



**Eagle River
Optional
Program**

A Guide for Parents

Eagle River Elementary School
10900 Old Eagle River Road
Eagle River, AK 99577
(907) 742-3000



Disbursement of Funds

The Steering Committee will authorize all disbursements of funds. All disbursements will be recorded in the minutes of either a Steering Committee or General Membership Meeting. All disbursements will be made by duly signed checks with two signatures (authorized signatory include co-chair, secretary and treasurer.)

Annual Audit

The fiscal year of the Eagle River Optional Program will be examined annually. An Audit Committee of not less than three members will be appointed by the Steering Committee by March 1. A statement signed by the Audit Committee shall indicate approval of the Treasurer's Annual Report.

Amendment of Bylaws

These Bylaws may be repealed or amended by a two-thirds (2/3) majority vote at a General Membership meeting. Notice of time and location of meeting, along with the proposed changes, will be distributed to all members one week prior to the scheduled meeting.

Anchorage School District

Guidelines

The Eagle River Optional Program will operate according to guidelines as directed by the Anchorage School District, in particular, those guidelines that pertain to Open Optional Programs.

Lottery procedures are delineated in School Board Policy Section 332.3, Alternative Program Procedures.

Media contact guidelines are delineated in School Board Policy Section 823.1, News Media. The Eagle River Optional Program Membership directs all media inquiries to the Principal.

Teacher selection is accomplished according to ASD's policies and Elementary Education procedures. A faculty member, as well as a representative from the parent/guardian membership, will participate in the interview and selection process in an advisory capacity. The parent/guardian representative will be designated by the co-chair.

Teacher and principal qualifications are outlined in the Alternative Program Proposal (Optional Program, April 1984) which is on file with the Anchorage School District.



*Welcome and thank you for considering the
Eagle River Optional Program for your
family. This brochure will give you a general
idea of what goes on in our school
community.*

The Optional Program has been in existence in Eagle River since 1984. It has been housed at Eagle River Elementary School since 1987.

The Optional Program is governed by a parent board, and by School Board Policy Section 332.3, *Alternative Program Procedures*. The program is open by lottery to children in the Anchorage School District. Information regarding the lottery is available in the Eagle River School office. Transportation is not available to children from outside the Eagle River School boundaries.

Parents are welcomed to visit the optional classrooms at any time. Please schedule a visit by calling 742-3000. Parent educators can also be contacted at the above number to answer your specific questions about the Optional Program.

and initiates telephone communications as authorized by co-chair or faculty member

Project Coordinator (one per class)

- Organizes materials and reserves rooms for activities
- Ensures clean-up of rooms
- Notifies classroom coordinator of volunteer requirements

Field Trip Coordinator (one per class)

- Inquires into community resources
- Coordinates with School District Resource Office
- Notifies classroom coordinator of volunteer requirements

Holiday Craft Coordinator (2)

- Identifies appropriate activities for grades 1 through 6
- Works with Project Coordinators to organize materials and parent assistance for Craft Day

Ad Hoc Committees

Ad Hoc committees will be formed and committee members appointed by the co-chairs as the need arises.

Elections

Election of officers and standing committee coordinators will take place at the Annual Spring Meeting.

Nominees must be present, or signify their willingness to serve by a letter to the Steering Committee received prior to time of elections.

The nominating Committee will be appointed by the Steering Committee two months prior to the Spring Meeting. The Nominating Committee's slate of officers and standing committee coordinators will be distributed with the notice of the Annual Spring Meeting and presented at that meeting. Additional nominations may be made from the floor by the general membership. A hand vote will be taken for offices being sought by one person. A secret

ballot will be utilized for offices being sought by more than one person.

Program Evaluation

Program evaluation includes assessments by administration, staff and parents through the use of informal questionnaires and periodic appraisal as determined by the Steering Committee.

Financial Administration

Annual Budget

The Eagle River Optional Program will operate on a forward funding basis, i.e. the proposed budget for the upcoming fiscal year will be limited to the amount of funds received during the current fiscal year.

Program Development Fund

Program development fund requests of less than \$100 will be subject to Steering Committee approval. A request may be presented verbally at a Steering Committee meeting or may be submitted in writing. Any related discussion will be recorded in the meeting minutes and distributed to the General Membership. A vote will be taken at the next Steering Committee meeting.

Program development fund requests for more than \$100 will be subject to approval by the General Membership. A verbal or written request must be presented at a Steering Committee meeting. Any related discussion will be recorded in the meeting minutes and distributed to the General Membership. A vote will be taken at the next scheduled General Membership meeting. If a decision must be made prior to the next scheduled meeting, a ballot will be included with the published minutes and the vote will be conducted by mail.

