

EARLY CHILDHOOD ACADEMY PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL

PARENT HANDBOOK



2009 ~ 2010

Preparing young children for a bright future.

Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School

Information at a Glance

Mission Statement

It is the mission of Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School to foster the academic and social/emotional growth and development of each student in a safe and holistic learning environment that will equip all students with the knowledge and tools to become high achievers, proficient readers, and critical thinkers, who will thrive for a lifetime as productive and caring citizens.

www.ecapcs.org

(202) 373-0035 Phone

(202) 373-5586 Fax

Johanning Campus (Main Campus)

4025 9th Street, SE Washington, DC 20032

(enter on Bellevue Street)

Walter Washington Campus

4301 9th Street, SE Washington, DC 20032

(enter by tennis courts)

Administration

Wendy S. Edwards, Principal: wedwards@ecapcs.org

Thann Ingraham, Vice Principal: tingraham@ecapcs.org

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Officers of the ECA Board of Trustees

Dennis M. Sawyers, President: dennis_sawyers@yahoo.com

David A. DeSchryver, Secretary

John F. Alexander, Treasurer

DC Public Charter School Board

3333 14th Street, NW Suite 210

Washington, DC 20010

(202) 328-2660

INSTRUCTION BEGINS PROMPTLY AT 8:30 A.M.

STUDENTS MUST ARRIVE AT 8:15 A.M. IF THEY CHOOSE TO HAVE BREAKFAST AT ECA.

Dear Parent:

We welcome you and your child to Early Childhood Academy for the 2009-2010 school year. We are eager to begin another successful school year and are happy that you have entrusted us with the growth and development of your child. We are also excited to complete our range of grade levels with the addition of third grade this year. We feel confident that you have made the best decision in enrolling your child here and commit ourselves to providing your child with a rich and rewarding educational experience.

Attendance is critical for optimal learning. We expect all students to arrive on time, in uniform, and come to school every day, unless they are ill. Please remember that students must arrive at 8:15 a.m. if they would like to have breakfast at the school. Instruction begins promptly at 8:30 a.m.

In addition to its mission statement, ECA believes in ten core values, which include: honesty, kindness, self-control, respect, responsibility, peaceful resolution, hard work, helpfulness, empathy, and forgiveness. These values will be infused throughout the teaching and learning process.

Students are expected to adhere to five school rules:

1. Come to school every day, on time, and in uniform.
2. Follow the directions of all adults in the building.
3. Treat others as you want to be treated.
4. Keep all body parts to yourself.
5. Show respect for the school, school property, and the property of others.

We look forward to working with our students and parents throughout this school year. If you have any questions or concerns about your child's educational program, please feel free to contact your child's teacher or a school administrator. Our doors are always open and we welcome the opportunity to hear from you.

It is important that all parents update phone numbers as needed to ensure that the school is able to reach you in an emergency situation. Please be sure to update numbers both with the classroom teacher and with the main office. This handbook contains additional important information that you will need regarding ECA's beliefs, policies, and procedures. We ask that you take a few moments to review it.

Please contact me in person, by phone, or by email if you have any questions about the content of this handbook.

Thank you for being a part of the ECA family!

Wendy S. Edwards
Principal

ATTENDANCE

The school day for students is from 8:30 a.m. until 3:00 p.m. The before care program begins at 7:00 a.m. and ends after school at 6:00 p.m. Students may arrive as early as 8:15 a.m. to participate in the school breakfast program.

Students who arrive after 8:30 a.m. are late and will be marked tardy.

One of the most important responsibilities of parents in the home/school connection is ensuring your child's excellent school attendance. Good student attendance positively impacts students' acquisition of new concepts and skills and their rate of growth and development. It is important that students come to school every day, on time, and remain until the end of the day in order to achieve the most success. Tardy and chronically absent students often do not make sufficient progress to move on to the next grade level. It is crucial that parents send children to school each school day, even when weather is less than perfect.

Please note that DC law requires that children five years old and older attend school regularly. Students in kindergarten through grade three who are frequently late or absent will be reported to the DC Office of Child and Family Services.

On occasion, children must miss a day of school. A school absence is considered excused if the child is sick, attending a funeral, required for a court appearance, or because of a family emergency. Parents are required to provide a doctor's certification or other written note explaining the absence. If a student is suspected of having a communicable illness, the parent must provide a doctor's note clearing him/her to return to school.

Vacations, out of town travel, overnight stays at others' houses, bad weather, oversleeping, lack of clean clothing, etc. are considered unexcused absences and will be marked as such.

