

# *El Paso Country Day School*



## *Student & Parent Handbook*

## **Mission Statement**

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The mission of *El Paso Country Day School* is to provide a full-time educational program of academic excellence that encourages learning, personal and academic growth, as well as creative and divergent thinking for our students. *El Paso Country Day School* strives to provide all the academic and technical skills to develop lifelong learners and to instill the joy of learning and discovery in every student.

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The policies and procedures set forth in this Student and Parent Handbook provide guidelines for students and parents. The guidelines and procedures referenced herein may be changed from time to time by the Administration or the Board of Directors.

## School Philosophy

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*El Paso Country Day School* believes in the value and unique qualities of each individual. No two children learn in exactly the same manner, at the same pace, through the same senses, or from the same background of experience. We believe education to be a continuous process that is inherently an enjoyable and rewarding experience.

*El Paso Country Day School* presents a challenging and safe environment for students. Our curriculum expands the borders of traditional academic areas and emphasizes skills involving creativity, thinking, and problem solving. We hope to demonstrate to students the natural integration of traditionally segregated areas of study.

Graduates from *El Paso Country Day School* are expected to be knowledgeable in the academic areas. They are also expected to be individuals who enjoy the lifelong process of learning and who welcome opportunities for creative and divergent thinking. They are exposed to the arts, world cultures, technology, and areas of controversy that allow them to become socially responsible leaders. Through community involvement, students of *El Paso Country Day School* learn that they are responsible not only for their own actions, but also have a broader responsibility to their community.

We welcome you to *El Paso Country Day School* and are glad you have chosen to be a part of our community. The faculty and staff of *El Paso Country Day School* look forward to sharing this unique, outstanding educational experience with you and your family.

Laura K. Alpern, Ph. D.  
Director

Melissa Eckert, M.Ed.  
Associate Director

Linda G. Heuer, MATL.  
Administrator

## **Student Expectations**

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Academic and behavioral expectations for the students at the *El Paso Country Day School* are high. Classroom teachers and school administrators are confident that each individual student has both the mental and developmental ability to succeed and grow. Academic performance commensurate to ability level is required for educational success.

Inadequate academic performance necessitates a student-teacher conference and, when appropriate, a parent-teacher conference as well. A student is placed on academic probation in a given subject area for any grading period grade below C-. Tutoring at parental expense may be required.

Behavioral expectations are age appropriate. Students are expected to behave in a manner that promotes safety, responsibility, respect for self and others, and the inherent enjoyment of learning and socializing with others.

Behavior that is unsafe, lacking in respect, or incompatible with the stated goals of the school is not acceptable. Consequences of such behavior may range from an individual counseling session with the teacher to suspension or expulsion from school. A philosophy of logical consequences is applied to student behavior. At no time is corporal punishment used or is it recommended for home discipline.

Assumptions of *El Paso Country Day School* include a belief that individuals find comfort and stability in a social order that encourages the exchange of ideas within a framework of respect for self and others. It is also assumed that students and their families are willing participants in each student's academic and developmental advancement and will work with the school to that end.

## Accreditation

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### Accreditation

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*El Paso Country Day School* is accredited by the Southern Association for Colleges and Schools (SACS) which offers our school a broad accreditation scope. SACS is a nationally recognized accrediting agency and is listed with TEPACS. We are proud to be a part of their outstanding organization.

## Attendance

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Students are expected to attend all school commitments and to arrive on time. When a student has to be absent because of illness, parents are required to phone the school office **The school must receive a signed and dated note from a parent when the student is absent indicating the cause and date(s) of absence.** If a student is absent for three or more days, a doctor's note may be required in order for the student to return to class. An absence will be considered unexcused absence (zero for the day) without a written note. A student may not be allowed to return to class without an Admission to Class form from the office. Arrangements for making up missed assignments must be made with each teacher. **Absence from a block class (90 min) is counted as two (2) absences.**

A student who, for any reason, is absent five days or misses a course five times in a quarter may be referred by the teacher to the office. A letter will then be mailed to the parents advising them of the policy on absenteeism and that continued absence may result in denial of credits.

A student who, for any reason, is absent ten days or misses a course ten times in a semester may forfeit credit for the compromised course(s). Any chronic health condition must be verified by a physician's statement with school administration.

Due to the nature of the school, its students, and their parents, it is reasonable to expect that students will be absent occasionally for reasons other than illness. A student who would like to request permission to miss a commitment must have a parent call or write the Administration for special arrangements. As travel can be very educational, we do not want to discourage it. If, however, your child is to be absent for more than three days, the school must be notified at least *one week in advance* so that teachers can plan an appropriate additional assignment, as well as all missed work. Completed work is due upon return to class. Whenever possible, all work should be turned in before the planned absence. For prearranged absences, teachers of classes from which the student will be absent must be contacted for appropriate assignments and the teachers' signatures obtained on the "Planned Absence" form that is available in the office. The form is then returned to the office for approval. **A student will be allowed up to five (5) excused vacation days during instructional days. Anything over the five (5) days is considered excessive and will result in an unexcused absence.**

In the case of absence for only part of the day, the parent must sign in or out through the school office (see also Tardiness). Both absences and tardies are recorded quarterly on the individual *Evaluation of Academic Progress* and/or Report Cards.

