

Welcome to Eagle River Elementary School and the Optional program!

Some new parents have questions about Optional, we hope this helps.

Yippee! My child got into the Optional program! What exactly does that mean?

The Optional program is a school within a school. We are a small segment (about 90 students) of Eagle River Elementary School (total of about 425 students for the 2014-2015 school year). Every student in the building has the same principal, music teacher, art teacher, P.E. teachers, etc. Kids will have lunch and recess with all the students in their grade level. They benefit from all the opportunities offered to every student, such as PTA sponsored events and items purchased with PTA funds for the school. You and your children are invited to attend every "all-school" and PTA sponsored event. The PTA advocates for all students in the building equally.

But I thought that the Optional program was separate from the neighborhood school.

We are. The Optional program offers our students a different set of learning opportunities as well as additional events and activities. Our students take more field trips, grow a garden, each class creates it's own theatre performance, have days full of crafts, take part in intensive learning, are expected to work cooperatively and respectfully with the elder/younger classes as part of their everyday routine, and are allowed to explore many paths to learning.

WOW! AWESOME! Those teachers are amazing!

Yep. Our teachers are Superheroes. They offer the best of themselves to our students. It's clear that our teachers come to the classroom each day prepared to listen, and because of that, they are able to recognize what each child needs to keep learning and growing.

What about all that cool stuff the kids do? When do they have time?

Because the teachers gift us with flexibility in schedules and support with non-classroom projects, the Optional program is very much parent driven. Parents are at the heart of the program. The teachers can't do all that stuff alone, and Optional wouldn't be Optional if they did. The program NEEDS parents to step up and be involved. Without the influence of the minds of teachers AND parents, Optional would not be able to offer kids new experiences that keep them excited.

Well, that sounds great! Sign me up!

There are lots of ways to help, in the classroom, preparing for an event or activity, and doing things at home if you can't come in to help.

** The first 2 weeks of school, the classrooms can be chaotic, and the students easily distracted. The teachers prefer NOT to have parents in the classroom for that time. They need to get into a routine, to get to know the kids and to figure out what kind of support they will need from parents. If you would like to help in the classroom, there will be a sign-up sheet on Parent Information Night. You can sign up then and the teachers will contact you when they get the whirlwind of the first weeks of school sorted out.

How else can I get involved?

Again, look for sign up sheets at back to school night. There will be more details about each planned event available then. The first event is our garden harvest. We will need parents to come in and help harvest our garden. Once harvested, we send everything home with willing families to be washed and returned the next day. That morning, we will need help to assist every kid as they make soups for the first official Optional meeting of the year.

Helping out day-to-day is great, but what if I want to be more involved?

- Steering committee meetings are where the planning starts. Meetings are open to everyone. Check back for dates and locations for the 2014-2015 school year. (Questions about steering committee? Contact a member, info below)
- Join the PTA. Your help is needed for all school events as well. PTA sponsored events like gingerbread house building and field day always need adult volunteers.

When is Parent Information Night (formerly Back To School Night)?

Parent Information Night is scheduled for August 19th, 2014 6:30-8:00pm. We recommend coming without children if possible. Our parent information night is time for the teachers to communicate with you about classroom expectations, homework, school supplies, etc. It's important stuff. You may be tested on it later. Just kidding.

School Supplies! We need lots of erasers and scissors, right? That's what the sheet posted at Freddie's said.

Noooooo!!! Please wait until we give you a list of supplies needed. Our kids really do need the things on our list, but only the things on the list. We don't want you to spend money you don't have to on things we don't need or don't have storage for. We will make sure that you receive the supply list before school starts.

List is posted on our webpage: eagleriveroptional.org

How will you keep in touch with me? When will I get more information?

Optional keeps in touch with our families in 3 ways.

- An email list.
- Facebook.
- Pieces of paper.

It is *imperative* that we have correct email addresses for you if you want to stay informed. We DO NOT send out all information on paper! Forms that need to be returned would be an example of a paper contact, while information about upcoming events will go out via email. Facebook is used mostly for question/answer type communications.

(Please contact Kaleigh Wotring 727-8986 if you do not have access to email. We will make other arrangements)

What do I do if I think of another question?

You can check our website, you might find the answer there: eagleriveroptional.org

Or, call or email Kaleigh Wotring 727-8986 k@indra.com or another member of the steering committee.

We look forward to seeing you at Parent Information Night!

Dear Parents,

These are PROPOSED dates for events in the 2014-2015 year. We do our best to keep to these dates, but things can be rescheduled for a variety of reasons.

We will keep you updated throughout the year.

2014		2015	
Tues. Aug. 19	Parent Information Night 6:30 pm - 8 pm	Winter Break: Dec 22 – Jan 2	
Wed. Aug. 20	Grades 2-6 start, Kindy and first grade interviews start. (The K/1 teachers will contact you)	Mon. Jan. 5	First day back from Winter Break
Wed. Aug. 27	Kindy and grade 1 start	Fri. Jan. 16	Optional Community building with ERHS
Mon. Sept. 1	Labor Day Holiday	Mon. Jan. 19	Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday – no school
Fri. Sept. 19	Optional Community building with ERHS	Thrs. Jan. 29	1-2 Dolan Play
Thrs. Sept. 11	Optional Potluck	Mon. Feb. 16	President's Day – no school
Fri. Oct. 17	In-service - report card day	Feb. 18-19	Half-Days for Conferences
Oct. 22-23	Half-Days for Conferences	Fri. Feb. 20	In-service
Fri. Oct. 24	In-service	Wed. Feb. 27	3-4 Long Play
Sat. Oct. 25	Halloween Carnival	Mar. 3-4	Science Fair
Nov. 27-28	Thanksgiving Break	Mar. 4	Science Fair Night
Wed. Dec. 10	5-6 Spain Performance	Fri. Mar. 6	In-service – report card day
Thrs. Dec. 11	Gingerbread Houses	Mar. 9-13	Spring Break
Dec. 12, 17	Craft Days	Wed. Apr. 15	K-1 Long Play
Fri. Dec. 19	No school – report card day	Wed. Apr. 29	Auction Potluck
		Mon. May 18	Optional Eklutna field trip
		Thurs. May 21	Last day of school

Other important things:

Celeste Long, K/1 long_celeste@asdk12.org
Kalesha Dolan, 1/2 dolan_kalesha@asdk12.org
Andrew Long, 3/4 long_andrew@asdk12.org
Jenn Spain, 5/6 spain_jennifer@asdk12.org

www.eagleriveroptional.org

2014-2015 Steering Committee

Co-Chair: Kaleigh Wotring k@indra.com
Co-Chair: Alexis Kallen lexieloops@yahoo.com
Secretary: Lisa Norbert laungst@yahoo.com
Treasurer: Rosanna Lee and Robin Gray flygirl@gci.net and stephengray_260@hotmail.com
Fundraising: Rosanna Lee flygirl@gci.net
Parent Education: Felicia Hanna feliciatiger@gmail.com
Volunteer Coordinator: Codie Costello codiec@gmail.com
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