on the following page.

For information on kindergarten please contact the elementary office at 875-5615, option 2.

PROGRAM PAYMENTS

Preschool payments are due by the 10th of the month **for the upcoming month**. If full payment is not received by the 10th of the month we reserve the right to turn your child away at the door and to drop him/her from the program.

Payments must be received in the form of a check or money order if received at the Early Learning Center. Cash is only accepted at the district's business office. Please make checks payable to the South Bend School District.

All rates are on a per slot basis and remain the same even if your child misses due to illness, vacation, etc. Refunds and credits are not given for days missed. If we close the center for inclement weather or other unforeseen problems and we go beyond the extra days in June that we do not charge you for, we will make up the days according to the school schedule.

PROGRAM FEES

Half-Day Preschool is open to all three and four year old children for a flat rate fee of \$50 per month. See ECEAP information below regarding free preschool for income eligible families.

Monthly rates apply regardless of the number of preschool days in the month. Preschool days in June will be at no charge to make up for shorter months and weather closures that may occur during the school year. Fees charged help to offset the cost of supplies. Staff, equipment costs, transportation and meals are funded by the district.

Full-day Preschool is open to four year old children who qualify for ECEAP. For children who do not qualify for ECEAP, children may attend for \$426 per month. The same information regarding closures and shorter months as described under the half-day information also apply to full-day programming. For additional information on the full-day program, please ask the program secretary.

Families who choose to pay the full amount for the year up front will receive a discount.

ECEAP (Early Childhood Education and Assistance Program)

Free preschool is available through ECEAP for lower income families (half day only). If your income falls at or below the following income guidelines, you are eligible for the program:

<u>Size of family</u>	<u>Annual Income</u>	<u>Monthly Income</u>
1	\$12,837	\$1,069
2	\$17,303	\$1,441
3	\$21,769	\$1,814
4	\$26,235	\$2,186
5	\$30,701	\$2,558
6	\$35,167	\$2,930
7	\$39,633	\$3,302
8	\$44,099	\$3,674

For each additional family member add \$4,466 to the annual income and/or \$372 to the monthly.

Junior preschool is open to children who turn three September 1st or beyond in the current school year. We determine the roster by what quarter the child's birth date occurs. The program is free, but your child must attend regularly. If your child misses too often, we reserve the right to drop him/her from the program in order to enroll other children who are on the waiting list.

Playgroups are provided free of charge, but parents or other caretakers must remain with their children.

PROGRAMS FOR BIRTH TO THREE (all free of charge)

South Bend School District offers the following programs specific to families with children pregnancy to 3 years old:

Early Steps

Early Steps is an early childhood education program for families with children pregnancy to five. The program is designed to assist children with early language development, social and emotional development, and to equip parents with the skills they need to successfully support their child's growth. This is accomplished through home visits from a trained early childhood educator (bilingual in English and Spanish), monthly parent groups, playgroups and story book hours, and a book bag lending program. The program is open to all families in the South Bend and Raymond school districts.

Infant-Toddler Play Groups

Weekly play groups are held at the Early Learning Center for children who are 2 to 30 months. A parent or other important adult in the child's life must attend with the child. Play group is a great time to meet other parents and for your child to interact socially with little friends their age. Play groups are open to all families living in the tri-district area.

Early Support for Infants & Toddlers

Sometimes infants and toddlers experience developmental delays, and with early help and support they can very often successfully catch up with their peers. If you have concerns about how your infant or toddler is developing, or if you want confirmation that everything is okay, give us a call and we can assist you with getting the information you want. If your child qualifies for early assistance, we can provide that service for you and your child.

For more information on any of the above programs please contact the Early Learning Center at 875-5327, option 1.

GENERAL INFORMATION & FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Do I *really* need to have all the paperwork done before my child can start school?

When enrolling your child in any of the programs we offer, there are a number of forms that we are required to have you complete before your child can attend. **Most importantly, children may not begin classes without a completed immunization form, and in the case of ECEAP, all financial information must be complete.** If we do not have all the paperwork completed that we are required by law to have, your child may not start classes regardless of what program they are enrolled in. If your child arrives on the bus, we will call you to come pick him/her up. If you have difficulty getting to the center to complete your child's paperwork, please call us and we can arrange to come to your home.

