



Chartered 1839

EARLY CHILDHOOD

Handbook 2010 - 2011

Elgin Academy's Mission Statement

Elgin Academy
is a PS-12 independent,
college preparatory, coeducational day school
committed to developing the full potential of each of its students.
Through a proactive partnership among
faculty, parents, and students
in a nurturing, dynamic, challenging and diverse community,
the Academy creates an environment
where students may acquire
the knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary
to become
intellectually engaged and confident about their place in the world.

Elgin Academy 350 Park Street Elgin, IL 60120

Phone: 847-695-0300 Fax: 847-695-5017

Website: www.elginacademy.org

Elgin Academy admits students of any race, religion, sex, nationality or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, sex, nationality or ethnic origin the administration of its educational policies, admission policies, financial aid programs, or athletic and other school-administered programs.

Preschool/Prekindergarten Hours

8:20 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. - Half-Day Students

8:20 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. - Full-Day Students

Early Childhood Phone Numbers

Office

(847) 695-0309 x 255

Or

(847) 695-0315 x 255

Mrs. Dawn Schmidt

PS - 4 Secretary

(847) 695-0315

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Important Note:

If you are coming in to school with your child, please be careful not to park in the spaces reserved for faculty and staff. It is important that our teachers can count on their parking spaces being available.

When dropping your child off in the morning drop-off line, please remain in your car and allow the teacher assisting with morning drop-off to help your child.

Also: Please drive slowly and take notice of other foot traffic in the parking lot AT ALL TIMES!!! We are all responsible for the safety of the children. Thank you!

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Educational Philosophy and Goals

The purpose of the Academy's preschool-12th grade program is to develop a thorough and in-depth knowledge of the traditional academic disciplines, and the skills and attitudes needed to acquire and use that knowledge as life-long learners. Believing in the developmental nature of intellectual, emotional, and physical growth, the Academy faculty recognizes different stages and styles of learning that require different methods of teaching and a high degree of individual attention. By balancing structure with freedom and tradition with innovation, the school develops within each student the capacity to solve problems through both reason and imagination.

In both size and attitude, the Academy is a personal school. This personal environment fosters the pursuit of excellence in all arenas, equal standards for all, respect for individual differences, and the encouragement of risk-taking. It produces a relationship of trust and support among all members of the community – students, faculty and staff, parents, alumni, and trustees – who are joined in the common goals of excellence and cooperation. At the same time, the Academy exposes students to the complex world beyond the school community. Ultimately, the school expects students to assume increasing levels of personal and social responsibility in order to lead their lives with confidence and compassion.

Elgin Academy’s Academic Goals:

To develop students who:

1. Have achieved academic excellence in critical reading, research, writing, speaking and listening, observing, analyzing, computing, reasoning, and studying.
2. Are academically accomplished in English, mathematics, social studies, world languages, science, technology, and the arts.
3. Use a variety of educational and cultural resources effectively.
4. Are informed and concerned about contemporary issues and understand how their personal values and actions affect those issues.

Elgin Academy’s Personal/Social Goals:

To develop students who:

1. Characterize their lives with understanding, honesty, compassion, and justice.
2. Have a positive self-concept and can work toward worthy and realistic goals.
3. Have personal habits marked by initiative, responsibility, thoroughness, and a strong work ethic—qualities that make for effective citizenship and a healthy lifestyle.
4. Value cooperation and competition by participating in a variety of co-curricular activities: athletics, the arts, community service, and student publications and government.
5. Understand the value of a sense of humor as part of a rewarding life and of enjoying the pursuit of one’s goals.

Early Childhood Philosophy

The Elgin Academy Early Childhood program recognizes the importance of the early childhood years. It is our philosophy that the school environment should encourage and nurture optimum development of the individual child. By providing the opportunity to develop physical, emotional, social and cognitive skills, several lifelong qualities are fostered in turn. These qualities include creativity, independence, respect and cooperation.

Play is a child's work. Within this work, children have a natural curiosity and will learn new concepts through concrete, hands-on activities. Play is also a most effective teacher. As such, the staff at Elgin Academy is responsible for providing and nurturing an enriching and goal oriented environment for the child to learn from and explore. Children are encouraged to engage in meaningful play experiences at their own developmental level within a caring and understanding atmosphere.

In the kindergarten year, play remains an important aspect of the young child's classroom experience, but the balance shifts somewhat. The need for more focused lessons and goal-specific activities increases. This change is subtle and takes place gradually as the kindergarten child grows and matures. And at the same time the learning is still planned around real world, meaningful content that is important and appropriate for the five-year-old growing mind.