## Assemblies

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School-wide assemblies are scheduled regularly in order to provide class and individual leadership opportunities, to enhance the concept of community within the school, and to offer high-quality programming to all students in the school. Students are expected to give full attention and respect to the performers and guests. We welcome parents and other visitors. All visitors must check in at the office and should sit towards the back of the assembly area.

## **Bake Sales**

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On Friday afternoons, different classes may sponsor a bake sale. This small fundraising project gives the individual classes the opportunity to raise money for class activities of their own choosing. Items sell for \$0.25 - \$1.00 and are brought to school by class parents. Please support your classes' efforts in this regard.

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## **Before and After School Care**

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*El Paso Country Day School* offers a *before and after* school care facility approved by the Texas Department of Human Services. Before and after school care is available for *EPCDS* students between 7:00 a.m. and 8:15 a.m. before school and again between 1:15 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. We strongly encourage that prior arrangements be made through the office. Naps are not required, but the school makes every attempt to abide by parental wishes in this matter.

If the office has closed, you may reach daycare at [533-1852](tel:533-1852).

There are two choices for daycare billing. Families are to choose one option for the academic year.

1) Hourly billing: Charged hourly and recommended for families who anticipate fewer than 60 hours per month of daycare. Charges are per hour or any portion thereof. If a student is not punched out at the end of the day, daycare hours will be billed through 6:00 p.m. Overtime (after 6:00 p.m.) will be charged at the regular overtime rate of \$5.00 per minute and added to your daycare bill.

2) Flat Fee Billing: A monthly flat fee will be charged no matter how many hours of daycare are used. However, any overtime (after 6:00 p.m.) will be charged at the regular overtime rate of \$5.00 per minute and added to your daycare bill. August will be prorated and the remaining 9 months will be billed at the full Flat Fee Rate. Billing for before and after school care is mailed monthly. All time cards must be punched IN for the morning and OUT for afternoon. **Parents are responsible for punching the card in and out.** All students arriving before 8:15 a.m. or staying after 1:15 p.m. (Alpha) or 3:45 p.m. (Beta - Eta) will automatically be sent to and billed for day care. If a payment option is not chosen, hourly billing will apply.

**Hours:** 7:30 a.m. - 8:15 a.m. & 1:15 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

**Late pick-ups (after 6:00 p.m.) will be charged \$5.00 per minute per child.**

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## **Board of Directors**

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*El Paso Country Day School* is governed by a Board of Directors which meets regularly during the year. Membership of the Board of Directors, many of whom have students at *EPCDS*, is composed of local professionals who devote many unpaid hours to benefit the school. The Board of Directors accepts written appeals from faculty and staff regarding school policies and procedures as well as actions and decisions made by school administrators. Upon request, faculty and staff are invited to meetings of the Board of Directors to discuss specific situations. Individual members of the Board of Directors should be contacted through the Director.

The PTO President is your direct liaison with the Board. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact him or her at any time.

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## **Books**

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Students are responsible for maintaining books in good condition. Textbooks must be covered appropriately at all times. Adhesives or tapes may not be used. Students may not write in the textbooks. Middle school students are required to use color-coded cloth book covers. Repeated infractions of uncovered books may result in mandatory purchase of stretch book covers for all grade levels. All books are to be returned at the end of each course, normally during final exams.

Families will be responsible for the cost or replacement of any damaged or lost books. Grades and transcripts will be withheld until this financial obligation is met.

In some instances, such as Dual Credit, students may be required to purchase additional books.

## **Community Service**

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Community Service is the cornerstone of a well-rounded education. The goal of this program is to teach students responsibility for themselves and for the community in which they live. Community service is generally done as a class group or a school project on special occasions.

## **Complaint or Concern**

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If a student or parent has a concern about a school policy or an employee, the following procedure should be followed in order to resolve the problem as quickly as possible:

1. Contact the person with whom you have a complaint to arrange a meeting.
2. If the problem still exists, contact the Administration.
3. If the problem has still not been resolved satisfactorily, a written letter may be submitted to the Board of Directors.

## **Computer Facilities**

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All computers are IBM compatible and use the Windows operating system. Age appropriate software is available for all levels and subjects. Keyboarding skills are taught beginning in the second grade. Word processing, programming, graphics, Spanish, Math, etc., are a part of the computer curriculum.