What if my child has to be absent from school?

We know things happen, so if your child is going to be absent we ask that you call and let us know so we won't be concerned for where he/she is. Our primary funder requires us to maintain an 85% attendance rate, so we ask that your child be in attendance regularly. Your child's attendance is critical to his/her success in becoming fully prepared to move on to the next stage of their education.

Are there any medical requirements or recommendations?

All ECEAP enrolled children are required to complete a well-child exam with their primary care provider either within the last six months or within three months after school begins. We will ask you to sign a well-child exam form at the time of enrollment that will allow us to communicate with your child's physician so we may collect verification that the exam occurred. ECEAP families who do not comply with the well-child exam requirement may be dropped from the program. This will mean that to continue in the program you will need to pay the monthly fees with all the rules of payment being applied. See page 2 of this handbook.

While it is not required for non-ECEAP enrolled families, we still strongly recommend that your child receive an annual well-child exam. It is critically important to your child's learning that they be healthy and alert as they progress through their educational experience.

Dental, height, weight, vision and hearing screenings are provided for all children at the center within the first three months of the school year free of charge. We will contact you with results of all screenings.

Pickup & Drop Off Information

Children will only be released to adults authorized on the registration form, unless given written permission to release the child to another adult by the parent or guardian who enrolled the child. Front office staff will ask for verification of identity. Older siblings may pick up your child from the center at the end of the school day with written permission from you.

All children in the center are required to be signed out if they are picked up early.

For safety sake, if you pick up or drop off your child, you are required to come into the building. All children who are enrolled in childcare must be signed in and out at the front desk by whoever brings them to school. Children who arrive on the bus are escorted into the center and signed in by staff.

How will I know what is going on at the center?

A monthly newsletter is sent home in your child's backpack. The newsletter has information about the upcoming month including themes, field trips, family activities, planned holiday or vacation closures, and early release days when the center will have special activities in place of class time.

Starting and Ending dates for 2014-2015: (These dates are subject to change)

September 2 - 1st day for 3 & 4 year old preschool - full-day and half-day
September 29 - 1st day for junior preschool
October 3 - 1st day for play groups

May 20 - last day for junior preschool
May 22 - last day for play groups
June 4 - last day for 3 & 4 year old preschool (full-day & half-day)

Full day preschool summer schedule: June 22-23; July 20-21; August 17-18. All summer classes will be 9:00-1:00 at the Early Learning Center.

Planned Closure or Early Release Days for both centers for 2014-2015:

September 1 - Labor Day	January 19 - Martin Luther King Jr. Day
October 10 - Staff Training Day - closed	February 16 - President's Day
November 11 - Veteran's Day	March 4 - Planned Snow Makeup Day
November 26 - Center closed	March 5 - 6 Winter Break
November 27-28 - Thanksgiving	April 13-17 - Spring Break
December 22-January 2 - Christmas Break	May 25 - Memorial Day

Note: Grades K-12 have late start days that the Early Learning Center will not participate in. Classes will continue as regularly scheduled.

The district also has a website at www.southbendschools.org where upcoming events information and sometimes children's photos are found on the Early Learning Center link.

Can I come to my child's classroom to help or visit?

Parents are always welcome and encouraged to visit their children's classrooms. **All visitors to the Early Learning Center are required to check in at the front desk before going to the classrooms.** When in the classroom, we kindly ask parents to please not dominate the teacher's time with excessive conversation. The staff's job is to tend to the educational needs and safety of the children, and they are asked not to visit while children are present in the classroom.

At no time are adults permitted to be alone with children except their own. This includes in the classroom, multi-purpose room, bathrooms, and on the playground. **Surveillance cameras are found throughout the center for the protection of the children, staff, and adult visitors to the center.**

What are the qualifications of the staff?

All staff and substitutes are required to complete DSHS background checks. Employees of the district are also required to complete FBI and State of Washington background checks, including fingerprinting.

On staff we have employees with bachelor's degrees, associate's degrees, and staff at various levels of college training. The director of the program holds a master's in education degree with several early childhood credits and over 20 years of experience in the field.