Form during first week of school year

- Recruits volunteers for standing and ad hoc committees
- Keeps lines of communication open between parents and staff, Eagle River PTA, Administration and School Board

Secretary

- Compiles accurate minutes of all program meetings
- Distributes copies of the minutes within five (5) days of meeting
- Maintains roster of Steering Committee members

Treasurer

- Collects and disburses all funds for the program
- Maintains checking account
- Maintains current ledger of all monetary transactions in concurrence with forward funding platform
- Makes a treasurer's report via meetings or newsletters
- Prepares year-end financial report
- Maintains inventory of all property belonging to the Eagle River Optional Program

Standing Committees

Fund Raising Committee

- Identifies and coordinates fund raising activities

Parent Educator

- Serves as a contact for parents interested in the Eagle River Optional Program

- Conducts informational tours

- Assembles Optional Information Packs

- Promotes Optional Program to local community and area schools

Lottery Coordinator

- Schedules student/teacher orientation meetings (August)
- Confirms enrollment prior to

school start

- Maintains a current student enrollment and wait list
- Conducts lotteries
- Notifies parents of lottery results

Publicity Coordinator

- Creates appropriate articles for local newspapers
- Advertises upcoming lotteries in local newspapers and Eagle River/Chugiak elementary school newsletters
- Maintains a scrapbook of Optional related articles
- Contacts newspapers for special events
- Secures and maintains a file of photo releases from students

Eagle River PTA Liaison

- Attends and reports on Optional Program and PTA Executive Board meetings

Directory Editor

- Collects Parent Participation Forms from teachers
- Compiles, prints and distributes Optional Directory (September)
- Forwards Parent Participation Form to Classroom Coordinators

Nominating Committee

- (Appointed 2 months prior to Spring meeting)

- Contacts parents regarding Steering Committee positions for following year

- Prepares a slate to be presented at the Annual Spring Meeting

Classroom Coordinators

- (one per class)
- Schedules parent volunteers for classroom assistance
- Distributes copy of schedule to teachers and all parents
- Coordinates with teacher for any special needs
- Establish classroom telephone tree

Philosophy

Anchorage School District Alternative Programs

provide the opportunity for staff, students and families to share a common educational philosophy. The Eagle River Optional Program maintains the philosophy that learning is best accomplished in a holistic, child-centered environment. All aspects of a child's development are considered: intellectual, emotional, social and physical. Equal emphasis is placed on *creative, academic and personal* growth.

We believe that learning is best accomplished in a non-competitive environment. Each child is unique, therefore *individuality is respected*. Inner direction is a powerful tool for motivation, therefore, independence, goal-setting and personal interests are cultivated.

We also believe that learning is best accomplished in a community environment. Multi-age grouping, strong parental input and a "school within a school" setting provide a stable, close-knit community of learners.

The "doing" or experience approach to learning is one of the basic tenets of the Optional Program. Basic skills are considered tools that are necessary for growth, rather than ends in themselves.

The Optional Program is designed to help foster growth, self-direction, independence and responsibility. Children are taught and encouraged to practice self-discipline, conflict resolution and group and individual decision making.

Goals of the Eagle River Optional Program

- To provide a program that partners *high standards of academic competence* with rich experiences in the creative arts.
- To encourage children to think *independently, act responsibly, become self-motivated*, and to think of learning as a *life-long process*.
- To create a learning environment that fosters *positive self-image*.
- To encourage children to show concern for others and to value the opinions of others in *solving problems*, thus promoting *understanding of democratic processes*.
- To encourage learning experiences which will cultivate *critical thinking* and *analytical* skills.
- To provide an educational experience for children to succeed using their own unique *learning style* at a pace suited for their stage of development.
- To enable children to make increasingly more responsible *learning* and *time management decisions*.
- To encourage children to know, utilize and care for their *community*.
- To nourish *natural curiosity* and *love of learning* in each child.
- To promote shared responsibility among family, staff and students for upholding and implementing the Optional Program philosophy as an integral part of education.

Eagle River Optional Program Membership Bylaws

Adopted/Revised 1/29/93, 12/3/95, 5/30/00

Purpose

The Eagle River Optional Program Membership works cooperatively to:

- Define the philosophy and educational goals of the Eagle River Optional Program within the context of ASD Open Optional Programs
- Implement the Optional philosophy and educational goals in the classroom
- Provide a liaison between ASD and the parent/guardian membership
- Foster a sense of community among families, staff and students
- Promote a greater understanding of the Eagle River Optional Program within the local community.
- To promote the shared responsibility among family, staff and students for guardianship of the Optional Program philosophy through self-governing and program evaluation.

Membership

The Eagle River Optional Program membership will consist of:

- All parents or guardians of children enrolled in the Eagle River Optional Program
- Optional Faculty and Principal
- Eagle River PTA President (or designee)

Meetings

A minimum of two (2) meetings of the General Membership will be held each year:

- Fall meeting to introduce Steering Committee members and new families and faculty
 - Spring meeting to elect new officers, review Bylaws and approve budget
- Meetings of the Steering Committee will be held at the discretion of the co-chairs.

Meetings of standing and ad hoc committees will be called by committee coordinators as needed.

Emergency meetings may be called by the co-chairs.