Early Childhood Academic Goals:

To develop students who:

1. Have relevant learning experiences involving conceptual, social and emotional development.
2. Are curious about the world and confident in their own ideas and can express themselves creatively.
3. Are able to problem solve, applying learned concepts to new situations.

Early Childhood Personal/Social Goals:

To develop students who:

1. Display a healthy self-image and demonstrate self-control.
2. Form healthy social relationships and show responsibility for themselves and others.
3. Are actively engaged in their school experience and demonstrate a positive attitude toward learning.
4. Demonstrate confidence in themselves and their abilities to learn and succeed.

Admission

Elgin Academy's educational program is designed for students who have the potential to respond to the curriculum in a positive way and who wish to prepare themselves with a sound academic background for college work.

In considering a candidate for admission, the Academy endeavors to find out as much as possible about the student's scholastic background, work habits, character, personal interests, and social traits. From this information an Admission Committee judges a candidate's ability to meet the high standards of academic achievement and personal conduct expected of EA students.

The decision of the Admission Committee is based on:

1. The student's past academic work as recorded on a copy of an official transcript sent from the student's current school.
2. A completed Teacher Recommendation form (Grade 2-12 applicants only; form is provided by Elgin Academy).
3. The results of the ERB Test administered by the Admission Office (Grade 6-12 applicants only) or a scheduled screening visit (PS –Grade 5 applicants only).
4. A personal interview with the parents and student candidate, when deemed appropriate.
6. A school visit by the candidate.

Tuition Policies

A non-refundable deposit is required for both returning students, as part of the re-enrollment agreement, and new students to confirm the applicant's place in class. This is applied to the total tuition and fees. The Academy has many expenses of a continuing nature, such as faculty salaries and campus maintenance. In order to plan and maintain these services over the entire year, it is essential that the annual income from fees be assured. For this reason, it is understood that students are enrolled for the entire school year or such portion as may remain after the date of entrance. In view of the foregoing, no reduction or remission of fees can be allowed by the Academy for absence, withdrawal, or dismissal. The fact that the school fees may be paid in installments does not constitute a fractional contract.

The Tuition Protection Plan is a program provided by Elgin Academy for the purpose of protecting the investment a family makes in the education of a child at the Academy. Enrollment of a child at Elgin Academy carries with it an obligation to pay tuition for the entire academic year, even if the child is subsequently withdrawn. By participating in the Tuition Protection Plan, you become eligible to receive a pro rata refund of your tuition if your child's separation from school occurs by reason of one of the causes covered by the Plan, including Medical Withdrawal, Psychiatric Withdrawal, Geographic Withdrawal, and Disciplinary Dismissal.

Participation in this Plan is required of all students whose tuition is paid via a payment plan. Participation is recommended (but not required) for parents who choose to pay their student's balance in full by August 5th and wish to minimize their risk of lost tuition expense in the event of a covered separation from studies.

Daily Routines

Arrival and Dismissal

Students are welcomed into the classroom any time after **8:00 a.m.** Please be prompt in bringing your child to school **8:20 a.m.** for preschool and prekindergarten. It is difficult for children (and adults, too!) to join a group already involved in activities. When dropping your child off in the morning drop-off line, **please remain in your car and allow the teacher assisting with morning drop-off to help your child.**

Students enrolled in the half-day program will be dismissed at **11:30 a. m.**
Half-day Preschool students will be dismissed from the play yard or at their classroom door. Half-day Prekindergarten students will be dismissed from in front of North Hall.

Full day PS/PK students will be ready for dismissal at **2:30 p.m.** All full day students will be dismissed from the back entrance of North Hall. (The door closest to the parking spaces.)

Please be on time for your children. Some young students get anxious when mom or dad is running late and the other students have gone home. If this should happen on occasion and you know that you are running late, please call. This way we can let your child know that you will be here soon.

Lower school siblings of full day **PS/PK** students are welcome to join us in the back hall at afternoon dismissal. This way you can avoid being in two car lines, and the back hall dismissal is faster!

Please let us know in person or in writing if you make different arrangements for your child's dismissal. We cannot allow anyone else to take a child from school without proper notice from the parent and positive identification of the responsible adult. Please make your child's social arrangements prior to dismissal. Curbside invitations in the presence of children not included can result in hurt feelings.

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Thank you!

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Snacks and Lunch

A snack is served each morning. We use healthful and nourishing foods of low sugar content and, when possible, involve the children in preparing and serving the food. If your child has food allergies, strong dislikes, or cultural restrictions, please make certain that we have been informed of them.

