

ELC Kindergarten Attendance Policies

Attendance

The ELC believes that attendance in kindergarten is vital to each child's ability to succeed. Arriving on time and participating in the entire school day (8:00 AM to 3:00 PM) provides each child with access to the full opportunities of our program, therefore it is our expectation that children are present each day kindergarten is in session. It is the responsibility and obligation of parents and/or guardians to ensure their child gets to school on time each day. School attendance is mandated by Tennessee state law (Tennessee Code Annotated, Title 49, Chapter 6). Recommendation of advancement to first grade will be dependent on school year attendance satisfying established requirements of Knox County Schools and the State of Tennessee.

To receive credit for attendance, children must be present for a minimum of three (3) hours, thirty (30) minutes each day. If a child is not present for this minimum, the child will be counted absent for the full day. If the child regularly misses time within the school day, missed time may be totaled toward the mandated limits of unexcused absence.

Free Choice Days

Children in Tennessee must be offered 180 days of school each year. The 2018-2019 kindergarten schedule for the Early Learning Center holds 183 days of school, therefore allowing for three (3) days that children can miss for any reason. These three (3) days *will not* count toward excused or unexcused absences as noted below. Families with an older child in Knox County Schools should consider using these three (3) days for Knox County School closings that do not align with ELC closing dates. Beyond these three (3) days, time off due to a Knox County closing will not be considered an excused absence.

Snow Days

The Early Learning Center kindergarten does not align with Knox County Schools in announcing school closures due to inclement weather. Parents and guardians will receive notification of decisions regarding school closings, delayed openings, or early closings via the UT ELC alert system. If the ELC is open on a day the Knox County School system remains closed due to inclement weather, children may be granted an excused absence if the parent submits a written note explaining the hardship of travel. Notes should be submitted within 5 days of the child's return to school.

Unexcused Absence

If a child is absent for an accumulation of three (3) days without approved excuse, the family/guardian will receive a written notification from the Early Learning Center providing reminder of state law and program policy regarding attendance expectations. If a child reaches a total of five (5) days of unexcused absence, the family/guardian will be called in to meet with a program administrator to develop a family plan to resolve the issue, and the ELC will submit, as required, a report of the child's attendance information to the Knox County Schools' Central Office. At this point the family may receive a letter of warning from the Knox County School system as part of their truancy initiative. At ten (10) unexcused absences, the family may be required to attend a Juvenile Court hearing to address truancy issues.

Examples of unexcused absences include: 1) No contact by parent or guardian; 2) Failure to provide a note within five (5) days of a child's return from an absence; 3) Family vacation.

Excused Absence

Children may accrue up to ten (10) days of excused absence accompanied by a parent or guardian note explaining the absence. Written excuses must include the child's name, the date and reason for the absence, and the parent's or guardian's signature. Parents should call the front desk at 974.4062 if their child will be absent for the day. The required parent note to excuse the absence must be submitted to the White Avenue front desk within five (5) days of the child's return to the classroom.

Excused absences include:

- Personal illness or injury
- Illness in the immediate family that prohibits the child's transport to and from school
- Death in the immediate family
- Recognized religious holiday regularly observed by persons of the child's faith (Statement on religious organization's letterhead is required if not a recognized holiday.)
- Verifiable family emergency
- Required court appearance accompanied by summons, subpoena, or court order

Absences beyond the ten (10) days must include a note from a medical provider, including the time period the child was or is required to be absent.

Early Departure Procedures

If a child needs to leave before kindergarten dismisses at 3:00 PM, a teacher should be notified of the planned early departure as the child arrives for the day. Parents should also check in at the White Avenue front desk and complete an early departure notice including the following:

- Child's name
- Date and time of departure
- Contact phone number
- Parent signature

When arriving for early departure, planned or unplanned, parents should enter through the main program entrance and check in at the front desk to sign the child out. Persons other than parents signing a child out must show a valid picture ID and must be listed on the emergency contact form for the child. Depending on the time of day and activity of the class, the child may be dismissed to the lobby rather than having the parent or guardian enter the classroom.

Tardiness

The ELC kindergarten day begins at 8:00 AM. Children should arrive before that time so the class may be ready to assemble and start their day promptly. All arriving children should enter through the main front door and sign in at the front desk. Guardians may accompany children to the kindergarten classroom when arriving between 7:30-7:59 AM, entering through the interior classroom door. Children arriving at 8:00 AM or later must enter with a guardian through the main front door and be signed in as tardy at the front desk before entering the classroom. An administrative support staff member will escort children with a tardy arrival to the kindergarten classroom.

Tardy arrivals disrupt the day of the child and the classroom, and should be held to a minimum. Families bringing their child late to school more than 5 (five) times will be called in for a planning conference to problem-solve the issue. Unresolved and continuing tardiness may be referred to the Knox County School system.