

# ECHL Parent Handbook



**2013 - 2014**

**Stephen F. Austin State University**

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# WELCOME

Dear Parents,

Welcome to the Early Childhood Laboratory (ECHL/Lab). We are pleased that you have enrolled your child in our program. We want you to be a part of our Lab and your child's education. We ask that you look over this parent handbook and then keep it at home for future reference.

The Lab has established a number of policies concerning program and classroom practices. These guidelines were developed to comply with state licensing standards, national accreditation criteria, and to reflect input from the SFASU Administration, teachers, and parents. The policies and procedures are written to provide a clear description of expectations for all parties. Our goal is to provide exemplary child care services to our community's families.

We hope your experience at our Lab is a good one and that you are secure in the fact that your child is well cared for. Please communicate with us regarding any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

*Lori Harkness*

Director

936.468.4006 office

936.560.5674 home

Mailing Address: PO Box 6072, SFA Station  
Nacogdoches, Texas 75962

Telephone Number:

936.468.4006

E-Mail: [lharkness@sfasu.edu](mailto:lharkness@sfasu.edu)

Website address: [www.sfasu.edu/echl](http://www.sfasu.edu/echl)

Parents may review a copy of the minimum standards and our recent licensing inspection report in the office.

Contact information for the local licensing agency:

936.633.3745 office

800.858.5400 PRS Child Abuse Hotline

[www.tdprs.tx.us](http://www.tdprs.tx.us) PRS Website

# OVERVIEW

## History

The provision for quality education and care for young children has been a vital aspect of the academic program at Stephen F. Austin State University for many years. In 1969, The Early Childhood Laboratory started as The University Kindergarten and consisted of one classroom. This classroom was used as a laboratory for Elementary Education students who planned to teach in the newly funded state kindergartens. Located in the Manse of the Westminster Presbyterian Church, the SFA University Kindergarten operated on a half-day basis.

The following year the program moved on the SFA campus. From 1970 until 1975, this classroom was housed in an old church building on Baker Street behind Wilson Dormitory. During this period, the kindergarten was expanded to two, half-day kindergarten sessions.

Also operating on this campus during the same time period was a Home Economics Nursery School which started in 1936. This school served infants through four-year-olds in a half-day format.

The Early Childhood Laboratory which opened in 1975 was designed to serve infants through five-year olds. This new facility met the educational needs of a growing demand for early childhood students in both Elementary Education and Home Economics. The new facility provided the community with provisions for all-day, childcare in an educational setting that was to serve as a model in the field. The Home Economics Nursery School continued to operate until 1979, when the programs merged. At this time the space in Home Economics became the new primary or first grade classroom expanding the age of children served from infants to first grade.

Ready acceptance of the Early Childhood Laboratory by parents and children, and the rapid growth of the early childhood program, as well as the field of Early Childhood Education, resulted in severe space problems before the building was yet ten years old. In 1983-84, another expansion doubled the size of the Early Childhood Laboratory allowing age groupings to be designed to better serve children and college students.

In 1995 public school educators requested that the Lab be extended to house a Nacogdoches Public School, second-grade classroom. After several years of operation, the Lab's kindergarten, first and second grades plus an additional third and fourth grade became a collaborative charter school between SFASU and Nacogdoches Public Schools. A fifth grade classroom was added in 2004. During the spring 2008 semester, SFASU applied to the state to be approved for a University Charter. This was unanimously approved by the State Board of Education and opened fall 2008 and serves children in kindergarten through fifth grade.

In August, 2009, the Early Childhood Lab, SFA Charter School, and Department of Elementary Education moved into the \$30.8 million East Texas Early Childhood Research Center. This state-of-the-art facility allows these three programs as well as other campus departments to play a leading role in research and development in the field of education.

During each long-term semester, more than 2000 college students use the laboratory for observation, participation, and other educational purposes. Using a Constructivist Curriculum, The Early Childhood Program at SFASU is recognized as one of the most outstanding Early Childhood programs in the nation. The college program is accredited by NCATE and the children's program is accredited by NAEYC. Serving over 2000 college students and 130 children each year, this dynamic program continues to meet the demands of a changing university, community, and state.

By Dr. Janice Pattillo

## **Role of the Laboratory**

The Early Childhood Laboratory (ECHL/Lab) is a facility maintained for the education of University students who are learning to work with young children and their families, and is committed to quality education and care of young children. The ECHL is a subunit of the Elementary Education Department as well as a Field Based Center for the James I. Perkins College of Education. The Lab provides classroom facilities, "hands-on," and observational experiences with the lab children, and supervision for students in the Elementary Education, Human Sciences, and other instructional programs. The ECHL is a demonstration and training unit of Stephen F. Austin State University that serves two principle functions:

- ✚ Model demonstration program of child care and early childhood education to University students
- ✚ Training site for University students in connection with their academic studies in child development and early childhood education.

## **Philosophy**

The ECHL program is based on the following tenets:

- ✚ Children have an intrinsic motivation to act and to organize their actions.
- ✚ A variety of educational opportunities is more intellectually productive than is a specified set of lessons offered in sequential order to all children.
- ✚ Behaviors that reveal autonomy, openness, problem solving ability and personal integrity are critically needed in a modern, technological, democratic society.