Behavior standards for the computer room are very strict in order to ensure the safety of the students and to protect the computers. These standards are discussed the first class day in the computer room. Violation of these standards result in the logical consequence of restricted computer privileges until the student has demonstrated increased respect for the facility.

Students are expected to:

- respect hardware and all software,
- respect all data stored on the hardware, including other students' work,
- use the Internet appropriately,
- obtain instructor's approval before using software from home,
- each student is required to use their own zip disk (100), or USB drive,
- use the school computers as needed to complete homework assignments,
- have work printed as needed before or after school, during breaks, or lunch.
  - use email to send assignments when a home printer or a disk is not available, or there is a possibility of disk failure.

The following computer room guidelines must be followed:

- NO food or drinks are allowed in the computer lab.
- computer games are not permitted.
  - the use of the internet demands personal responsibility. Inappropriate use will result in loss of privileges.
  - use home computer failure as an excuse for not turning in homework on time. A hand written report will be accepted with the printed copy due the following day.
  - no personal email.

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## Computer - Student Laptops

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Students may use personal computers in class with the instructor's permission. If a student is using his/her computer inappropriately (ie: off task, web surfing, playing games or music) during class time, s/he will lose the right to use the personal computer during school or have it confiscated.

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## Controlled Substances

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(See Substance Abuse)

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## Delivery and Pick Up

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All students *must* be dropped off and picked up in the front of the building on the *south side* of Cliff Drive. Please do not park on the north side of Cliff Drive as students are not allowed to cross this busy street. Students arriving before 8:15 a.m., or those not picked up within fifteen minutes after class dismissal, will be sent to daycare and billed accordingly.

Students may be picked up **only** by parents or those individuals designated on the *Student Information Form*. For the safety of the students, proof of identity may be requested.

Individual requests for early dismissal must be made to the school office. Office personnel will contact the classroom teacher to release a student for early dismissal. Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. or leaving prior to their normal time of dismissal must sign in or out through the office by the parent.

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## Detention

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When detention is assigned by administration, it will be served in the office on the day following the infraction beginning at 7:30 a.m. Tardiness or absence from this detention will result in the detention time being doubled. Continued tardiness will result in the student being withheld from the compromised class. This may result in loss of credit. Continued tardiness will result in further disciplinary action up to and including suspension and/or expulsion from *EPCDS*.

Detention is mandatory for any of the following infractions:

- three (3) or more total unexcused tardies,
- gum chewing,
- inappropriate dress,
- any behavioral infraction,
- or other infractions of school policy.

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## Discipline

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The *El Paso Country Day School* advocates the use of logical consequences as an effective method for encouraging appropriate student behavior. Each teacher and class will establish acceptable classroom procedures with positive and negative consequences related to them. The ultimate result is the creation of a positive school environment and an orderly community that encourages cooperation. School detention, suspensions, and expulsions are implemented when necessary. At no time is corporal punishment used nor is it recommended for home discipline.

We recognize that students do make mistakes and hope that they will learn from them. We endeavor to address consequences, when necessary, with compassion and firmness, in an attempt to foster the habit of self-discipline and to encourage respect for the spirit as well as the intent of the rules. We do not operate a system of strictly automatic penalties, believing that each incident should be handled on an individual basis. Such factors as the needs and age of the individual student, the circumstances of the offense, and the previous record are taken into account.

In order to make clear certain limits, we list below our essential regulations, infractions of which are serious disciplinary matters and can lead to suspension or dismissal. Students who see violations

being committed and support the actions by their presence, or who fail to report the violations to a teacher or administrator, will also be held accountable.

1. Everyone has the right to be safe: physically, emotionally, and intellectually.
2. Everyone has the right to learn.
3. **Absolute integrity** is required of us all.
4. Everyone has the right to mutual respect.

As with other facets of the school philosophy, the active participation of parents is extremely important. The effectiveness of any disciplinary program is dependent upon the active support and cooperation of parents and family.

Students who commit or are involved in any of the following will have appropriate disciplinary action taken:

1. Vandalism: destroying or defacing school property, the property of another student or of a school employee. The student will be held responsible for the repair and/or replacement of the damaged property.
2. Fighting: fighting on school grounds or during any school-related activity.
3. Stealing: the theft or attempted theft of any school property, student property, or employee property, including borrowed school property for which the student agrees to be responsible, such as library books, etc.
4. Cheating/Plagiarism: Integrity in one's work is the cornerstone of learning. A student who does not honor the school's policy of absolute integrity will be held responsible for his or her actions. Cheating will result in an automatic zero and may result in, but not limited to, loss of credit for the semester.
5. Possessing, handling, or transmitting any object or material that is ordinarily or generally considered to be a weapon.
6. Truancy or failure to attend assigned classes or activities.
7. Tardiness to school, assigned class, or scheduled activity.
8. Using language or actions that by school standards is considered vulgar, obscene, sarcastic, demeaning, threatening, or intimidating.
9. An arrest outside of school grounds, even if it does not occur during school hours or events.
10. The possession of any illegal substance or item. (See also Substance Abuse).