Children enrolled in the full-day preschool and prekindergarten programs will need to bring their own lunch. We encourage balanced and nutritious lunches; low in sugar, sodium and fat. A lunch box that is easy for the child to open and close is also important. The school provides milk at lunchtime free of charge.

Snack and lunch are social experiences. We encourage the children to practice good manners, converse freely, eat at the table, serve themselves, and use their utensils properly.

Children in Preschool/Prekindergarten:

Parents who wish to send a snack for the class can sign up to be part of the scheduled rotation. This is a voluntary agreement and we will print a schedule of snack days along with suggestions of popular ideas for snack. Please be reminded that cupcakes, doughnuts and other high sugar/fat content foods are not appropriate for snack. We welcome your generosity in this area, but we request that foods sent for sharing be healthful and easy to serve. We ask that you please pay close attention to any restrictions and the guidelines that may be unique to your child's class. Your child's classroom teacher will offer further information on this subject.

Allergies

Please be certain to inform the school of any food allergies your child has.

*****Note:** Some of our students have life threatening allergies to peanuts, such that even contact with peanut products presents a threat. It is critical therefore that all peanut products are excluded from the snacks and lunches of all students in Preschool, Prekindergarten. ***

Health and Safety

Forms

In compliance with Illinois law, parents of all students must complete:

- *Medical Emergency Authorization Form*
- *Certificate of Child Health Examination Form* (complete with the dates of immunization, physician's examination report, signature and date)

All new students need a current physical examination form on file at the school office. In order for the Academy to maintain its accreditation, it must comply with these State regulations. The Academy must insist, therefore, that the *Medical Emergency Form* and the *Health Examination Form* be on file at the School. Students who do not have their health records and medical emergency forms on file will not be able to attend classes.

Illness/Absence/Emergency

If your child will be absent from school please notify the office by phone or e-mail. If the absence continues, please inform the school each day. If the absence is due to a communicable disease such as strep throat or chicken pox please let Mrs. Dawn Schmidt know along with the date of diagnosis.

Children exhibiting symptoms such as vomiting, diarrhea or fever should be kept at home. The active nature of the school day may prove too much for some children when they are not well. This is an important point to consider when your child seems on the borderline between 'well enough' or not quite healthy enough to be in school. Once your child is fever free without medication, please allow them a day before returning to school.

In the event that a child becomes ill during the school day, the parents will be notified to pick them up. The ill child will be kept quiet and comfortable until parents can arrive. Parents should notify the school of the times when their child will be absent and when the parents will not be at their regular address or phone number, so that they can be reached at all times, just in case of sickness or emergency.

Your children are supervised and in the company of their teachers at all times; however, accidents may occur. In any case, parents will be notified of any accident and its circumstances. If the accident is minor, the parents will be informed when picking up their child at the end of the day. If a serious accident should occur and a child needs immediate medical attention, our first action will be to obtain the needed help. The second action will be to notify the parents. We will refer to your child's *Medical Emergency Form* at such times.

No group insurance plan to cover student accidents or injuries is offered by the Academy. Parents are strongly urged to secure health and accident insurance for their children in the event of illness, accident or other emergency, as the Academy will not be financially responsible for expenses resulting from such occurrences.

Emergency School Closing

If there is a need for a scheduled school day to be cancelled (i.e. a “Snow Day”) parents will be contacted by the school. Emergency information initiated by Elgin Academy will be immediately communicated via email and/or phone to parents.

Parents’ Absence from Home

If parents will be out of town, please inform the school in advance. We will need the following information:

1. The name of the person caring for your child and the telephone number if your child is not staying at home.
2. Your out-of-town contact information in case of an emergency.

Medication

Prescription medication shall be administered only according to a prescription from a physician and with written parental instructions and consent. Prescription medicine must be labeled with the full pharmacy label.

Nonprescription medications may be dispensed in accordance with manufacturer’s instructions when provided by the parent with written consent. The medication must be clearly labeled with the child’s first and last name. The container must have the name of the medication and directions for dispensing clearly printed on the label.

A record of all medication administered will be maintained.

All medications shall be inaccessible to children.

Building Community

General Behavior

The Academy expects students to exhibit personal maturity and responsibility commensurate with their age. The school believes that students grow and develop as children and adolescents best when proper standards of politeness and decorum are maintained. When discipline is necessary, we use measures that show love and kindness, but also firmness and consistency. We attempt to help children gain the confidence and knowledge that will develop their self-control. We do not allow children to hurt themselves or others or to destroy property. We encourage use of language to express feelings in a productive and independent manner.