The program attempts to develop:

- ✚ Sensory/perceptual/motor functioning
- ✚ Inter – and intra- personal competence
- ✚ Thinking and reasoning skills
- ✚ Functional use of language conceptualizing process

These developments are the foundation upon which intellectual and personal competences are based.

The ECHL program is designed to facilitate the total development of young children. Its curriculum is designed to develop intellectual and personal competence rather than to train children in performing a limited set of academic skills.

## **Program Quality/ Standards of Excellence**

High quality early childhood education benefits children. Children who experience a quality program are more likely to have greater academic success, enhanced self esteem and increased self-control. The ECHL aligns the program and curriculum with federal and state guidelines, is licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, and accredited by the National Association for the Education of Young Children, NAEYC. For more information about program quality you can visit the following websites:

### **Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS)**

[www.tdprs.state.tx.us](http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us)

### **National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)**

[www.naeyc.org](http://www.naeyc.org)

### **NAEYC Accreditation, the Right Choice for Kids**

[www.rightchoiceforkids.org](http://www.rightchoiceforkids.org)

### **Texas Education Agency – Pre-K Curriculum Guidelines (TEA)**

[www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/early/prekguide.html](http://www.tea.state.tx.us/curriculum/early/prekguide.html)

### **Child Development Associate Council (CDA)**

[www.cdacouncil.org](http://www.cdacouncil.org)

## **NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct**

The NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct offers guidelines for responsible behavior and sets forth a common basis for resolving the principle ethical dilemmas encountered in early childhood care and education. The ECHL staff adheres to the NAEYC standards and the following Statement of Commitment as a professional guide:

### **Statement of Commitment**

As individuals who work with young children, we commit ourselves to furthering the values of early childhood education as they are reflected in the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct. To the best of our ability we will:

- ✚ Ensure that programs for young children are based on current knowledge of child development and early childhood education.
- ✚ Respect and support families in their task of nurturing children.
- ✚ Respect colleagues in early childhood education and support them in maintaining the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.
- ✚ Serve as an advocate for children, their families and their teachers in the community and society.
- ✚ Maintain high standards of professional conduct.
- ✚ Recognize how personal values, opinions and biases can affect professional judgment.
- ✚ Be open to new ideas and be willing to learn from the suggestions of others.
- ✚ Continue to learn, grow and contribute as a professional.
- ✚ Honor the ideals and the principles of the NAEYC Code of Ethical Conduct.

## Program Information

The ECHL is open to the public on a tuition basis. Operating hours are 7:30-5:30 Monday through Friday. Nutritious lunches and morning and afternoon snacks are served to each child.

The ECHL is designed to serve children at five levels of development, the levels are:

- ✚ **INFANT** (Ages 2-12 months approximately)  
Ratio: 8 children/2 teachers and University student worker
- ✚ **TODDLER I** (Ages 13-24 months approximately)  
Ratio: 12 children/2 teachers and University student worker
- ✚ **TODDLER II** (Ages 25-36 months approximately)  
Ratio: 16 children/2 teachers and University student worker
- ✚ **PRE-K I** (Age 3 years)  
Ratio: 20 children/2 teachers and University student worker at selected times
- ✚ **PRE-K II** (Age 4 years)  
Ratio: 22 children/2 teachers and University student worker at selected times
- ✚ **School Age** (Age 5 years through 5<sup>th</sup> grade)  
Ratio: 25 children/2 teachers and/or University student workers

## Releasing Children to People Other than Parents

In order to protect your child, it is our policy not to release children to persons other than the child's parents or guardians. Children will be released to other adults under the following circumstances:

- ✚ The person's name is listed on the Emergency Card by parents or guardians;
- ✚ Under an emergency condition, the parent has called the ECHL (and has been identified by an ECHL employee) and has given the name of the adult he/she wishes to pick up his/her child or children.

Anytime someone other than the parent or guardian picks up the child, the classroom teacher and front office must be notified. Upon arrival, the designated person will be asked to show picture identification to the Early Childhood Lab office staff. A copy of each approved person's photo ID will be kept in the child's file.

*State Licensing requires that any request for a new person to be added to your child's pickup list must be in writing and delivered by the parent to the Lab.*

## Child Custody Issues

It is the Lab's intent to meet children's needs, especially when parents may be experiencing difficult situations such as a divorce, separation, or remarriage. However, the Lab **cannot legally restrict** the non-custodial parent from visiting the child, reviewing the child's records, or picking the child up unless the Lab has been furnished current legal documents. Copies of these court documents must be kept in the child's file.

## **Visitor Policy**

Any visitor to ECHL must

- ✚ sign in at the front desk & get a visitor's badge.
- ✚ provide identification.
- ✚ have an approved purpose for a limited visit.
- ✚ be courteous of the classroom schedule and activities.

## **Child Abuse/Neglect**

If we suspect a child has been abused, mistreated, or neglected, we are required by law to report it within 48 hours to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and/or to a law enforcement agency. *Child abuse and neglect are against the law in Texas, and so is failure to report it. CHILD ABUSE HOTLINE 800.858.5400*

## **Gang Free Zone**

Under the Texas Penal Code, any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to a harsher penalty.