These offenses are considered very serious. Infractions may result in detention, suspension, loss of credit, or in certain situations, expulsion.

## Donations

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Donations of money, materials, or time to the school are always appreciated. As a nonprofit school, each donation directly benefits the student. The school is particularly in need of quality books for the library. Your child's birthday is an especially appropriate time to give a book in his or her name. All donations are tax deductible.

## Dress Code

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*El Paso Country Day School* supports a casual environment that encourages involvement in one's learning. The school "dress code" stresses simple standards of neatness and taste in the face of changing styles. Students are expected to dress casually, yet appropriately. Dress and personal appearance should reflect a sense of personal integrity and respect for others and the occasion.

Clothes should be clean and in good repair. Flip-Flops and plastic shoes can be slippery and dangerous on the playground and may **not** be worn to school. **Skirts and shorts must be at least fingertip length.** Spaghetti straps, tank tops, and crop tops are **NOT** permitted. Exposed midribs, muscle shirts, and excessively baggy, drooping pants, or hip huggers are not permitted (determined by the student raising arms to shoulder height). **A finger-tip length top must be worn with leggings, tights, etc.** Specific guidelines on appropriate dress for certain occasions will be given. Facial jewelry may not be

worn. Piercing must be appropriate and fit within the confines of the *EPCDS* dress code. If hair is colored, only natural hair colors are allowed. Hats, caps, and sunglasses are not permitted indoors. At no time may a student wear clothing with obscenities or references to drugs or alcohol or derogatory references to race, sex, ethnicity, or religion. The school will provide alternative clothing to students who are inappropriately dressed or the student may be sent home.

A school uniform consisting of tan kahki pants, shorts, or skirt with an *EPCDS* polo shirt may be worn at the option of the family. Students who do not adhere to the school dress code may be required to wear a school uniform.

Uniforms are required for off-campus trips (See Also: **Field Trip Uniform**).

## **Electronic Mail - Email**

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In order to provide supportive and up-to-date communications with parents, all families are asked to provide the school with a current, up-to-date, and functional email address.

## **Extended Families**

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Families requiring duplicate mailing of student information to an address other than the student's address of record must inform the school office in writing, providing complete information. If you wish to have a separate address and phone number listed in the Student Directory, the office must be notified no later than September 1 of the current academic year.

## **Evaluations/Grading**

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The purpose of grades is to notify both students and parents of academic progress. Grades reflect a personal mastery of both academic materials and effort.

Written evaluations of student academic progress will be distributed approximately one week following the end of each grading period. Records of school absences and tardies are also included.

The school year is divided into two 16-week semesters. Each semester is divided into two 8-week quarters. The grade received for each of these quarters is averaged for the semester grade. These individual grades are not printed on the transcript and are in letter format.

Each quarter is divided into two four-week mid-quarter report periods. This is a statement of where each student stands in each of his/her classes. The grade often reflects missing work that still can be handed in. Extra work or make-up work is often not reflected so grades may be artificially low. These grades are numerical.

MID QUARTER	4 WKS	4 WKS	4 WKS	4 WKS	4 WKS	4 WKS	4 WKS	4 WKS
QUARTER	8 WEEKS		8 WEEKS		8 WEEKS		8 WEEKS	
SEMESTER	16 WEEKS				16 WEEKS			

Report cards serve as official grade reports. All four quarters appear on the final document.

## **Exams**

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### **Study Guides:**

With teacher guidance, study guides may be prepared with student input. Study guides cover all information that may be on the final exam. Accurate completion of the study guide in a timely manner assures students have all the information they will need to be successful on the final exam.

- ◆ Study guides will be graded as a major project or exam and included as part of the semester grade.
- ◆ Students are required to bring the study guide to the final exam as their entrance to take the test.
- ◆ If the study guide is not turned in at the final exam, there will be an eleven (11) point deduction on the final exam grade.

### Final Exams:

Final exams are usually scheduled during the last week of the grading period. Upper school generally schedules final exams during the last school week of December and the last two school weeks of May. Absences during these times can be detrimental to the student's grades and may delay their evaluation. An absence due to illness must be documented by a doctor's note to reschedule a missed exam. Planned absences may not be scheduled during finals. Cheating on an exam will result in an automatic zero and may result in, but not limited to, loss of credit for the semester.

- ◆ Final exams constitute 20% of the second semester grades. There will be no make-up for failed exams.