All classroom staffs are required to have college level training, as well as ongoing professional development throughout the school year. Teachers in the three- and four-year old classrooms are required to have two year degrees plus 30 early childhood credits. Assistant teachers are required to have at least 12 early childhood college credits. Teachers and assistant teachers who do not meet the qualifications are on strict professional development plans that require them to attend college classes outside of their work days. .

Family support staff is required to have a two-year degree that includes 30 credits in early childhood or human services. As with the teachers, staff who do not meet the qualifications of their position are required to be on a strict professional development plan.

Some of the staff is not required to have college level training, but it is our goal to have a highly qualified staff. As a result, anyone on staff who does not meet minimum qualifications of having at least 12 early childhood college credits is on a professional development plan to bring them to a highly qualified level. Other non-college trainings are made available to all staff throughout the school year to ensure they are current on best practices in early learning and development.

What are the hours of the Early Learning Center?

We are open daily at 8:00. Staff is scheduled to end their day at various times between 3:00 and 4:30. Classroom time ends at 3:00 regardless of if the staff is still in their room. They use the time after 3:00 to prepare for the next day or to complete paperwork requirements.

PLEASE do not bring your child earlier than their scheduled class time. Staff do not start work until their classrooms are scheduled to open and are not expected to accept children any earlier than when their shift begins, even though they may be in the classroom. Likewise, please be mindful of our ending times. Staff end their days at the times listed above, even though they may be in their classrooms after that time.

If you are late to pick up your child, we reserve the right to charge you \$1 for every minute you are late beyond the scheduled ending time.

What should my child bring to school? Or not bring to school?

We provide all supplies for your child's learning experience with the exception of a backpack. All children should bring a backpack to the center every day, and we ask you to please check your child's backpack each day. Inside you will find a school folder where we will send information to you, and you can send information back to us. We will check your child's folder every day, and we ask that you do too. **If you are unable to afford a backpack, the program has some to loan.**

We may occasionally invite you to send recyclable items to school such as toilet paper rolls or egg cartons, but we will never ask you to provide anything that will cost your family money. We may offer opportunities for you to purchase things such as school photos, but we will never ask you to provide food or school supplies.

We recommend that you provide an extra set of clothes to be kept at school or in your child's backpack for the occasional accident or for the days when he/she may get dirty from some of the activities we might have during the day. Playing outside or playing at the water table are examples of when your child might get wet or dirty and may need to change. If you do not want to provide a change of clothes, that's okay. We have extras at both centers for those times.

If your child is here full day and has a favorite napping blanket or snuggly toy they are used to at rest time, you may send it to school and we will keep it stored away for rest time. He/She will not be allowed to have it except at rest time, so please consider if that will be a problem. If it could be a problem, it's best to not send it. He/She can attach to things we have at the center.

Please do not allow children to bring toys or food from home. We are not responsible for anything your child may bring to school. If toys are brought to school, we will require your child to put it in his/her cubbie. If your child brings a toy gun or other weapon type toy to school, it will be confiscated and placed in the director's office. You will need to come to the center pick it up if you want it back. After a week, it will be discarded.

Children are not allowed to eat in front of other children, and we do not have enough staff to stay with them in the lunchroom to finish foods they may have brought with them. We provide breakfast, lunch and snack at the center. Please do not send food with your child and please do not use food to coax your child to school. If your child comes with food, you either need to stay with him/her in the lunchroom until it is finished, or we will require your child to put it in his/her cubbie.

What about my child's birthday? Can I bring in treats?

We became concerned long ago about the increase in children with peanut and other serious food allergies, and could not guarantee that treats coming to school from home would be food allergy free. To avoid this concern we have a monthly birthday celebration where children decorate cookies and are served juice or milk. Children who have birthdays during the month wear a crown to recognize their special day and their classmates sing Happy Birthday to them. We understand your desire to bring treats on your child's special day, but we hope you understand our concern for keeping all the children safe.

What is the center's policy on pets visiting the classrooms?

Animals are not allowed at either center, not even if they are just babies. If you have a special pet you want the children to see, you must have permission from the director at least one week in advance. Permission will only be given if all parents agree to accept the pet as a visitor to their child's classroom, and if all the requirements of pet immunizations and health are met.