## **Asbestos Operation and Management Program**

No asbestos or other hazardous materials were used in the building of our facility. Documentation is available for review in the main office.

## **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The ECHL does not discriminate against any child or family based on race, color, national origin, sex, religion, or disabilities. Reasonable accommodations will be made to provide services to all children enrolled in our program.

## **Confidentiality Statement**

ECHL maintains confidentiality and respects the family's right to privacy, refraining from disclosure of confidential information and intrusion into family life. However, when we have reason to believe that a child's welfare is at risk, we will share confidential information with agencies, as well as with individuals who have legal responsibility for intervening in the child's interest. Disclosure of children's records beyond family members, program personnel, and consultants having an obligation of confidentiality shall require familial consent (except in cases of abuse or neglect).

# PROCEDURES & GUIDELINES

## Application/Enrollment

The ECHL enrolls children, ages 6 weeks to five years. Parents of prospective students are encouraged to observe the ECHL class appropriate for their child. If interested in enrolling the child in the program, the following procedures must be followed.

- ✚ Applications are received during the month of March each year. Submission of the application form will hold your child's place on the wait list for a one-year period. Each March you must renew the application to ensure that your child will stay on the list and maintain his/her status (or possibly move up if others do not renew their application). Renewal is not automatic.
- ✚ A one-time application fee of \$25.00 will be assessed with submitted/renewed application. Your application process is not considered complete until the fee is paid and the completed application form is received.
- ✚ Upon acceptance, a materials fee and the first month's tuition are due immediately. Both fees are non-refundable.

Children will be accepted in the ECHL on a first-come, first-served basis with the following exceptions:

- ✚ A child who has a sibling currently enrolled and attending the ECHL, will be given priority over one who does not.
- ✚ A child of a full-time SFASU employee will be given priority over one who is not.
- ✚ The length of time on the wait list will be a determining factor for allocating positions.
- ✚ The ECHL management team will exercise professional judgment in filling vacancies and consideration will be given to the unique makeup of each classroom in order to maintain the highest quality care for all of the children in the facility.

## Lab Closings/Holidays

The current Agreement Form and Lab calendar includes a list of anticipated Lab closings and holidays. In the event our nation calls a special national day or the University closes, the Lab will notify the families of this observance. No refunds are made for Lab closings.

## Weather/Other Emergencies

The ECHL will close along with the University in the event of inclement weather conditions or emergencies. During periods when University classes are not in session, the responsibility for closing is that of the Lab director. The director will place announcements of Lab closings on local radio and T.V. stations. No refunds are made for Lab closings. The Lab office staff monitors radio reports during inclement weather to remain aware of changing conditions. Parents need to pick-up children within 30 minutes of the announced closure times to avoid late pickup fees.

## **Promotions to Other Classes**

Age is only one of the criteria used to determine a child's placement in the next age group. The director, teachers, and parents shall decide when a child should be promoted to another classroom based on multiple considerations:

- (1) classroom observations,
- (2) the child's readiness for experience with an older group of children,
- (3) the child's social, emotional, and general cognitive development.

When teachers determine a child is ready for placement in another class and space is available, the parent will be contacted and may be called in for a conference. At that time, all parties involved will discuss the promotion criteria. Arrangements for a smooth, gradual entry to the new classroom will be made.

## **Withdrawal**

When a child withdraws from the Early Childhood Lab, a withdrawal form must be completed and submitted to the director or assistant director at least 14 calendar days before the child is to withdraw. Charges will cease at the end of the day indicated on the withdrawal form. If advance written notice is not given, the parent agrees to pay the additional two weeks of tuition.

## **Insurance**

All children enrolled in the program are insured for accidents that may occur while children are in our care.

## **Discontinuing Service**

The Early Childhood Laboratory reserves the right to discontinue services to any child if the

- ✚ parents fail to reasonably cooperate with the Lab in the provision of educational services to their child;
- ✚ parents fail to reasonably cooperate with the Lab in adhering to all Lab policies;
- ✚ child is dangerous to self or others;
- ✚ child is destructive of state property or so disruptive that the education of other students is significantly impaired;
- ✚ child requires a more appropriate educational setting to better meet the child's individual needs.

## **University Student Participation**

Stephen F. Austin State University students work with children in the Lab under the supervision of professional Lab staff members. Parents accept this practice as part of the enrollment agreement.

Parents must complete a release form stating their child may be tested, assessed, or evaluated as part of the professional preparation of University students. Furthermore, Children may be photographed, videotaped, recorded and quoted for educational purposes, and will be viewed on live, online streaming to parents by secure login.

## Fees & Payments

### Tuition/Late Charge

The Early Childhood Lab tuition is based on 12 months enrollment and is due the first of each month. The ½ of the first month's tuition will be paid in advance at the time of enrollment to secure the position, and full tuition will be due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each subsequent month thereafter.

A late charge of **\$20.00** (per child) will be assessed if payment is not received by the tenth of the month. Partial payments for a single child will not be accepted. If the account becomes more than 30 days in arrears, the child's space **will be** forfeited.