Elgin Academy will not tolerate verbal or physical conduct by any community member—student, parent or employee – which harasses, disrupts, or interferes with another’s performance or which creates an offensive or hostile environment. This policy includes harassment of any kind, but particularly harassment forbidden by law and based on race, religion, sex, age, national origin, color, physical size, marital status or disability. In the case of inappropriate behavior by a member of our community, the offended party should contact the Division Director. If the party concerned is uncomfortable contacting the Division Director, he/she should contact the Head of School or the Director of Finance and Operations.

Birthdays

A child’s birthday is a special time. If children wish to bring in a treat for the class please let the teachers know ahead of time. We do celebrate birthdays in school. A favorite book to share or stickers for the class are nice options in place of or along with a treat. In order to avoid confusion and hurt feelings, all invitations to birthday parties need to be mailed rather than brought to school. Encouraging good manners, sharing and kindness toward others is important when celebrating birthdays.

Toys from Home

We have many appropriate play and work materials for the children to use here at school. These materials can help the children learn to share, trade, initiate activities, and plan ahead. We therefore request that toys not be brought from home. We will on occasion request certain items for sharing which reflect a theme or category. These items are treated with care and they are shared with all the children interested.

Children are allowed to bring a soft toy for rest time or reassurance. These special toys are kept in the child’s school bag when not needed. It is recommended that the child’s bag be checked before leaving for the day if the special toy is necessary for the bedtime routine!

All clothing and personal belongings should be labeled with the child’s name.

Extended Day

Elgin Academy has an Extended Day program in place for students in grades K-6. Children in the preschool and prekindergarten are eligible to participate in the extended day program on a slightly restricted basis. As a general policy PS/PK children are eligible to stay until 4:30 p.m. in the Extended Day program. It is important that we keep each child's health and well being at the center of our decisions; by doing so we help to ensure that school will be a positive and rewarding experience. With this in mind we can make arrangements for admission to the extended day program on an individual basis. **Parents interested in this option need to discuss their interest and their child's stamina for a longer day with the early childhood director before they can be enrolled in extended day.**

Dress Code

The most important feature of the dress code for the young child is that clothing be clean, neat and appropriate for an active learning environment. It is also important that the clothing fosters independence in dressing and taking care of toileting needs.

Because of the active nature of our program it is important for the children to wear comfortable, well fitting shoes. Footwear should be flat and appropriate for active learning. Platform and flip-flop shoes should be reserved for non-school occasions. When boot season arrives, a pair of slippers with no- skid soles can be kept in the cubby at school. These are easy to change in and out of and help keep feet warm, dry and comfortable. In winter, it is important that all children come to school with warm outdoor wear. This includes hat, mittens, boots and snow pants. We plan outdoor time each day unless it is raining or the wind chill is below 20 degrees Fahrenheit.

Please avoid blue jeans. Please save clothing that is very special or dressy for special occasions outside of school. Children do get dirty in school. Not on purpose, it just happens!!

All clothing and personal belongings should be labeled with the child's name.

Extra Clothing

Please bring an extra change of clothes for your child to keep at school in case of a bathroom accident or spill.

All clothing and personal belongings should be labeled with the child's name.

Spirit Day

The first Friday of each month is an all school Spirit Day. Children may wear blue jeans and their Elgin Academy t-shirts/sweatshirts or the school colors: orange and black.

All clothing and personal belongings should be labeled with the child's name.

The Library/Media Center

Hours: 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. daily unless otherwise posted.

Students should know that the Library/Media Center director is always available for assistance in using the Library/Media Center's resources, either for class or for personal projects. Parents are also welcome to use the center's resources and check out materials.

Circulation

Materials may be checked out of the Library/Media Center for a lending period of one month for Upper School and Middle School materials. Early Childhood and Lower School materials may be checked out for one week because these students have weekly visits to the library. All items may be renewed unless requested by another student. Materials should be returned to the circulation desk. No materials should leave the Library/Media Center until they have been checked out. Reference books may be checked out of the Library/Media Center for one night only.

Overdue or Lost Books

Students will be notified of overdue materials by a printed notice from the Library/Media Center Director. Any lost items should be reported to the Director at once. Every effort should be made to locate the items in question. If the materials are not found, the student will be assessed the replacement cost of each item that is lost. If payment is not made, Library/Media Center privileges may be revoked.

Library Etiquette

It is expected that students using the Library/Media Center will behave in a manner considerate of others. No behavior annoying or disturbing to others in the room will be allowed. Food and drinks are not allowed in the Library/Media Center.

Birthdays

Many children choose to celebrate their birthdays by donating a book to our Library/Media Center. Thanks to the Birthday Book Club, our collection has grown quite significantly.