## Field Trips

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Field trips are scheduled regularly throughout the academic year. In order to participate, students must have parental permission (*Student Information Form*), be appropriately dressed (school uniform or school shirt), be up-to-date in class work and homework, and have demonstrated correct behavior during previous trips. All drivers will be licensed and all students will use seat belts.

Students are responsible to keep the vehicle clean and pick up their trash and will be held accountable for any destruction of the vehicle.

## Field Trip Uniform

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Scheduled field trips require all School students to wear trip uniforms that will consist of solid color khaki shorts, pants, skirt, or jumper (no mini length) with an Oxford blue button down shirt. Khaki, blue, or white socks (or tights for girls) are appropriate. Solid khaki or navy blue sweaters may be added. For informal situations, individual classes may elect to wear school T-shirts.

Wearing a field trip uniform is to remind students of the higher standard of behavior required on field trips as well as to help other people identify our group.

There will be several school activities that require school T-shirts to be worn. Additionally, Fridays are "School Spirit Day" and students are encouraged to wear a school shirt.

## Finances

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Questions involving financial matters should be addressed to the school bookkeeper. Payments for tuition, daycare, PTO programs, after-school classes and other on-campus activities may be made in either school office.

Tuition is for the academic year; it is **not** on a month-to-month basis. Therefore, absence or withdrawal in the middle of the year does not relieve the parents' tuition obligation. Tuition Refund Insurance is mandatory when choosing a payment plan option.

The Registration Fee is nonrefundable. Payments are due in the office by the 15th of each month. If payments are not received by the 20th of the month, a student may be held in the office pending receipt of payment. Any and all past due accounts may be subject to a 10% late charge. There is a \$35.00 charge on all returned checks. *EPCDS* reserves the right to accept only cash or a money order in the event of receiving an insufficient fund check.

All financial obligations to the school must be up-to-date for school records to be released.

A student may not be permitted to take final exams unless all financial obligations have been met. Course credit will not be given until all financial obligations have been met.

A student may not be allowed to participate in the **Annual Class Trip** unless all financial obligations are current.

The following procedures will apply to all late payments:

- 15 days: a 10% late charge may be applied.
- 30 days: your child may not be permitted to enter class.
- 60 days: your account may be reported to the credit bureau.
- 90 days: your account may be turned over to a collection agency.

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## Financial Aid

With the exception of automatic sibling scholarships, financial aid is awarded each year by the Financial Aid Committee of the Board of Directors on the basis of need. Financial aid may be up to 50% of the full tuition amount; there are no 100% tuition awards. Only complete Financial Aid applications will be considered. Application forms are available by appointment only with the Administrator. Financial aid funding is limited and generally allocated during the summer. Financial Aid may not be granted if financial obligations are not current. Financial Aid recipients will be responsible for volunteering hours to *El Paso Country Day School* at a rate of \$15.00 per hour to equal the amount of scholarship money awarded and will be responsible for paying the standard tuition rate for any hours that have not been completed by the end of the academic year. Assistance with Annual Fundraising is mandatory.

Currently registered families must submit the Financial Aid Application no later than **May 1st** of the current academic year. Financial Aid funds may not be available after that date.

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## Fire and Emergency Drills

Fire and emergency drills are held in compliance with state requirements. Preparation for such emergencies is part of the *EPCDS* curriculum. Such practice is important and should be approached seriously.

When the alarm sounds, all work will cease immediately. Students will follow their teacher according to the route posted in each room. Classroom doors and windows should be closed.

***Absolute silence is required during these proceedings.***

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## Fundraising Events

*EPCDS* usually has one major fundraising event scheduled in early November. All income from this event directly benefits the students. As the success of any of these events is dependent upon the level of family involvement, we strongly encourage all *EPCDS* families to participate. Optional fundraisers may be offered throughout the year to allow students the opportunity to earn money for class trips. Our Annual Fundraiser (Casino Night) is generally held in November.

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## Handbook

All students, parents and/or guardians are responsible for knowing and abiding by the regulations in the Student and Parent Handbook.

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## Health Forms

For the protection of your child and the other students and faculty, *EPCDS* requires all students to have an annual physical with the completed form maintained in the school office.

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## Homework

A guideline for homework is that each student should receive approximately ten minutes of homework per year of school for grades 1-6. For example, a fifth grader should have about fifty minutes of homework per evening Monday through Thursday. If your child's homework consistently differs from this average, you should contact his or her teacher. If a student comes to class unprepared, teachers may choose to either retain a student in class during recess to make up the work, send the student to the office to complete the work, or give the student a zero grade.

Homework can be made up when the student has been absent due to extended illness by making arrangements with the office for the student's work to be picked up. One day for each day of absence is generally allowed for completion of missed schoolwork.