Parents receive an Agreement Form that includes a current fee schedule and calendar that indicates Lab holidays and closings. Payments must be made by check or money order. CASH WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED. Check or money order is payable to SFA ECHL and mailed or delivered to the director at

ECH Lab, P.O. Box 6072  
SFA Station  
Nacogdoches, Texas 75962-6072.

**DO NOT TAKE OR SEND PAYMENTS TO TEACHERS.** Written notice of delinquent accounts will be issued after a payment is 10 days in arrears.

The Early Childhood Lab closes at **5:30 p.m.** Late fees are assessed if you fail to pick up your child on time. The fee is calculated at **\$25.00** per child for any part of the first 5 minutes, and an additional **\$20.00** per child for any part of the next 5 minutes, and **\$1.00** per child for each additional minute after **5:40 p.m.** Repeated failures to pick up your child in a timely manner can result in enrollment termination.

*If we have not heard from the parent and we have not been able to contact other authorized persons listed on the child's enrollment form by 6:00 p.m., we are required by law to consider a **child abandoned, and we must call the police.***

### Absences

The Lab operates on a budget, based on enrollment income. For this reason, no reduction of fees is made for absences.

### Materials/Supply Fee

A one-time, non-refundable materials/supply fee of \$300.00 per year is charged for all children enrolling during the school year. This fee may be paid in two payments of \$150 each. The first is due September 1<sup>st</sup> and the second January 1<sup>st</sup>. A late fee will be assessed for any fees not paid by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month due.

For children enrolling in the ECHL for the first time, the materials/supply fee is due upon acceptance and is non-refundable. For newly enrolled children, summer materials/supply fee is as follows: enrolling during the month of June \$75, July \$50, August \$25.

## Classroom Guidelines

Teaching staff develop individual relationships with children by providing care that is responsive, attentive, consistent, comforting, supportive, and culturally sensitive.

### Arrival and Departure

Children may arrive no earlier than 7:30 a.m. and must be escorted by a parent (or adult listed on the child's emergency card) to the child's **classroom** and released directly to the teacher. Children may not be dropped off at the door. All children must be picked up no later than 5:30 p.m. to avoid a late fee charge. Parents must let the teacher know when a child is arriving or departing AND must sign the child in and out each day (this is a state licensing criteria). In the event the parent (or person delivering the child to the classroom) forgets to sign in his/her child, the classroom teacher will contact the parent and he/she *must* return to the Lab and sign in the child within 30 minutes to avoid a fee.

- Toddlers and Pre-K classrooms begin curriculum instruction at 9:30 a.m. In order for children to receive the full benefit of our program and to participate with the group activities, we ask that you have your child here by this time. If there is a special circumstance, such as a doctor's appointment requiring arrival after 9:30 a.m., please notify the teacher so she will know when to expect your child.
- Arrival time is 7:30 a.m. to 9:30 a.m., and departure time is 3:00 p.m. to 5:30 p.m. Children will benefit most from the educational aspects of the program if they arrive by 9:30 a.m. Lunch is served between 11:00 and 11:30. Rest time takes place between noon and 2:00. Please do not bring your child to the center between 11:00 and 2:00, because this will make separation from you more difficult and is disruptive to the rest of the class.
- If you have made prior arrangements with the teacher for a late arrival, you must sign in at the front office as well as your child's classroom.
- Do not drop your child off during naptime.
- Call the ECHL (936.468.4006) no later than 9:30 a.m. if your child is going to be absent (9:30 a.m. is the time the daily lunch count is made).
- If you are picking up your child(ren) between 5:15 and 5:30, you must enter the building through the front, main entrance. Once your child(ren) has/have been picked up, you are asked not to return to the classroom. This allows our cleaning crew to begin promptly at 5:30 p.m. and our teaching staff to be free of their duties.
- **ECH Lab is considered a NO CELL PHONE zone.**

*Parents are asked not to bring children after 9:30 a.m. except in the event of a doctor's appointment, an emergency, or a special family occasion. When this occurs, please call before bringing your child after 9:30 to allow center staff to plan for your child's attendance.*

### Parking/Doors

Parents may temporarily park in the loading and unloading zone on the ECHL side (south side) of the building. When using this drive, all vehicles must pull forward and avoid blocking the entrance or exit to the drive. If you plan to be in the building for any length of time, please park in the main lot in the front of the building. The ECHL loading/unloading entrance door will unlock with issued swipe cards from 7:30 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. Swipe cards will again work from 3:00 p.m. until 5:15 p.m. If you need in our building between 9:00 a.m. and 3:00 p.m. or are picking up your child after the doors have locked at 5:15 p.m., please use the main, front entrance.

## Naptime

We must provide a supervised sleep or rest period after lunch for children 18 months or older ([www.tdprs.state.tx.us](http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us)). Children under the age of 18 months most often sleep according to individual schedules.

## Discipline

The purpose of all “discipline” in the ECHL is to help children become increasingly self-managing and socially responsible. Positive, non-punitive methods are used in the pursuit of this goal. Discipline is directed toward improving the child’s understanding of social expectations, developing appropriate ways of behaving in given situations, and understanding causes and effects of the feelings and actions experienced.