What meals are served at the centers?

At both centers, preschoolers attending in the morning will be served breakfast and a snack; preschoolers attending in the afternoon will be served lunch and a snack. Full day children will receive breakfast, lunch and snacks. Children who attend play groups will be served a snack. All meals and snacks meet or exceed USDA guidelines. Monthly meal and snack menus are posted on the parent bulletin board at the center, and a copy is sent home monthly with the newsletter.

NOTE: Our food program requires us to serve meals at the same specified times each day. Children must be here during the scheduled times to receive breakfast or lunch. Breakfast is served 8:00-8:45 and lunch is served between 12:00-12:45. Snacks are served at 10:45 and 2:45.

If you bring your child to school after serving times, please feed your child before your arrival at the center.

CHILDREN ARE NOT ALLOWED TO BRING SACK LUNCHES TO EITHER CENTER. No foods are allowed to be brought from home.

My child won't drink milk because I think she is allergic to it OR because he doesn't like it. Do you have to serve them milk?

As required by our meal program, milk must be served to every child unless a doctor's note is provided telling us why the child cannot have milk and what we are to serve instead. We are happy to serve an alternative to milk if you provide us with a doctor's note, but we cannot take your word for it.

If your child needs other special dietary accommodations due to allergies or religious preferences, please make us aware of those needs at enrollment time or as the need arises.

What are the hand washing requirements?

Children will be directed or helped with hand washing upon arrival at their center, before meals or cooking activities, after toileting or diapering, after outdoor play, after coming in contact with body fluids. Soap, warm water and paper towels are available to the children.

Staff is also required to wash their hands before or after the same activities as the children.

It is also requested that all adults entering classrooms wash their hands to assist us with infection control.

What do I need to know about potty training & other toileting rules?

To avoid any legal or confrontational situations, staff members **MAY NOT** snap body suits or wipe

the private parts of any potty trained child. Before sending your child to school, please teach your child how to do these things for himself/herself.

Children who are not potty trained and still in diapers in junior preschool will be changed by paid staff only (unless the child's parent is present). Whoever changes the child (staff or parent) will be required to follow all licensing specified rules on diaper changing.

We are happy to help potty train any child who is ready. Potty training happens much faster when your child wears training pants covered by plastic pants rather than putting him/her in a pull-up. The moisture next to the skin is uncomfortable in underwear and plastic pants whereas pull-ups absorb the moisture much like a disposable diaper. We will do whatever you prefer, but we recommend using the training pants method.

We supply wipes, but we do not provide diapers or pull-ups.

Once your child is enrolled in three year old preschool, we will not accept pull-ups or diapers unless your child is on an IEP. If your child is not potty trained and not on an IEP, he/she must wear underwear covered by plastic pants or underwear covered by a pull-up. Pull-ups alone are not acceptable. We are not equipped in the three year old classroom to take care of diaper changing. If your preschool aged child poops his/her pants, we will call you to come take care of it.

What is the center's policy on discipline or behavior guidance?

Staff will structure activities and room arrangement to promote positive social interaction in individual and group activities. When inappropriate behaviors occur, the following steps will be taken:

- The child will be redirected to a new activity or more appropriate situation.
- The child will be talked to one-to-one; we will describe the behavior that he/she should be using and the behaviors that are not acceptable at preschool.

If the above steps are not successful the child will be removed to a quiet area under adult supervision where he/she may express and bring emotions under control. Once this is accomplished he/she may rejoin the group. Children will not be removed from the group for excessive amounts of time.

At no time is it appropriate for staff or parents to spank, strike, shake or otherwise use physical force to discipline a child when in the center. Discipline will be handled in a way that protects and enhances the child's self esteem and confidence. The center's full guidance policy may be reviewed upon request.

What are the center's rules around reporting suspected abuse or neglect?