Students are responsible for the completion of all homework. Parents will be called when homework is missing. Required study periods will be planned for students who have an excessive number of missing assignments. These periods may be before or after school and parents will be billed accordingly.

### Middle School

Students are responsible for the completion of all homework as well as any class work not completed and may access information on Teacherease.com. Parents may refer to Teacherease.com to verify work has been handed in.

All homework is due when assigned. If the missing assignment is turned in the next day, it will be accepted and an 11% reduction in grade will be given. After the next class period the homework will not be accepted and will receive a zero (0) grade. All work assigned must be completed in order to pass the class.

A student may get extra help from any of his/her teachers before school and/or after any school day. A teacher may require a student to attend these sessions. Students may be required to come in at 7:30 a.m. or remain until 4:30 p.m. if homework is not completed.

#### **Guidelines:**

6th grade:	one (1) hour
7th grade:	one and one half (1 1/2) hours
8th grade:	two (2) hours

All papers must be typed unless otherwise instructed.

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## Honor Code

See Also: Plagiarism

Students are required to sign their name to all work indicating they have done the work on their own. If any assistance was provided to the student, it must be stated on the signed work.

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## Illness

Students should not be in school when ill. In cases of nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, fever, acute headaches, etc., parents will be called to pick up their child from school immediately. Students should have a normal temperature for at least twelve hours before returning to school. Students should not be in school with conjunctivitis (pink eye). All contagious conditions must be reported to the office immediately.

Students must have a signed note from the parent to return to school and be admitted to class.

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## Immunization

Texas State Law requires all students to have a current immunization record on file in the school office. Information as to what immunizations are necessary is available in the school office.

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## Information Forms

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Emergency forms must be completed and signed by the first day of school. It is important to note that students will not be allowed to leave school with anyone other than those listed on this form or those for whom special arrangements have been made. Signed blanket permission slips for Field Trips on this form are encouraged. Many opportunities for trips present themselves at the last moment and it is always disappointing when a student is unable to go due to not having a permission slip.

Families are responsible for providing the school office with any changes in student information such as address, phone, etc., in writing.

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## International Students

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*EPCDS* is proud to sponsor many foreign exchange students from countries around the world. This program provides international students with an opportunity to experience a cultural and educational system different than their own and to expand their normal scope of world understanding. *EPCDS* students will also gain a greater insight and wisdom about the world around them through their interactions with an international student. If you are interested in becoming a host family and providing a home for a foreign exchange student for the academic year, please contact the School office.

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## Letters to Parents

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Each Monday (or Tuesday in the event of a Monday holiday) you will be emailed a Monday letter from the teacher. This letter is to inform you of the week's activities, homework, field trips, etc., in your child's classroom as well as in the school at large. Please take the time to read this letter *with your child*.

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## Library

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Students are financially responsible for books checked out of both the school and the city libraries. Lost books must be replaced or purchased. Progress evaluations or report cards may be retained until this obligation is fulfilled. Books overdue from the *EPCDS* library will be charged overdue fines at the rate of five cents per day.

Periodic field trips are made to the city library and students are required to have individual library cards. To insure that your child is able to check out books, the card should be left with the teacher. The school will not return overdue books to the public library.

**Parent/Professional Library.** *El Paso Country Day School* continues to assemble books, publications, and articles of interest to parents. Parents are encouraged to check out material they find useful.

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## Lunch

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An optional hot lunch program is available Monday through Friday. Each Hot Lunch Card will buy twenty (20) lunches. Each day, students will have the choice to purchase lunch that will then be credited to their card. Students dismissed at 3:30 p.m. often appreciate a small snack brought from home for morning break. *EPCDS* provides afternoon snacks around 4:00 p.m. for those in after school supervised care. During hot weather, we encourage you to include an extra beverage and remember that many foods spoil if not properly packed. Should a student forget his or her lunch, or a lunch card expires, a lunch card will automatically be charged to the student's account. If a student expects to be late and wants to order lunch, the office must be called no later than 9:00 a.m.

Due to limitations of space and time, use of a refrigerator for student lunches is not possible. Students will NOT be allowed to order more than one (1) lunch per day without written parental consent on file in the office.

Due to Health Dept. Regulations and safety concerns, teachers may not cool or heat lunch foods for students.

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## Medications

All medication sent to school (including inhalers) must be kept in the office during the school day. Medications must be clearly labeled with the child's name and appropriate dosage and will be given at the appropriate time. The child and parent are responsible for picking up the medication from the office after school. It is recommended that if a child will be needing daily, long-term medication that the medication should be kept at school and not transported daily.

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## Parent Involvement

We welcome the cooperation of parents to uphold our standards and are convinced that most problems of school conduct will not arise as long as parents and the school share realistically and consistently the task of establishing the right balance of freedom and responsibility for young people.