Physical punishment, threats, and intimidation of a child are inappropriate and not practiced at the ECHL. Instead, techniques are used for diverting attention to constructive pursuits, compromising/arbitrating differences, extending understanding of the reasons for “rules,” and encouraging children to seek alternatives within the boundaries of their abilities. In some instances, in order to help a distressed child regain self-control, the child will be removed from the situation and allowed a private time to quiet himself/herself before rejoining the classroom activity. A reassuring adult will assist the child in regaining self-control. The partnership between parents and teachers is essential to make the advancement of the child’s autonomy and integrity a real and functioning accomplishment.

**If a parent refuses to work with the staff in resolving the problem and/or the behavior problem persists resulting in a chronic situation requiring greater need for care than the ECHL teachers can provide, the child’s enrollment is subject to termination.**

*The ECHL discipline/guidance policy complies with the Texas Administrative Code and the rules in the Subchapter L of Minimum Standards ([www.tdprs.state.tx.us](http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us)).*

## Birthdays

Parents who wish to bring refreshments for a special snack should make arrangements in advance with a teacher and the kitchen supervisor. Cupcakes, cookies or other store purchased snacks of individual proportions are preferred since each child receives the same portion. This also makes serving much easier. Rather than bringing party favors/balloons/etc. to the child’s classroom, please consider donating a book, or CD, to the ECHL in your child’s honor. A bookplate will be placed inside the book or on the CD/tape cover to recognize your child and his/her special date.

**The child’s birthday observance at the Lab is not intended to take the place of each family’s special observance at home.** If you do decide to provide a birthday treat for the class, be mindful that:

-  no gifts are to be exchanged.
-  no treat bags or party favors are to be distributed in the classroom.

*Birthday party invitations for parties away from the Lab may be distributed at school **only** through the classroom teacher if all children in the class are invited. If you do not want your child's birthday celebrated, please notify the Lab in advance in writing.*

ECHL does observe traditional, national, cultural, and seasonal holidays with activities that are child-centered, educationally oriented, and developmentally appropriate. Every effort is made to be culturally sensitive.

Please share with the Lab staff any celebrations that are important to your family so that these, too, may be included in our classroom planning.

## **Bringing Items from Home**

Children frequently want to share with their class nature items and treasures from home. Such items are especially welcomed if they support a topic being studied. It is always a good idea to check with a child's teacher before bringing objects to the Lab.

We **do discourage children from bringing toys** from home; although, some teachers will allow items of comfort, such as a soft cuddly stuffed animal, to be brought to school to help a child sleep more comfortably (please check with the teacher first). When a child brings a toy from home, it is sometimes difficult for them to share and the toy could get lost or broken. The staff is not responsible for lost or damaged items.

*The Lab **does not allow** toys of violence like guns, swords, or violent action figures.*

## **Clothing**

Children should be dressed in comfortable, casual clothes, which are washable and suitable for active play. Clothing should encourage self-help skills; for example, overalls or tight belts might restrict a young child's ability to care for bathroom needs. Shoes should be well fitting and safe for playground activities. Canvas or leather tennis shoes are recommended. **Boots, cleats, flip-flops, crocks with or without backs, and some sandals are inappropriate for many outside activities and should not be worn to school.** A complete change of clothing (labeled with the child's name) is to be available in the child's cubby at all times. Please replace these items as they are used to avoid embarrassment or inconvenience to your child. All items left at school should be labeled with the child's name including jackets, sweaters, extra clothing, blankets, and pillows. Clothing with an aggressive theme or nature (i.e. Ninja Turtles, Batman, and Power Rangers) is inappropriate and should not be worn to school.

## **Other Children in the Classroom**

In consideration of the health and safety of the ECHL children, we ask that older/younger siblings refrain from entering our classrooms or playgrounds when a child is being dropped off or picked up. The teachers and assistants will be glad to assist you with this process.

## **Camera Log In**

The ECHL has cameras located in each of the five classrooms. Parents will receive a username and password to obtain access to view classrooms for which their child(ren) is/are enrolled. Specific guidelines and procedures are distributed separately.

# Curriculum

## Weekly Lesson Reviews

On-going assessments are conducted throughout your child's time with us. These assessments are used to determine the weekly lesson plans for the whole class and also to help develop individual curriculum goals for your child. Each teacher designs classroom lesson plans around the emerging skills of the whole class. There are also plans for individualized skill building for children who need help or challenge with emerging skills. Weekly plans are built around the developmental domains with the teacher choosing assessment items from each domain. There is an objective and activity for each item. A weekly review of the lesson is available for parents in the classroom. We encourage parents to support the activities and to practice specific skills each week; it is also helpful for parents to read the same books with their child and to sing the songs and finger plays. **Children learn by repetition.**

## Assessments

At the ECHL, an assessment is administered onsite to determine your child's developmental age upon enrollment and thereafter throughout the year. The child's assessments will be used to

- ✚ identify children's interests and needs,
- ✚ describe the developmental progress and learning,
- ✚ design classroom curriculum and adapt teaching practices,
- ✚ communicate with families, and
- ✚ arrange for referrals when indicated.