According to Washington State Law, all school district employees, including staff at the Early Learning Center, are required to report to Child Protective Services any incidents of suspected abuse or neglect. If staff sees any of the following or if a child discloses any of the following, we are obligated to report it:

- Sexual abuse (inappropriate touching, watching sexual activity).
- Corporal punishment (striking, slapping, shaking, excessive spanking, ear pulling, hair pulling)
- Being locked out of the house.
- Being left alone without direct or adult supervision.
- No food or complaining of hunger.
- Burns or any wounds not being treated.
- Out of the ordinary bruises, black eyes, cuts, cigarette burns, etc.
- Unclean or improper grooming that leads to shunning from other children.
- Signs of drug abuse.
- Confession of neglect: "I left my children home alone for about a half hour last night so I could go to the store."
- Other indicators not addressed on this list that gives staff cause for concern.

What is the center's illness policy?

For the protection of all children, if your child shows any of the following symptoms, he/she will not be permitted to remain at or attend school:

- Fever of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher.
- Vomiting on two or more occasions within the past 24 hours, or any child who has vomited during the night.
- Diarrhea - three or more watery stools within a 24 hour period or one bloody stool.
- Eye discharge or pinkeye. Children can be re-admitted to the center after medical diagnosis to rule out bacterial or viral infection or after 24 hours on antibiotic treatment.
- Fatigue that prevents participation in regular activities.
- Any rash that isn't an obvious diaper rash, or any draining rash.
- Open or oozing sores, unless properly covered and 24 hours have passed since starting antibiotic treatment.
- Lice or scabies. The school district has a no nit policy. Children will be checked periodically and parents will be called to pick up any child found to have lice or nits. If your child is sent home with lice they cannot ride the school bus back to preschool or childcare until classroom staff has checked the child.

If your child becomes sick while at school, you will be contacted and asked to come get your child **within 30 minutes**. If we are unable to reach you or someone on your child's emergency contact list, the child will be put on a mat with a quilt away from the other children.

If your child is excluded from school due to illness, he/she must have none of the above symptoms when returning to school and must be fever free for 12 hours without medication, or on an antibiotic for at least 24 hours prior to returning. In some instances we may require a doctor's

note saying the child may return to school.

How will I know if there are any communicable diseases at the center?

We try very hard to minimize the spread of germs by disinfecting often and by sticking to strict hand washing and health policies. But the truth is we can't prevent everything because we are open to the community. So that means your child may be exposed to some communicable diseases, viruses, lice or illnesses. If we do have any outbreaks of anything, we will let you know as soon as we have a suspicion or a confirmation. You will receive a letter home, and we will post information on the illness/concern in the front office of the Early Learning Center.

If your child has a communicable disease, he/she should be kept home until he/she is free of it, fever free for 12 hours without medication, on an antibiotic for at least 24 hours prior to returning, or released by a doctor to return. We will discuss with you what is required if your child has a communicable disease on a case by case basis.

Strep throat, pin worms, viral infections, infected glands, measles, mumps, chicken pox, scarlet fever, lice and other communicable diseases are among the conditions categorized as "highly contagious."

We keep it strictly confidential of who is infected in the event of any outbreak. Even if you ask, we will not identify anyone to you.

If you choose not to have your child immunized because of medical, religious or personal reasons and we have an outbreak anywhere in the district, your child will be required to stay home even if he/she is not infected.

Did you know that most communicable diseases start with cold like symptoms? Please consider keeping your child home if he/she shows cold or flu like symptoms. Please help us to help us keep the children and staff of the center healthy.

What about medications?

Medications will not be administered by staff in half-day preschool with the exception of inhalers. If your child is on a medication that must be administered while he or she is in preschool, please make plans to either come to school or send someone in your place to give it.

Children in full day preschool will be administered medications if a medication request form is completed by the parent/guardian/physician specifying dosage information. All medications must come to the center in their original packaging.

The center will not provide any medications, topical ointments, or sunscreen. It is your responsibility to provide these things if needed. If you do provide them, your child's name will be written on the product and will only be used on your child. You must complete a parent permission form for us to use any of these products on your child.

Is there transportation available for my child to come to school?

As a courtesy to families, the South Bend School District's Transportation department provides busing for preschool aged children enrolled at the Early Learning Center. The following guidelines

have been established:

1. When preschool children are transported home, a parent or guardian must acknowledge the arrival of the bus or the child will not be allowed off. If the arriving bus is not acknowledged within a reasonable amount of time, the child will be returned to school. If your child is returned to school, we will attempt to reach you. If we cannot reach you, we will call the numbers on your emergency call list.