Your child should not be in school if he/she has a fever, is vomiting, is experiencing excessive coughing or runny nose, or is lethargic because of illness. If a child is suspected of having conjunctivitis, ringworm, or any other communicable illness he/she may not attend school. The child will be required to submit a doctor's note clearing him/her to return to school before re-admittance.

BEFORE AND AFTER CARE

The before and aftercare program is available to all ECA students. Before care is provided at both the Walter Washington and Jochenning campuses. Before care hours are from 7:00 a.m. until 8:15 a.m. After care begins at 3:00 p.m. and ends promptly at 6:00 p.m.

ECA has worked diligently to ensure that parents are provided with a before and aftercare program that is affordable for all working parents. Participation in the before and aftercare program is \$100 per month for the first child and an additional \$10 per month for each additional sibling who lives in the same home. December and June payments are reduced to \$60 for each month. There is no discount for cousins or other relatives living together. The \$100 fee applies to students who attend before and aftercare and students who attend after care only. The before care only fee is \$40 for the first child and \$10 for each additional sibling who lives in the same home.

Before and aftercare payments must be made before the month begins, by the 20th of the previous month (by September 21st for October before and aftercare). A late fee of \$10 will be charged for payments made after the 20th of the month. If payment is not received by the first day of the new month, the student may not attend for that month.

A late fee will be charged for late pick up: \$10 for the first five to fifteen minutes late and an additional \$10 for each fifteen minute increment thereafter. Students whose parents are chronically late for pick up may be excluded from the aftercare program.

BREAKFAST, LUNCH, & SNACK

All students will be provided with breakfast from 8:15 a.m. until 8:30 a.m. daily in the school multipurpose room (Jochenning campus) or in the classrooms (Walter Washington campus). Lunch will be served daily between the hours of 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. Students who participate in the ECA aftercare program will also receive a snack. All ECA students must have a signed lunch application on file in order to participate in the free breakfast and lunch program.

CURRICULUM

ECA adheres to the District of Columbia state standards for reading, mathematics, social studies, and science. To view the standards, please go to the DC Public Schools website at dcps.dc.gov and navigate

to “Teaching and Learning” > “Academics” > “Learning Standards” > “Learning Standards for Grades PK – 8”.

Preschool and prekindergarten students participate in the US Department of Education Early Reading First grant and are also a part of Head Start through the United Planning Organization. ECA uses the Pearson Opening the World of Learning (OWL) and Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Math series for preschool and prekindergarten. For students in grades kindergarten through three, ECA uses Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Reading, Social Studies, and Science and MacMillan/McGraw-Hill Math Connects.

All students also participate in weekly Spanish, physical education, and general music classes. Violin, viola, cello, drum, and xylophone classes are offered to students admitted into the instrumental music program. Additional services are provided to students with Individualized Education Programs based on their identified needs.

CLASSROOM PARTIES

Parents and grandparents of students often request that birthday parties be held at the school for their children. In planning school birthday parties for students, parents/guardians are asked to adhere to the following procedures:

- Parents must notify the child’s teacher in advance if they would like to sponsor a birthday party for their child.
- All birthday parties must be held at 2:30 p.m.
- Birthday parties must not extend beyond 3:00 p.m.
- Sugar and salt-filled foods must be strictly limited. Students may be served only cake and ice cream as well as any nutritious foods, such as fruits or 100% juices.
- Please do not include goody bags containing candy or junk food.

Parents are asked to notify the teacher if religious beliefs prohibit your child from participating in school parties or celebrations.

COMMUNICATION WITH YOUR CHILD’S TEACHER

On-going communication with your child’s teacher is essential to the home/school connection. Parents are encouraged to schedule conferences with their children’s teachers whenever a question or concern arises. Please contact your child’s teacher by e-mail or on the school telephone at (202-373-0035). A message will be taken and teachers will be asked to return your call during non-instructional time. Staff

email addresses have been created using the persons's first initial and last name, followed by @ecapcs.org (ex. wedwards@ecapcs.org). Email addresses may also be found on the school website at www.ecapcs.org.

If you have a question or concern that should be addressed to a school administrator, please contact the principal or vice principal by phone or by e-mail at wedwards@ecapcs.org or tingraham@ecapcs.org.

BEHAVIOR SUPPORT

All staff persons will use the ECA Unified Behavior Support Plan (UBSP) as a guide for maintaining a positive classroom climate. The UBSP provides the basis for the development of a safe, orderly, and productive school environment. Teachers and teacher assistants will work collaboratively to design procedures and routines, rules, and logical consequences for student behavior that will be implemented consistently. The values of self-control, respect, honesty, empathy, helpfulness, responsibility, forgiveness, hard work, kindness, and peaceful resolution guide ECA's beliefs. The school also maintains five school-wide rules that will be discussed with students and posted in the classrooms:

1. Come to school every day, on time, and in uniform.
2. Follow the directions of all adults in the building.
3. Treat others the way you want to be treated.
4. Keep all body parts to yourself.
5. Respect the school, school property, and the property of others.