*The assessments are shared with parents during Parent/Teacher scheduled conferences.*

## Referrals

When program staff suspect that a child has a developmental delay or other special need, this possibility is communicated to families in a sensitive, supportive, and confidential manner with documentation and explanation for the concern, suggested next steps, and information about resources for assessment.

Identifying children with disabilities or delays early helps minimize or prevent future problems. As a professional institution, the ECHL assumes responsibility under federal regulation (34 CFR, Sec. 303.321) and state regulation (25 TAC, Sec.621.45) to refer a child under the age of 3, to Early Childhood Intervention (ECI) **within two working days** of identification of a disability or suspected delay in development. ECI is federally and state funded through the Individuals with Disabilities Act and is available in every Texas County.

*All screening referrals will be kept strictly confidential and will be used only to help access appropriate care as needed.*

## **Technology Policy**

ECHL uses technology to extend learning within the classroom and to integrate and enrich the curriculum. The use of passive media (television and video) is limited to developmentally appropriate programming.

## **Extracurricular Activities**

Parents agree to take responsibility for getting children ready for extracurricular activities such as gymnastics, dance, soccer, etc.

## **Outdoor Participation**

Outside play is an integral part of a child's day. Except during extreme weather conditions, all children will participate in outside activities. Teachers determine outdoor activities based on temperature, wind chill factor, humidity, and age of children. If a child must remain indoors for medical reasons, other arrangements for childcare should be made. Extra personnel are unavailable to provide one-on-one care.

## **Field Trips**

The Excursion Agreement form will be signed when the parent registers his/her child. This form allows the child to attend all on/off campus excursions. Parents will be advised at least 48 hours prior to trips requiring vehicular travel. If children take walks on campus, a notice will be posted on the classroom door.

# Health & Safety

## Accidents/Emergencies/First Aid

The ECHL works hard to provide a safe environment for the children at all times. However, part of growing up can include bumps and bruises. Our ECHL is equipped with simple first aid supplies and if a child has a minor accident, the staff will provide appropriate first aid to the child.

When injuries do occur, we make two copies of a written report to inform parents about the accident. One copy is for the parent and the other copy is to be signed by the parent and kept in the child's school file.

## Emergency Conditions

A signed authorization for emergency care is kept in each child's file. Physician information and emergency telephone numbers must be kept current. Emergency contacts must be local or able to respond within 30 minutes of a phone call to avoid a late fee.

### Medical Emergencies:

In the case of injury or illness during school hours, the following procedures will be followed:

1. The staff will administer necessary first aid and then attempt to contact one or both parents.
2. If parents cannot be reached, persons designated in the child's file will be called.
3. When a child needs immediate medical attention, a staff member will contact the child's doctor and upon his/her recommendation, take the child to the doctor's office or nearest emergency room.

### Emergency Drills:

Tornado and fire drills are practiced during the year.

## Hygiene

Every effort is made by the ECHL staff to prevent the spread of germs. We strive to maintain the highest standards of cleanliness, which includes required hand washing for children and teachers and instruction in hygiene to help minimize the spread of germs.

The ECHL promotes dental hygiene by providing children twelve months and older a daily opportunity for tooth brushing. Infant's gums are cleaned with a disposable tooth wipe after each feeding.

## Monitoring

Children monitored at all times by visual and auditory means. The rooms are arranged to accommodate this criteria. All teachers/staff have direct visual and auditory contact at all times. This includes outside playgrounds and sleeping arrangements.

## Illness

One of the most serious challenges facing group care situations for young children is preventing illness. The ECHL is a well-child childcare facility. The ECHL uses the following guidelines to protect your child as well as others from contagious illness. We realize that this can sometimes be an inconvenience for parents but we trust that you will understand the necessity for such a policy. If any of the following conditions occur while your child is in attendance, you will be notified and your **child must be picked up from the Lab within 30 minutes of notification to avoid late fees.**

1. An ill child belongs at home, not in a well-child childcare center where respiratory and gastrointestinal diseases spread rapidly from child-to-child under the best of preventative precautions.
2. An ill child will not be accepted for care if one or more of the following exists:
  - a. the illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in facility activities,
  - b. the illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children,
  - c. the child has one or more of the following:
    - + oral temperature 100.4 degrees or greater, rectal temperature 101.4 degrees or greater, armpit temperature 99.4 degrees or greater, until the child has been free of fever for more than 24 hours; accompanied by behavioral changes or other signs/symptoms of illness until medical evaluation indicates the child can be included in the facility's activities, or
    - + symptoms/signs of possible severe illness (such as lethargy, uncontrolled breathing, diarrhea and/or vomiting illness {two or more episodes in 24 hours}), rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, wheezing, behavior change, or other unusual signs until medical evaluation indicates the child can be included in the facility's activities.
    - + symptoms of an infectious disorder such as ringworm, pink eye, head lice, etc., or
  - d. the child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease until medical evaluation determines the child is no longer contagious and may participate in the facility's activities (refer to the Communicable Disease Chart for Child Care Centers @ [www.tdprs.state.tx.us](http://www.tdprs.state.tx.us)).