If a child is repeatedly returned to school because their arrival is not acknowledged, the school district transportation departments reserve the right to refuse transportation of your child.

2. If you know that your child is not going to come to school, please call us at 875-5327 so we can notify the transportation department and your child's teacher.

3. Children are generally scheduled for AM and PM classes according to their geographical location for pick up. Unfortunately, we usually cannot change a child from one session to another to accommodate parent's schedule changes. We are willing to discuss with you the possibility of changing from one session to the other if there is room, but there is no guarantee that transportation can be offered along with the session change. If that is the case, parents assume the responsibility for transporting their child.

4. For the safety of the children we will only accept one regular address and one alternative address for pick up and drop off. We understand that emergencies may come up and that there may be a time when neither address works for your child. In the event of an emergency or other unexpected circumstance, you may request that your child be picked up or dropped off at a different address from what is listed below. However, an emergency or unexpected change requires the approval of the director Laurie May and you must speak to her directly. If the emergency change is approved, we will do our best to accommodate you, but the change must match current bus runs.

The phone number to the transportation department is:

South Bend 875-5000

What if my child gets hurt at school? What do I need to know?

In the case of a minor injury, staff who are trained in first aid will take appropriate steps to care for your child's owie. The incident will be reported on an "Owie Report" and sent home to you. If the injury is a little more than minor, staff will contact you immediately to give you the details so you can decide if you want to come to the center to care for your child or to pick your child up.

In the case of serious injuries, staff trained in first aid will provide care for your injured child. A second staff member will call 911 and you. If staff cannot reach you, they will attempt to contact your emergency contacts. A staff member will stay with your child, including during transport to the hospital, until you or one of your emergency contacts arrives.

If you or your emergency contacts cannot be reached in an emergency situation, your child's doctor

will be notified. Staff attending your child will seek the best and most appropriate medical attention for the sick or injured child in collaboration with your child's primary care physician and medical staff attending your child. At enrollment you signed a medical emergency form agreeing to this plan and it is kept in your child's file at all times. If anything changes with your directives concerning your child, please let us know immediately.

Do you practice emergency drills at the center?

At both centers we practice monthly fire drills and at least once during each quarter we practice tsunami, earthquake and intruder alert drills.

Intruder alert lockdown drills are mostly for the staff so we will know what to do if we receive an intruder alert warning. We lockdown the building and gather the children strategically throughout the center so they cannot be seen from any window or door. The children generally have no idea that we are practicing a drill. We do not want to alarm them, so do not talk to them about it other than to remind them to always listen to their teachers.

For **earth quake drills** the children are taught to drop to the floor, cover their heads, and hold onto a table leg. If there is not a table nearby, we teach them to go to the nearest wall, drop and cover. After the drill is completed, we exit to the rear of the center and take attendance. Once we have the all clear, we return to our classrooms.

For **Tsunami drills** the entire school participates. We leave our buildings and walk to the top of the hill above the elementary school. Once we arrive at the rendezvous spot, attendance is taken. Once we are given the all clear, we return to the school by walking or by bus.

In the event of a true emergency, we will follow the same rules for releasing your child as we do daily at the center. You may come to where we are to pick up your child, or one of your emergency contacts may pick up your child. If a person comes to pick up your child that is not on our list, we will not let them go if we have not heard from you.

The district keeps enough water, food and other supplies to care for children and staff for at least three days if necessary. We have emergency plans in place that are on record with the city of South Bend and with Pacific County Emergency Management. Additional emergency information is available for you to view in the front office of the Early Learning Center and on the parent bulletin board in our health plan and in our district emergency plan book. If you want to see either manual, ask any front office staff member.

If you would like to participate in a center safety meeting, please contact Laurie May, center director to let her know. We hold safety meetings at least twice during the school year.

How can I find out about weather delays or closures?

Closures and delays due to severe weather or other emergencies will be announced on the local radio stations (97.7 FM, 102.1 FM, 105.7 FM and 1450 AM), as well as on the Seattle television stations of KIRO, KOMO, and KING. You will also be contacted by the School Messenger System.

Two-hour delays will result in the preschool being closed in the morning, but open in the afternoon. All other programming will run according to the school schedule. Preschool days may or may not be made up at the end of the year.