In addition, all teachers will post a three-colored (red, yellow, green) traffic signal as a visual cue to support students' positive behavior. All students begin the morning on the green light, signifying that they are ready for the day and prepared to follow school rules. Students are expected to remain on green throughout the school day by following the directions of all adults, adhering to school rules and values, and correcting minor behavior challenges. If a student displays inappropriate behavior that he or she does not correct when given ample opportunity, the child's name will be moved to the yellow light. Students on yellow have the opportunity to improve behavior during the day and return to the green light. Students who demonstrate extremely inappropriate or malicious behavior and are unable to correct behavior when given ample opportunity will be moved to the red level. Students on the red level may not be moved back to green during the day. A parent or guardian will be contacted for any student whose name has been moved to the red level.

All students will receive a personal two-week calendar on which to record their daily behavior. At about 2:50 p.m. daily, students will color their calendar circles green, yellow, or red according to their traffic light placement at the end of the day. Students who are out of uniform will have an “N” placed in the square for that day. Calendars will be maintained in students’ files and shared with parents during conferences. At the end of a designated number of days, students who have achieved a prescribed number of green circles, and have no “N” on their calendars will receive special recognition.

Serious offenses may warrant school suspension. Please see the “Suspension” section of this booklet for specific information on the ECA suspension policy.

Under no circumstances will corporal punishment be used by ECA staff for any reason.

DISMISSAL

Students are dismissed at 3:00 p.m. We ask that you allow children to remain at school until 3:00 p.m. each day, but also ensure that your child is picked up promptly at 3:00 p.m. Students may only be picked up by an adult listed by the parent on the official roster for pick-up. It is the parent’s responsibility to ensure that all adults whom you may ask to pick up your child are listed on the official pick-up list. Under no conditions may a student be picked-up by a minor before the official 3:00 p.m. dismissal time. A parent who wishes to pick up a child before the 3:00 p.m. dismissal time must first report to the main office to sign-out the child.

DRESS CODE

All ECA students are required to wear the official school uniform every day, Monday through Friday, unless parents have been notified in writing of a special non-uniform day. The ECA uniform consists of navy blue slacks, shorts (to the knee), skirt, or jumper, and a plain yellow button-front or polo shirt (with no words or graphics on the shirt). Plain navy blue sweaters or plain navy blue hoodies may also be worn. However, no clothing displaying writing, drawings, or graphics may be worn.

Students who are not in uniform will be required to wear uniform attire from the school clothing bank. Students who are not in uniform will not be eligible for our periodic special recognition for citizenship.

DRUG FREE ENVIRONMENT

Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School intends to maintain a safe, healthy, and drug-free environment for its students, staff, and visitors. It is the policy of Early Childhood Academy to

immediately notify law enforcement and pursue charges against any person or persons suspected of use, distribution, or sale of illegal or controlled substances while on school grounds.

ENROLLMENT: RANDOM SELECTION PROCESS

ECA is a public school for preschool through grade three and is open to all students who reside in the District of Columbia. As mandated by the DC Public Charter School Board, ECA will enroll students each year through the random selection process. Each year in the early spring, the enrollment period is announced through telephone alerts, newspaper advertisements, banners, direct mailers, and flyers. All parents who are interested in enrollment for the coming school year, including the parents of both new and current ECA students, must register each school year.

A maximum enrollment number is established each school year. If that number has not been met by the enrollment deadline date, all enrolled students will be accepted. Thereafter, additional students will be accepted in the order of receipt of completed enrollment packages until the school reaches its capacity for that school year.

If the school is over-subscribed by the enrollment deadline date, all applications will be included in a random selection process. Parents/guardians will be notified of the lottery date for random selection. It is not necessary for parents to be present for the lottery selection. Student acceptance will be based on the lottery selection order. Those students who are chosen through the lottery after maximum capacity has been reached will be placed on a waiting list in the order of their lottery selection.

FIELD TRIPS

The vast resources of the Washington, D.C. metropolitan will be utilized to extend teaching and learning beyond the walls of the school. Teachers will plan field trips that are directly related to goals and objectives being taught in the classrooms.

ECA will assume the costs for private bus transportation to and from most trips. If the event charges an admission fee, parents will be responsible for the payment by the deadline indicated on the field trip permission form.