Parental involvement in academics is often rewarding for both the parent and the child. Parental involvement in the school is beneficial to all.

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## Parent/Teacher Conferences

Ongoing student evaluation involves regular conferences between parents and teachers. Parents should set aside time to visit their child's classroom and speak individually with the teacher or teachers. Teachers will make regular contact to the home, generally through email, for continued follow up. Parents may schedule a meeting with a teacher or administration at any time.

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## Parent/Teacher Organization

All families are strongly encouraged to participate in the *El Paso Country Day School* Parent/Teacher Organization. The PTO sponsors several fundraising events throughout the year and depends upon the active involvement of its members. All money earned by the PTO is used for the direct benefit of the school. For more information please contact the school office.

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## Parties

All classroom parties must be cleared through the office in advance. Visitors need to check in before proceeding to the classroom. In-school birthday parties should be limited to cake and punch. Classroom must be cleaned thoroughly before the end of the period. *Please do not send* balloons, favors, etc. Invitations to off-campus parties should be handed out at school *only when every student in the class is to be included.*

Integrity in one's work is the cornerstone of learning. It is expected that each student perform all work for which s/he claims authorship. Use of another's work claimed as one's own is considered plagiarism. Cases of plagiarism will result in an automatic zero for the work compromised, possible failure of the course with loss of credit for the semester, and possible dismissal from *EPCDS*.

Also see Policy on Academic Dishonesty at [www.epcds.org/Upper School](http://www.epcds.org/Upper School)

## Physical Education

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Physical Education classes require student participation. Non-participation for two consecutive classes must be substantiated by a doctor's or parent note or points will be deducted from the student's grade. Any student unable to participate in class due to illness must bring a written note from his/her parent or guardian. Any extended absence from P.E. must be documented with a note from a doctor. Students may be eligible to take Independent Physical Education. Details are available in the school office.

Uniform: Students are required to wear athletic shorts or pants with a school T-shirt and sneakers. Students must be suited out to receive credit for P.E.

## Planned Absence

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Due to the nature of the school, its students and their parents, it is reasonable to expect that students will be absent occasionally for reasons other than illness. A student who would like to request permission to miss a commitment must have a parent write the Administration for special arrangements. As travel can be very educational, we do not want to discourage it. If, however, your child is to be absent for **more than three days**, the school must be notified at least **one week in advance** so that teachers can plan an appropriate additional assignments, as well as all missed work. Completed work is due upon returning to class. *Whenever possible, all work should be turned in before the planned absence.* For prearranged absences, teachers of classes from which the student will be absent must be contacted for appropriate assignments and the teachers' signatures obtained on the "**Planned Absence**" form that is available in the office. The form is then returned to the office for approval. Any student absent without following school policy may receive a "0" for assignments and/or classes missed.

## Reading

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Reading skills are essential to a successful learning experience. The more a child reads the stronger his or her academic skills become. *El Paso Country Day School* recommends that a child read silently or to a parent for 15-30 minutes each night. Reading as a family reinforces the child's positive attitude toward this activity.

## Religion

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Although the *El Paso Country Day School* is a non-denominational school, there are certain holiday periods throughout the year that are recognized and celebrated within our society. The school uses these periods to provide opportunities for the diverse student population to study the wide range of beliefs and cultures represented. As an educational setting, the school seeks to establish a balance that reinforces each student's self-esteem and appreciation of cultural diversity and individual differences.

## Room Parents

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Parents are encouraged to become involved in special events and celebrations within the class. The school and class are pleased to offer volunteers a variety of opportunities to assist the students. Please contact the classroom teacher to donate some time. Your efforts will make a difference!

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## School Materials

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Parents will be provided with a supply list detailing materials required for each class. Many of these items are consumable and parents will need to replenish and replace items throughout the school year. **All students are required to have an electronic tablet.**

At times, teachers may request additional items that were not on the original list. Textbooks and other supplies will be issued to students during the year. All books must be covered. Students and their parents are financially responsible for the loss or damage (beyond normal wear) of these items.

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## School Records

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School records are considered to be confidential and will be released only upon written request of parents. School administrators and teachers are available by appointment to discuss specifics records and standardized tests.

Records will be retained in the case of any outstanding financial obligations.

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## Standardized Testing

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Standardized testing measurements are administered annually, generally for elementary and middle school grades. Our primary goal with this type of testing is to teach students how to take these kinds of tests as preparation for higher educational entrance exams. Parents will receive testing results and interpretations.