A quorum will be required for all General Membership and Steering Committee meetings. The quorum will consist of five members to include one co-chair, an officer and three members.

Each member is entitled to one vote. A simple majority shall decide the issue, unless otherwise stated in these Bylaws. No voting will take place without a quorum.

Steering Committee

The Steering Committee will consist of all officers and committee coordinators. This group will represent the Optional Program General Membership to the Administration, School Board, Eagle River PTA and community.

Officers and coordinators assume their official duties at the beginning of the new school year. All officers, with the exception of the co-chairpersons, will be elected to one-year terms. Co-chairpersons will be elected to two-year terms on staggered years. Co-chairpersons may not hold office for two consecutive terms.

Any vacancy occurring during the term may be filled by a majority vote of the Steering Committee until the next Annual Spring Meetings.

Officers

Co-chairperson (2)

- Organizes and chairs general membership and steering committee meetings
- Prepares annual calendar
- Distributes Parent Participation

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is an essential element of the Optional Program. Each year parents pledge a commitment to participate according to their abilities and time available, in the various aspects of the program. In the classroom, parent volunteers create opportunities for more individualized experiences for students. In addition, parents share their special skills and talents to enrich the curriculum and classroom experience. Beyond the classroom, parents organize volunteer help and materials, provide back up clerical help for the teachers, manage special projects and coordinate field trips. A Steering Committee of elected parents administers the program and supports the staff. A teacher representative is included as a member of the Steering Committee.

Curriculum

Alternative education programs follow the defined curriculum and meet all standards set by the Anchorage School District. Curriculum is presented in a "theme" or integrated manner; basic skills are taught and refined within the context of a central theme. These skills become the tools students use to explore other subjects and expand their knowledge.

The curriculum is adjusted to reflect the growth patterns and interests of each child. Concepts are organized to allow students to pursue a line of inquiry, and to broaden understanding and progress without artificial boundaries according to one's abilities and interest. The classroom provides opportunities for flexibility, fluency, elaboration and originality of ideas as well as critical thinking and problem solving.

Multi-Age Grouping

Optional classrooms are clustered together in the school, enabling students and teachers to interact with each other on a continuing basis. Children of different ages and abilities work together. They are required to accomplish projects in cooperative groups while learning to respect individual differences and to value the opinions of others. Peer tutoring is practiced when older students help younger students. Cross-optional activities provide further teaching and learning opportunities. Class size is kept to ASD recommended limits.

Class Meetings

Meetings are held for students to share work, concerns, discipline problems and feelings. These meetings provide a forum for discussion, problem solving, and planning. Through their participation, the children learn effective ways to communicate their feelings and ideas, and to listen to and consider the feelings and ideas of others.

Choices/Student Involvement

Within the structure of the required activities, children exercise some choices as to how, when, where or with whom they will do each activity. As children demonstrate their ability to handle the responsibilities of choice, they are given greater opportunities to choose and plan projects that meet their need and interests. Commitment and responsibility are stressed. Students are expected to carry through with the choices they make.

Classroom Organization

Individual, small group and large group activities are provided. Independent study allows children to work at their own pace and level of understanding, using resources appropriate for their skill levels. Individuals are encouraged to improve their work by comparing it with present and past performance. Children are encouraged to help each other. Flexible small groups allow for instruction at various levels of ability and areas of interest. Cooperative projects are required. Whole group instruction is provided when appropriate.

Research/Inquiry

At all grade levels basic research skills are stressed. Students work toward becoming independent learners who know where and how to find information.

Creative Arts/Humanities

The creative arts are given special emphasis in the Optional Program. Music, drama, visual arts and world languages are incorporated on a regular basis to allow children to explore, experiment and express themselves, and to strengthen the academic curriculum.

Activities

In-depth arts and crafts, drama, and service projects are tied to current study topics and accomplished through parent facilitation. The Optional Program also extends into the community. Frequent field trips give children exposure to their local environment and teach them to use their community resources. Parents chaperone field trips and provide transportation. Walking and/or public buses are used when appropriate. Community members are also invited into the classroom as guest speakers.

Assessment

Student assessment in the Eagle River Optional Program is ongoing and constructive. No letter grades are given. Quarterly reports review progress and focus on strategies for improvement. Narrative reports are provided orally during parent conferences, and in written form twice a year. Students learn to self-assess. A portfolio is maintained for each child in the Optional Program. This long-term sampling of the child's work will follow each child through the program, providing benchmarks of individual growth and achievement. Students are also assessed annually by district-mandated standardized tests.

Conflict Resolution/Discipline

Children in the Optional Program are learning responsibility and self-control. They work on group problem solving and on expressing their feelings. There are two basic guidelines for behavior in the Optional Program: respect and cooperation. Constructive, democratic solutions to problems are modeled and taught. Anchorage School District discipline standards and policies apply.

Program Activities

Daytime or outside-of-school-hours activities may include:

- Fundraising events
- Student performances
- Potluck and social gatherings
- General Membership and Steering Committee meetings
- Cross-optional activities
- Community service