One of the best ways to prevent the spread of disease is to have strictly enforced standards regarding the exclusion of ill children. We need your help for this. **Do not bring an ill child to the ECHL and if your child becomes ill at the ECHL, please pick up your child immediately.**

If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease, please notify the ECHL. It is important for us to be aware of what children may have been exposed to so we can communicate this with other parents.

### **THE 24-HOUR 'SYMPTOM FREE' RULE**

**The Lab's policy requires that your child be free of symptoms of illness: fever, diarrhea or vomiting for at least 24 hours before returning to school.**

#### **Fever-free means without medication for fever reduction.**

Please keep in mind that if we send your child home because of illness, the child will not be admitted to the Lab the next day because the **24-hour period** will not have elapsed. Do not rush a child's return to school following an illness. The Lab reserves the right to require a doctor's statement before the child can be re-admitted to the Lab.

## Medications/Immunizations **ONLY PRESCRIPTION MEDICINES WILL BE ADMINISTERED**

Medicine must have the child's name, a current prescription date on the label, and must be in the original container for dispensing at school. Medicine forms are available in each classroom and must be completed by the parent and handed to the classroom teacher.

Immunization requirements, TB tests, and hearing and vision screenings follow the Texas Department of Health guidelines.

Based on the recommendations of local physicians and pharmacists, the following schedules will be followed when administering medication to children.

Directions	Schedule
2 times per day	not administered at school
3 times per day	1 <sup>st</sup> dose at home 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose at ECHL w/lunch 3 <sup>rd</sup> dose at home
4 times per day	1 <sup>st</sup> dose at home 2 <sup>nd</sup> dose with lunch 3 <sup>rd</sup> dose with 2:30 snack 4 <sup>th</sup> dose at home

## Nutrition

If a child requires a special diet, the parent **must provide food from home and the child's file must include a signed statement** that the ECHL is not responsible for the nutritional value of the food brought from home or for meeting the child's daily food needs. In addition, if a child requires diet modifications for health reasons, we must have written notice from a physician or registered-licensed dietician.

*Any food or beverage brought from home must be labeled with the child's name and date.*

## Food/Menus

Well-balanced, hot meals and nutritious a.m. and p.m. snacks are served daily. Children are NOT to bring food, gum, or candy to the Lab; this includes breakfast. Individual children bringing special goodies create problems for other children as well as for the teachers. If a child has special dietary needs, food allergies, or other special conditions requiring attention, parents need to advise the director, teachers, and kitchen supervisor immediately and provide a doctor's letter outlining specific needs. Lab policy is to accommodate children with special dietary needs or allergies as much as possible. Substitutions will be made if readily available. Parents will be asked to provide foods or snacks when suitable substitutions cannot be made. Menus are available to parents online and posted in each classroom.

The ECHL supports breastfeeding mothers and provides a comfortable, quiet place for feeding.

Teachers do not offer children younger than four years old the following foods: hot dogs, whole or sliced into rounds; whole grapes; nuts; popcorn; raw peas and hard pretzels; spoonful's of peanut butter; or chunks of raw carrots or meat larger than can be swallowed whole. The Teachers/staff cut the food into pieces no larger than 1/4 inch square for infants and 1/2 inch square for toddlers, according to each child's chewing and swallowing capability.

*The Lab does enforce a no candy rule in the classrooms. Our goal is to maintain the quality of the child's daily nutrition and we ask that parents join us in this effort to promote healthy children.*

# **PARENTS: THE SCHOOL HOME CONNECTION**

Parents' involvement in their child's education is encouraged at the ECHL in both formal and informal ways. It is important for parents to know what is happening in their child's classroom as well as at the Lab. Please make every effort to stay informed; you are your child's advocate and their most important teacher.

## **Parent Involvement**

The ECHL encourages active parent participation. Parents and Lab staff share a common concern for the commitment to each child's development; communication and cooperation are essential. Communication should be continual in order for parents and teachers to share their knowledge about the child's particular needs and special experiences.

## **Parent On-site Observation**

Parents are encouraged to take frequent advantage of the opportunity to observe their child in the observation booth, which is always open; and to discuss their observations with the teacher. Parents are informed through weekly lesson plans (posted inside the observation booth), newsletters, and charts located in each classroom.

## **The ECH Lab Lines Newsletter**

The ECHL publishes a newsletter as a way to maintain communication with parents. It is sent home on each child's cubby.

## **Classroom Parent Information Board**

There is a bulletin board located on or beside the classroom door, which contains both general and specific parent information. Please make a point to stop and check the information on the board each day. This will help with the process of communication and connecting with parents with the ECHL.

## **Parent Conferences**

All parents are invited to participate in parent/teacher conferences. These conferences are held twice each year and upon request at a time that is convenient for parents and teachers. The purposes of conferences are to discuss the child's individual developmental progress and goals, and to plan for the child's future growth and development. Occasionally a teacher may request a parent conference when there is a special concern in the classroom. We ask that parents respect this request with prompt attention.