Students must have a permission slip that is signed by the parent/guardian in order to participate in a field trip. Verbal consent will not be accepted in lieu of a signed permission slip.

For safety, all students will wear clean ECA t-shirts on all field trips, which contain the school name and phone number.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Student safety is our number one priority at ECA. In an emergency medical situation, we will address the immediate needs of the child first, then contact parents or guardians. It is important that all parents update phone numbers as needed to ensure that the school is able to reach you in an emergency situation. Please be sure to update numbers both with the classroom teacher and with the main office.

If a student has a fever, is vomiting, is experiencing excessive coughing or runny nose, or is lethargic because of illness, the child should not be in school. We will contact the parent for pick up.

If a child is suspected of having conjunctivitis, ringworm, flu, or any other communicable illness, the child must see a doctor before return to school. Students with suspected flu, ringworm, or conjunctivitis (“pink eye”) may not return to school without a written clearance from the child’s doctor.

Medications may not be administered to students by staff members unless ECA has received the required consent forms signed by both the parent and the child’s doctor along with a complete and unused container of the medication. When these circumstances are satisfied, certified staff persons will be able to administer medications as prescribed.

Without this completed written authorization, medications may not be administered. This includes all oral medications including cough drops, cough syrup, aspirin and Tylenol, and all topical medications including medicated creams and ointments, and antiseptic wipes. Students may not carry medications or have them in their backpacks. If your child requires medication during the school day, please contact the principal immediately.

Many students have food or other allergies. It is important that parents alert teachers of all known allergies. This information must be included when completing your child’s enrollment form.

HOMEWORK

Homework will be assigned as an extension of classroom learning. Therefore, homework for students in grades kindergarten through three will be designed so that the student has the ability and prior knowledge that will enable him/her to complete assignments independently. Although parents are

encouraged to actively facilitate homework completion, ECA asks that parents not complete assignments for their children.

Homework will be assigned based on the following completion times:

- Kindergarten & Grade One – no more than 15 minutes daily
- Grade Two – no more than 20 minutes daily
- Grade Three – no more than 30 minutes daily

Preschool and prekindergarten homework assignments will include family projects such as reading aloud with your child, exploring family history and the world around us, counting and number games, and identifying and sorting objects according to attributes.

MANDATORY REPORTING OF ABUSE/NEGLECT & RESPONSE TO DC AUTHORITIES

All ECA personnel are required by law to report suspected child abuse or neglect. If child abuse or neglect, including educational neglect (failure to send child to school regularly) is suspected, ECA personnel are required to contact DC Child and Family Services. As required by law, the parent will not be contacted in cases of abuse or neglect.

Additionally, ECA is often contacted for information by the DC Office of Child and Family Services, the DC Courts, and sometimes by the Metropolitan Police Department. Please be advised that ECA is required to cooperate fully with all local and federal authorities.

NUTRITION

ECA believes in encouraging student behavior that will result in the students maintaining a healthy lifestyle. Daily physical activity and nutrition education are important components of the early childhood program.

Parents are asked to refrain from sending students to school with snacks; the meal program will provide students with adequate food throughout the day. If children are running late for school and are in danger of missing the school breakfast program, please send them with a healthy breakfast, such as fruit, yogurt, or a cereal bar. Please do not purchase junk food for your child to eat for breakfast.

PROGRESS REPORTS & QUARTERLY CONFERENCES

Parents will receive progress reports detailing their children's achievement four times per year. Progress reports provide a description of the student's areas of strength and weakness as well as recommendations for parents to support their children's growth and development. In addition, mid-advisory reports will be sent home quarterly. Mid-advisory reports will be issued to every student and must be signed by the parent and returned to the teacher.

Parent conferences are scheduled three times per year to provide teachers with an opportunity to apprise parents of their children's growth and development and review progress reports. Preschool and prekindergarten teachers will conduct home conferences twice a year. Those parents who do not pick up progress reports during conference times may pick up their children's reports after the conference date. Progress reports will not be issued to students or older siblings. Please refer to the ECA school calendar for parent conference dates. Parent conferences will be held from 12:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. to accommodate the schedules of working parents.

Parents will be notified in writing by the start of the third advisory if a student is in danger of retention. This notification will be written on the child's progress report.

SCHOOL CLOSURE

Severe weather or other emergencies may occasionally necessitate school closure. Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School follows the snow/weather closure schedule of the DC Public Schools. If DC schools are one-hour delayed, students are to report to school at 9:30 a.m. If DC schools are two-hours delayed, students report at 10:30 a.m. The DC Public Schools snow closure announcements may be accessed by tuning in to your local news station.