If the South Bend School District is closed due to a weather closure, the Early Learning Center will also be closed.

If the closure occurs after your child has arrived at school, transportation will be provided if that is how he/she arrived at school, or we will call you to come pick up your child. For the safety of staff and staff's children, please come as quickly as possible so they may leave to go home as well.

What do I need to know about family nights and other activities offered by the Early Learning Center?

All families enrolled in the Early Learning Center are invited to participate in the family activities we host. There is no cost involved. Family activities happen throughout the school year and they are a time for you to get to know the families of the children who will go to school for years to come with your child. We will let you know about upcoming activities in the newsletter, by flyers sent home, and very often by phone calls to remind you.

At all of the family activities your preschool aged and younger children will receive a free book. If you attend all the activities throughout the year, your children will have a wonderful library of books to choose from each night when it is time for you to read to them.

By the way, this is a good place to remind you that it is more important than you probably know to read to your child for at least 20 minutes each day. The best time to do that is at bedtime. If reading at bedtime is a consistent habit at your house, it will help your children to settle down for the night. And just think of the great things you will cause them to dream about after you've read to them.

We generally have a family activity every other month starting in September and ending in May. During the months when we don't have a family activity scheduled, we have parent meetings so we can learn from you what you would like to see happen in your child's preschool program, and so you can learn from us what we have planned and what we know is going on in the community.

The staff looks forward to the times when we can be with parents as a group. Without you and your children, none of us would have jobs. We appreciate very much that you share your families with us.

In addition to fun family activities and parent meetings, we also have committees that we need to pull together occasionally. The various funders of the Early Learning Center require us to consult you on safety issues, health concerns, the educational needs of your children, and to find out from you how you feel about the quality of the program we provide. We hope you will join us for these meetings whenever possible. We will let you know when they are scheduled as early as possible so you will have time to plan your calendar around them.

What about parent-teacher conferences & open houses?

At least twice during the year you will be invited by your child's teacher to attend a parent-teacher conference if your child is in preschool 3's or 4's. We will not hold conferences for children in junior preschool or play groups unless requested by the parents.

Conferencing is a time for you to learn specifically about your child and how well he/she is doing in

the classroom. It is also a time for you to learn about things you can do in your home to help your child to strengthen his/her skills in preparation for moving on to the next level of education, whether in preschool or on to kindergarten. There is nothing to fear. Our teachers are kind and they want to tell you about your child and about the fun things going on day to day. Please consider coming to conference. It will be of value to you and important to your child's progress. It will also help your child to feel good about him/herself to know that you came to their school to talk to their teacher.

We will have open houses two to four times during the school year. This is a time for you to look around your child's classroom, to meet other parents, and to visit with all of the staff. Treats or meals are generally served.

What do I do if I am unhappy about something? How do I file a complaint?

If something happens at the center or on a home visit and you want to talk to someone about it, we recommend three steps:

- 1) Talk to your child's teacher or home visitor to resolve the problem. Be as specific as you can. "I'm unhappy because..." "I would like it better if..." "I don't understand why..." "Will you please tell me about..."
- 2) If talking to the teacher or home visitor does not resolve the problem, your next step would be to talk to the director. If you see her in her office, ask if she has time to see you right away. She has an open door policy so it is likely that she will be able to. In some cases it may be best to make an appointment through the secretary. The director will almost always see you the same day that you call or stop by the office, but sometimes she might have to be away from the building or out of the district and the secretary can let you know a convenient time for you to meet with the director. Let the secretary know that you have a complaint, and she will schedule you as quickly as possible. When you meet with the director we again recommend that you be as specific as possible. Please be aware that in most cases the director will ask your permission to also include the staff member so the issue can be resolved all at once.
- 3) Your last resort for resolving a complaint or concern is to meet with the district's superintendent. Meeting with him requires an appointment that can be made through his administrative assistant at 875-6041, option 4.

In all cases complaints will be taken seriously and staff will work to resolve the issue with you as quickly as possible.

HELP! My child does not want to come to school. What should I do?