## **Parent Meetings/Classes**

The ECHL holds group parent meetings throughout the year. This includes a general meeting, new parent orientations, and program/classroom Open House. Periodically, parent classes are held in the evening in the fall and spring. These classes cover a variety of topics related to the ECHL's program and/or the development of young children.

## ECHL Team and PTO

The ECHL Team is composed of a group of staff, the Early Childhood Undergraduate Coordinator, University faculty members, and SFASU's Elementary Education Chair. This group serves in an advisory capacity to provide support and guidance to the Director. In addition to this ECHL Team, parents of all children enrolled in the ECHL and all ECHL faculty and staff are encouraged to join the Parent Teacher Organization. This organization typically meets each month, offers ideas and suggestions to the ECHL Team, and plans social and community events promoting families and young children.

## Parent Resources

The ECHL maintains a resource area for our parents in the main office area. Additionally, each classroom has specific developmental information available on a variety of early childhood care and education topics. Other helpful resources can be found at the following websites: [www.parentinginformation.org](http://www.parentinginformation.org), [www.zerotothree.org](http://www.zerotothree.org), [www.iamyouchild.org](http://www.iamyouchild.org), [www.collabforchildren.org](http://www.collabforchildren.org)

## Organizational Structure

The ECHL employs a Management Team to assist with communication and supervision at the Lab. Administrators include the director, assistant to the director, and the Early Childhood Undergraduate Coordinator. Any of these managers may assist you with questions or concerns about the Lab. In addition, there are one full-time sub, one assistant to the director, one secretary, four master teachers, six lead teachers, and several part-time student assistants.

## Parent/Teacher Communications

When you have a concern, please remember

- ✚ teachers want parents to be satisfied with the care their child is receiving.
- ✚ to talk directly to teachers whenever possible, if you would prefer, talk with the director.
- ✚ use the Solution/ Resolution worksheet found in the Appendix of the ECHL Handbook to facilitate verbal communication.
- ✚ REALIZE that if you have a concern with a teacher, the director will need to investigate and talk with the teacher about your concern in order to deal with the issue in a straightforward and professional manner.
- ✚ to please give teachers a chance to correct minor issues.
- ✚ NOT to allow concerns to build up. As concerns occur, share them with the teachers. It is disturbing to find out "later" that a parent had a number of concerns and never expressed them.
- ✚ sometimes we cannot make the changes you may request due to other restrictions, but we ALWAYS want to hear your suggestions. We promise to consider them seriously and respond to you in a timely manner.
- ✚ if at anytime a parent wishes to meet with his/her child's teacher to discuss issues that may arise, he/she can contact the teacher to schedule a meeting.
- ✚ we do ask that you schedule a conference with your child's teacher to discuss issues in depth, and **not** try to discuss them during drop-off and pick-up times.

# EARLY CHILDHOOD LABORATORY

## Parent Policy Agreement

**As an Early Childhood Laboratory parent, I have met with the Lab's director and reviewed the ECHL Parent Handbook. I agree to:**

- + comply with and support all ECHL policies and procedures.
- + be financially responsible, keep my account current, and pay late fees if it is not current.
- + pick up my child no later than 5:30 p.m. and pay late fees when I do not.
- + sign in and out for my child everyday.
- + adhere to the Lab's ill child policy and the 24-hour "symptom-free" rule.
- + pick up my child promptly in case of an injury or illness while at the lab.
- + follow medication dispensing regulations and complete all necessary forms.
- + keep my child's immunizations current and provide copies of any updates to the ECHL office.
- + attend all parent conferences and/or meetings requested by the teacher.
- + read all information provided/shared with ECHL parents.
- + use the ECHL website to stay informed.
- + cooperate with ECHL teachers and follow up on medical, dental, or developmental referrals/needs of my child.
- + keep all telephone numbers, emergency, and other enrollment information current.
- + be willing to learn and grow as a parent and to increase my knowledge of child development.
- + provide the Lab with diapers, formula, breast milk, baby food, special foods, change of clothing or anything else necessary for my child' care.
- + discuss my concerns and keep open communication lines with my child's teachers and the lab seeking to avoid problems and misunderstandings.
- + respect all ECHL staff.

\*I understand that failure to abide by the ECHL policies and procedures may result in my child's enrollment termination. Disregard of Lab policies can include ignoring state licensing rules and regulations; not keeping the child's account current; aggressive, loud and argumentative interactions with a Lab employee; sexual harassment; hostile phone calls, voice mails, faxes or email communications.

**Above all, the ECHL reserves the right to maintain a harmonious and safe environment for the children. Our goal is to bring about collaboration between the home and school in ways that enhance your child's development.**

**Parent's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Child's Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

# APPENDIX

## Early Childhood Laboratory Solution & Resolution Worksheet for Staff & Parents

What is the issue?

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How does the issue affect/involve you?

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Who needs to be involved in solving/resolving the issue and the reason for their involvement?

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Schedule a meeting; list the date & time:

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During the Meeting: Brainstorm, with everyone present, ideas for solving/resolving the issue:

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Describe the plan to be implemented:

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List the action step(s) to be taken, the person responsible for the action step & the date set for the completion of the action step:

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List the date and time for a follow up meeting:

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