STUDENT SUPPORT TEAM

Sometimes students are identified as needing additional support in one or more academic areas or in behavior management. Teachers may refer these students to the Student Support Team (SST). The SST includes the teacher, parent, director of curriculum and instruction, and other ECA staff who may be able to provide valuable input. The team will meet to discuss the concerns of the teacher or parent, develop a plan with strategies for intervention, and schedule follow-up. Afterward, the intervention plan is implemented and monitored by the classroom teacher to determine effectiveness. If the intervention fails to address the needs of the child, additional approaches will be developed, which may include development of alternative strategies, or assessment to rule out the possibility of one or more disability.

Students may be referred to the SST by school personnel or by the parent. If you have a concern about your child's academic or social/emotional progress, please advise your child's teacher, who will schedule a meeting.

SUSPENSION / EXPULSION POLICY

It is the intent of Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School to maintain a safe and nurturing school climate in which students feel well cared for and academically challenged. The school's goal is to create an environment that promotes mutual respect, cooperation, and teaches appropriate conflict resolution. However, the egregious disregard for school rules and the safety of others warrants disciplinary action for the offending student. Attempts will be made to modify behavior through the implementation of classroom consequences and/or in-school suspension. Students who repeatedly commit serious infractions for which discipline is warranted will receive out of school suspension if attempts to modify behavior through in-school consequences have proven ineffective.

Parents will be notified verbally and in writing within 24 hours of the student offense and in advance of the commencement of any suspension period for the child. Notification to parents will include a description of the infraction, resolutions attempted at the local school level, and outcomes. Students will be provided with appropriate instructional activities to be completed at home during the suspension period. Parents will be required to attend a school conference with the principal and other pertinent staff members before the student's re-admittance to the school at the conclusion of the suspension period.

Students with disabilities may be suspended for infractions and periods that are consistent with suspension guidelines for non-disabled students. However, students with disabilities are not to be suspended for infractions that can be directly linked as a manifestation of the disability, unless it is evident that the student has a clear understanding that his/her actions were inappropriate and subject to disciplinary action. A meeting of the special education coordinator, principal, vice principal, classroom teacher, and special education teacher will be convened within 24 hours of the student offense to review the infraction and determine the appropriateness of suspension.

Students with disabilities may be suspended for a period of less than ten days for any single infraction. Students with disabilities are not to be suspended for a cumulative period of ten days or more within a school year.

Offenses that greatly compromise the health and safety of the staff and students of Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School may result in the expulsion of the student. Expulsion may be recommended to the Early Childhood Academy School Board of Trustees by the principal. Parents will be notified verbally and in writing of the nature of the infraction and the recommendation for expulsion. The parents are entitled to a meeting with the principal and school board representative, after which a final decision will be made by the Early Childhood Academy Board of Trustees.

All out of school suspensions will be administered for a minimum of one day and a maximum of twenty-five days. The following infractions may result in suspension of 1 to 10 days:

Acts that destroy, deface, or cause damage to school property
The documented, repeated failure* to comply with the directions of a school staff member acting within the scope of his/her employment, when said non-compliance results in disruption of the school program or injury to another student or staff person. *Repeated failure is defined as the failure of the student to comply during a third or more incident of the same nature.
The possession of profane material, or illegal or controlled substances while on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.
Trespassing on school grounds during a period of suspension or expulsion.
Causing disruption or being otherwise disorderly on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.
Participating or promoting gambling on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.
The unauthorized possession of electronic communication devices such as pagers and cell phones on school grounds or at school sponsored activities. (Authorization for the possession of such devices must be obtained in advance from the principal.)
Any theft or attempted theft of property belonging to the school, employees of the school, or visitors to the school.
The possession of weapons, tools that could reasonably be used as weapons, or items that give the appearance of being a weapon, such as toy guns, water pistols, etc. on school grounds or at school sponsored activities.
The use of profanity on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.
Physical or sexual harassment of employees or students on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.
Any malicious act that could cause injury to an employee, school visitor or another student while on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.

The following infractions may result in suspension of 11 to 25 days or in expulsion from Early Childhood Academy Public Charter School:

The use of any weapon capable of inflicting lethal injury to one or more individuals while on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities. Weapons include but are not limited to firearms, knives, and razor blades.
The use, distribution, or sale of alcohol, controlled substances, or illegal substances while on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.
Any malicious act that could potentially result in lethal injury to one or more individuals while on school grounds or at school-sponsored activities.

For additional information about the ECA suspension policy, please feel free to contact the principal or vice principal.