It is not unusual for a child to resist coming to school, especially at the beginning of the school year when they don't know anyone, or after weekends or long breaks when they've had lots of uninterrupted time with you. Please do not be disturbed if your child is shy, clings to you, cries, tantrums, gets aggressive, begs, hits, refuses or any number of other reactions. These are all signs of nervousness and stress that are completely normal. These behaviors will disappear in a relatively short amount of time as your child gets to know his/her classmates, the teachers and the classroom routine.

We often talk about bonding between parent and child at the time of the child's birth. This means to build a relationship of trust and care. Over time, your child also bonds with siblings, grandparents, family friends and other people in their lives that love and care for them.

It may take some time, but your child will also form loving and bonded relationships with friends and teachers at school. You can help your child with building these bonds by the following:

- Get your child excited about school at home. Talk to him/her about coming to school and all the things the children are going to get to do - play with other kids, color, paint, play outside, eat, cut with scissors, listen to stories, etc.
- Reassure your child that you will be at home waiting for him/her, or if that is not the case, reassure him/her that whoever is going to greet them or pick them up at the end of their school day will be there for them. You might even say something like, "When you get home from school we will look in your backpack and you can show me what you did at school today." If you make a promise that involves something on our end, like putting something in the backpack, please be sure to let us know.
- Consider sending your child on the bus if it is hard to leave the center. Sometimes riding the bus and be very exciting for children and it is the key to getting them to school. For some children, it may be necessary that you ride the bus to school with them once or twice so they can get over the initial nervousness of being on the bus alone. To wean yourself off the bus, you might move to telling your child, "You ride the bus today and I am going to get in the car and meet you there." If you use this idea, don't come into the classroom. Bring your child into the front office, give him/her a kiss and reassure him/her about what will happen after school. If your child offers resistance in the front office, the staff will help your child to go into the classroom. After you've done that for a day or two, you should be good to go.
- Trust us to comfort your child in your absence. Many times parents have a difficult time leaving their begging, crying child. We know it is hard, but if your heart will allow it, trust us to comfort in your absence. We've done it many, many times.
- Believe us when we tell you that it only takes a few minutes for your child to calm down after you leave, and sometimes you may just need to go even though your heart may be breaking. **Please don't get offended if we suggest to you that you go.** We promise that if your child can't calm down in a reasonable amount of time, we will call you to come back. In the case of a very young child (summer birthday, developmentally immature) we may even discuss with you the possibility of waiting another year, but of course the decision is always yours.
- At the end of your child's day, be sure to talk about all the fun things that happened in school. Rather than saying, "What did you do in school today?" ask more specific questions like, "Did you get to paint in school today?" If you are not specific, you will more than likely get an "I don't know." Talking about what happened in school helps your child to be reassured about going again the next day. Always talk about school in a positive way, and remember, the more relaxed you are, the more relaxed your child will be.

If you continue to have struggles with your child not wanting to come to school, please talk to your child's teacher, or you may also meet with Laurie May, director of the centers. We want your child's preschool experience to be pleasant for both of you, so please let us help.

A few words about biting ... and other aggressive behaviors.

"Bite" is a word that strikes fear in parents and staff alike! We try to catch biting before it happens, but unfortunately we are not always successful, and for that we are really sorry. Children, especially very young children, are not as verbal as they sometimes need to be, and when they become frustrated or they want their way they resort to biting. As the children grow older, and as we guide and redirect them, they will learn that biting is an inappropriate response.

Children sometimes learn that biting achieves the response they want. For example, "I want that toy. If I bite he will drop it and I will get it." Biting can also be a response to being provoked. "I had it. She took it from me. I want it back." Some children may choose pushing, hitting, crying or some other response, but it is the biting that we find most difficult to deal with and the action that causes many parents to become angry.

No one wants their child to be bit, hit, shoved, pushed or scratched. We don't want it either. Please understand that these undesirable behaviors are all normal responses from normal children who are in the early stages of learning how to work cooperatively in a group. We promise to do our best to catch these situations before they occur, but please know that we cannot always get there on time. We will do our best to help the children grow past these undesirable reactions and we ask for your patience.

EARLY LEARNING CENTER

Phone: 360-875-5327, option 1

Fax: 360-875-5379

Email: first initial last name@southbendschools.org

Example: lmay@southbendschools.org