



Emily Dickinson Elementary

FAMILY GUIDE

Emily Dickinson PTSA | Family Guide | September 1, 2019

About This Guide

The Family Guide for Emily Dickinson Elementary is supplemental and complementary to the Lake Washington [Handbook for New Families](#). Some of the information shared here will link to district pages, or repeat it for convenience. It is highly recommended you read the district handbook as well.

Whether you are new to public schools in WA State or the US, or are curious about how things work at the school, this document attempts to provide answers, tips, and recommendations to make your family's life at school productive and enjoyable.

If you want to contribute your "I wish I knew that sooner" to this guide, please email communications@dickinsonptsa.org.

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Before School Starts

The school is usually closed until the end of August. Staff returns to the office first and then teachers. Some school events are scheduled in advance for the 1-2 weeks before school starts. Use the school, LWSD, and PTSA resources to stay informed and know what you need to do.

SCHOOL RESOURCES

The school web site, <http://www.lwsd.org/dickinson>, will be updated with calendar events, supplies lists, and other important information. Check the calendar to find out what supplies your student will need and when the school's Meet & Greet or Back to School event will take place.

Supplies List

The school provides all text books required for the year. Parents are requested to purchase personal and classroom supplies needed for the year beyond text books. Teachers create and publish lists of supplies that students will need based on activities and subjects that will be taught. You can find these lists on the [PTSA web site](#).

Teacher Assignment

Parents will receive an email from the school announcing the name of their student's assigned teacher about a week before school starts.

Back to School Night

Formerly known as *Meet and Greet* and *Curriculum Night*, this is a combined event the week before school starts and after teacher assignments are sent by email. Students and families are invited to visit the school, see their classrooms, meet their teachers, sign up for conferences and receive a handout of the class curriculum for the upcoming year. It is recommended that students bring in their class supplies at this time and teachers will let them know where to place the items. Doing this ahead of school starting makes the first day easier on everyone. During the second half of this event, families will get a chance to mingle with other families, teachers and staff and learn about upcoming school and PTSA activities. In addition, bus routes will be posted in the main hallway.

DISTRICT RESOURCES

The school district handles a few of the non-school specific services.

Parent Access

The Lake Washington School District (LWSD) provides online services for things like adding funds to lunch accounts, accessing kids' information and grades, and more. New parents must sign up for this access on the [district's site](#). This link provides information about all online services, include Haiku (classroom resources), Skyward (online gradebook) and other services.

Volunteer Application

We highly encourage all parents to fill out a [Volunteer Application](#) to become an approved LWSD school volunteer. This will ensure that you can volunteer at any time for PTSA, school events, or in your child's classroom. This is a simple, free process, done online, and will provide approval for 2

years. [Read below](#) how our school thrives because of the generous volunteer support from our parents and community.

Bus Routes

Families receive their student's bus routes, stops, and times via postcard before school starts. You can also find that information online at the [district's transportation page](#).

PTSA RESOURCES

PTSA provides information to parents many ways. Check these sources regularly to stay informed! The information we share is a combination of district, school, and PTSA so you can find it all in one place.

Messenger Newsletter

By far the most critical source of information, the Messenger newsletter is sent weekly, starting the week before school and throughout the year. It contains PTSA and school information important for parents. Sign up to receive this newsletter [here](#).

Facebook

PTSA publishes information and events to our [Facebook page](#). Like the page to stay informed and share your thoughts/input with PTSA using comments on posts or messaging.

PTSA Web Site

Dickinson PTSA is 100% online for all our programs and information. We have reduced our paper consumption by 90% since 2015. Families requiring paper copies of any PTSA information can inquire at the school office.

Signing up for an account on our web site is easy, click [here](#) to get your family account. Creating a family account means easy access to registration for programs and events, streamlined communications, and inclusion in our PTSA online directory.

School Reader Board and Bulletin Board

At the entrance to Dickinson Elementary, the Reader Board will list the top 2-3 things you need to know for that week. At the entrance of the school, across from the office, the Bulletin Board will often have the current highlighted activity or program.

The First Few Weeks

The first few weeks can be a whirlwind for families, whether new or returning. The resources in the previous section will help keep you informed of all the goings on so you don't miss a beat.

FIRST WEEK SCHOOL BUSES

PTSA organizes volunteers to help greet school buses for the first week. This is aimed mainly at the youngest riders, our Kindergarteners, to ensure they get to their classrooms in the morning and to the correct bus at the end of the day.