Home/School Connection

Communication

A vital component of our program is parents and teachers communicating and working as a team. We aim to be current, perceptive and open in our manner with the children. Clear and open communication between home and school is necessary to attain this goal. Your child's education is a collaborative effort and we ask you to join us. We urge parents to ask questions, express concerns and share information. Your feedback will be solicited upon occasion, but please know that your input is important at any time.

Orientation/Get-Acquainted Conferences

We begin our year with a parent orientation session. This gives parents an opportunity to gather important details concerning the first weeks of school and the routines involved. The Get-Acquainted Conference is an opportunity for the parents and teacher to discuss the children individually. Parental insights regarding their children are very helpful to the teacher in planning an educational program.

Learning Plan Conferences

Student growth and development is recorded and shared on a quarterly basis. The first and third quarters of the school year include a Learning Plan Conference. This is a time for the parents and their child's teacher to address the student's individual learning style, strengths, weaknesses and developmental needs. The Learning Plan is designed to personalize the educational process. It is at the heart of Elgin Academy's educational philosophy.

Routine Communication

Parents of preschoolers and prekindergarteners are kept informed in writing each day concerning the latest themes, topics, activities and upcoming events. Our daily sheet provides parents with a description of the day's highlights in the classroom. These written communications are excellent reference sheets when having conversations with your child about their day.

At the end of each week a Friday Folder is sent home with each child. It contains information from many different areas of the school. Letters and memos from teachers, invitations to Parent Association events, opportunities to order Market Day, calendars and notices, are all examples of what may be found in a Friday Folder. Your signature is required on the folder's response sheet, and your comments and questions are welcomed.

Please feel free to leave us voicemail, e-mail, and/or written notes about your child and school as needed. **It is helpful for you to inform us of the best mode for your personal style and accessibility: phone, email, handwritten notes. We usually have time for quick conversations at the beginning and end of the day, but please remember that the children are our top priority at those moments and if you have information we will need to remember, please put it in writing or voicemail so we can attend to it properly.**

Field Trips

Parents are asked to sign an annual “blanket” permission form at the beginning of each school year. Parents will be informed ahead of time, with the specifics, when a field trip is in the plans for their child.

Big Orange Book

Early in the school year each family in the Elgin Academy community will receive what is commonly referred to as the Big Orange Book. This book is invaluable for its basic information; it is a school phone book, a school calendar and a reference book for questions that may come up during the year. It is kept in the car by many parents for quick and easy access.

Parent Involvement

All parents are encouraged to help out by serving as room representatives, library helpers, or with special classroom activities. There are events throughout the school year that require a large number of volunteers on a short-term basis. Please contact the Parent Association about these opportunities.

Parent Association

The Parent Association is a voluntary organization of Elgin Academy and is open to the entire parent body. The Association seeks to promote Academy unity, parent understanding of Academy objectives, and opportunities for parents to be of service to the school. The Parent Association recognizes the Head of School as the chief administrative officer of the Academy with primary responsibility for approving all school projects, activities, and policies.

Principles of Good Practice

Elgin Academy is a member of the National Association of Independent Schools, which has developed standards of practice for its 1,100 member schools. The following are Principles of Good Practice for parents and schools working together on behalf of our students.

Parents Working with Schools

1. Parents recognize that effective partnerships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be reached.
2. In selecting an independent school, parents seek an optimal match for the needs of the student, their own expectations, and the philosophy and programs of the school.
3. Parents are familiar with and support the school's policies and procedures.
4. Parents provide a home environment that supports the development of positive learning attitudes and habits.
5. Parents involve themselves in the life of the school.
6. Parents seek and value the school's perspective of the student.
7. When concerns arise, parents seek information directly from the school, consulting with those best able to address the concerns.
8. Parents share with the school any religious, cultural, medical, or personal information that the school may need to serve the student best.

Schools Working with Parents

1. The school recognizes that effective partnerships are characterized by clearly defined responsibilities, a shared commitment to collaboration, open lines of communication, mutual respect, and a common vision of the goals to be reached
2. The school fully discloses its philosophy, program, and practices to parents during the admission process and encourages dialogue that clarifies parental expectations and aspirations for the student.
3. The school seeks and values the parent's perspective on the student.
4. Teachers and administrators are accessible to parents and model candid and open dialogue.
5. The school keeps parents well informed through systematic reports, conferences, publications, and informal conversations.
6. The school clearly defines how it involves parents when considering major decisions that affect the school community.
7. The school offers and supports a variety of parent education opportunities.
8. The school suggests effective ways for parents to support the educational process.
9. The school actively seeks the knowledge it needs to work effectively with a diverse parent body.