MEMBERSHIP FAMILY EVENT

Parents and students are invited to a free PTSA Membership Family event sometime during the first few weeks of school. This is an evening event where you can meet other Dickinson families, learn about PTSA activities and programs, and enjoy a family movie and popcorn.

School Events

PARENT TEACHER CONFERENCES

Held twice a year, (fall and spring) teachers invite parents and students to discuss plans, goals, and progress. In the fall, teachers help the students come up with personal and academic goals that will help guide their efforts over the next few months. At the conference, the students will share these goals with their parents.

After School Care & Programs

Dickinson is fortunate to have excellent after school options for students on campus.

PTSA PROGRAMS

The Dickinson PTSA provides multiple enrichment programs before and after school for its members. Programming might include:

- Choir
- Art Club
- Theater
- Math Club
- Foreign Language
- Chess
- Athletics
- Coding/animation

Programs are published by PTSA and registration opens in September for the fall session. Check the [PTSA web site](#) for information on available programs and registration details.

YMCA

New this year, the YMCA in partnership with Dickinson Elementary will offer their Kids U program on campus in place of the Boys and Girls Club. This program will also replace of many before and after school classes previously offered by our PTSA. Parents have the option to sign up for full time or part time care or for only certain enrichment classes. Please view their flyer for more information.

How PTSA Works

PTSA members support and enrich the school experience for Emily Dickinson students, families and community. The organization is lean and **based solely on volunteers**.

Leading the organization is the PTSA President(s) who is supported by a PTSA Board comprised of Vice Presidents for the different areas of activity:

- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Services
- Programs
- Communications
- Fundraising
- Membership

Two volunteers should staff the VP positions to help share the responsibilities and provide for easier transition. We usually ask for a 2 year commitment and shift the two positions such that a second year volunteer is able to train a first year volunteer for the role.

In addition to the PTSA President and the VPs, there are liaisons who represent groups in our community, such as the Explorer Community School and our Special Needs students and teachers.

There are also committee chairs. These volunteers take on specific activities or programs to assist the VP of that area. Examples of such programs include Art Smart, Theater, Emergency Preparedness, Carnival, Book Fair, Staff Appreciation, Box Tops etc.

This system of board members and chairs helps provide a broad support across all PTSA activities and programs.

Volunteers Are the Fuel

Volunteers supplement and enhance the school experience for our students, staff, and community. There are many opportunities to volunteer time, ranging from little time to more time, help from home or at the school, and help during or after school hours. Whatever your volunteering capacity and preferences are, there is likely a way you can help.

BENEFITS OF BEING A VOLUNTEER

Nothing takes you into your student's day to day at the school like volunteering. However you choose to help, you will learn more about how things work in the school and get to know school staff and other volunteers, expanding your community network. You will get to know your student's teachers better and meet your student's friends and classmates.

If you work for a company that matches your donations, your volunteer hours double the benefit – you can report the hours you volunteered to the school or PTSA and your employer will match them with donations.

CLASSROOM VOLUNTEERS

Your student's teacher will likely have a list of needs for volunteers. These can include helping with Art Smart lessons, spelling, reading, math and whatever else they may need. Most classrooms also appreciate a "room parent", a volunteer that can help organize the class parents for events like parties and celebrations. During the year, teachers will reach out to class parents for additional needs such as field trip chaperones or drivers. If you do not see a list of volunteer needs from your teacher at the meet and greet event, please reach out and ask. They will appreciate it!

SCHOOL VOLUNTEERS

The school might need volunteers for special occasions and activities they may not be able to staff. Helpers are often needed for hearing and vision tests, picture day, and field day. These volunteer needs will be published in the Messenger Newsletter as they arise.

PTSA VOLUNTEERS

PTSA runs 100% on volunteers. Our board members and chairs are volunteers. Almost all sponsored events and programs require some volunteer help.

Required Volunteering

Before and after school programs that are run by our PTSA require adult chaperones in addition to the instructor. In these cases, parents of students registered are required to chaperone one or more sessions. Examples include Art Club, Theater, Choir, etc. Parents might be assigned a session to chaperone or offered dates via SignUp Genius.

Board Positions

New PTSA Board members are needed each year. Board roles vary in time investment and type of work. Reach out to the [president](#) or any other past or present board member if you want to learn more. We will be happy to share!

Chair Positions

So many great things cannot happen if we don't have dedicated people to take the lead. Chairpersons might recruit additional volunteers for their area and coordinate the work required to deliver the event or program. Chair examples include Theater producers, Carnival chair, Auction chairs, Messenger Editor, Box Tops chair, etc. They come in all sizes and time requirements.