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## Substance Abuse

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The use of tobacco products, alcohol, controlled or dangerous substances as defined by law, abusable glue, aerosol paint or other chemical substances, or any other intoxicant or mood-changing, mind-altering, or behavior-altering drugs, or possession or use of any drug related paraphernalia are strictly prohibited on campus or at school-related activities. Disciplinary action will be taken if a student is arrested outside of school grounds, even if it is not during school hours or events. In keeping with our commitment to healthy development and respect for self and others, use or possession of any substance noted above requires immediate response from the school. Any student found under the influence will be sent home immediately. Use or possession of an illegal substance may result in expulsion. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of each student to abide by these regulations and refrain from using these substances. Representing any substance to be a drug will be considered and treated according to the same standards of Substance Abuse.

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## Suspension

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Suspension is a serious form of discipline, reserved for severe infractions of school rules. Parents and students should be aware of the severity of an action that results in suspension. Suspensions will be recorded on a student's permanent record and will be forwarded with the student's transcript.

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## Tardiness

School begins *promptly* at 8:30 each morning at the. Students should be at school no later than 8:25 a.m. to begin class on schedule. Each student is expected to be in class, ready to work at that time. We ask parents to help teach responsibility and, through example, respect and punctuality. If not signed in at the front desk, an absence will be recorded on the student's record. Chronic tardiness is considered to be a disciplinary situation.

Students who are late for the start of school are required to sign in at the office. Late arrivals will wait in the lobby or front office. At an appropriate break time they will be permitted to enter class. This is not a punishment for the student but is our method of keeping disruptions during the important first fifteen minutes of the day to a minimum.

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## Teacherease.com

EPCDS provides an online grading system, Teacherease.com., to keep parents better informed of their child's work for the Middle School students. Parents and students are able to check assignments, grades, behavior, etc., online. This service is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, from any internet access. Parents can support the learning process -- encouraging students to complete work, helping struggling students, praising success, etc. When a parent or student checks grades online, student performance improves dramatically. Parents will receive an email directly from Teacherease.com with an access ID and password.

Teachers will post grades within five (5) business days of the assignment due date. If an assignment is turned in late or requires a redo, teachers will post grades within five (5) business from the time the student turned in the late or redo work.

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## Telephone/Messages

Messages for students will be posted on the white board directly outside the office at both campuses. Students are responsible for checking the board for any messages. Students do not have access to a telephone **except in emergency situations.**

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## Television Viewing

Educational research has demonstrated that excessive television viewing can have a negative effect on school success. We suggest that each family consider reducing the amount of time the television is on in the home. Three to six hours per week can be considered an appropriate amount of time to be able to watch positive programming, make critical choices about what to watch, and still not feel as though television is totally banned. When children see their parents turning off the television, they soon follow the example and spend their time more productively.

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## Transcripts & Recommendations

Official transcript or records requests will be processed within ten (10) business days from date of request. Official transcripts will only be sent directly to the student's new school. Official transcripts will not be given directly to a student or parent. For graduating seniors, each request must be accompanied by verification that all college applications have been submitted.

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## Travel

## Also See Planned Absence

Travel can be a wonderful part of a child's education. If extended travel is scheduled to take place during the school year, one week's advance notice is required to be given to the school office. This allows teachers to develop a study program for the time the student is to be away from school. Assignments can be developed to take advantage of the special opportunities of travel.

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## Trophies/Awards

Trophies or awards received by students will be displayed in the school office for the academic year and given to the student(s) at the end of the school year.

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## Uniforms

## See Field Trip Uniforms

Uniforms may be required for extracurricular team activities as specified by the sponsor.

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## Valuables/Lost and Found

Students should not bring valuables or large amounts of money to school. The school cannot be responsible for their loss. All personal possessions, especially coats, lunch boxes, and backpacks, should be labeled with the student's name. Lost and found items will be kept in the office. Unclaimed items will be donated to local social agencies at the end of each semester.

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## Visitors

All visitors to the school, including parents, must check in and out through the office for the safety of the students, the employees, and the school campus. Visitors should be respectful of ongoing classes, ensuring minimum distraction. Students, as well as school personnel, should report any questionable visitor to the office. *El Paso Country Day School* encourages parents to visit their student's classroom between the hours of 9:00 a.m. and up to one half hour prior to the class dismissal time.

Messages or materials for students must be left in the office rather than taken to the classroom in order to minimize disruptions.

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## Volunteering

In addition to our major fundraising event, there will be activities throughout the year that will require volunteer help. Information on these activities will be sent out as it becomes available. We look forward to seeing you at these events. Parents are always welcome and encouraged to volunteer time with us.

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## Weapons

Faculty, staff and students shall not go onto the premises or attend a school-related activity with a firearm, ammunition, explosive weapon or knife, or any other weapons to include but, not limited to:

1. fireworks of any kind
2. clubs or night sticks
3. razors

4. metallic knuckles
5. chains
6. any other object capable of serious bodily injury that is used in a way that threatens injury to another person
7. knives of any size, and all sizes, including pocket knives
8. toys mimicking any or all of the above will be considered as a weapon.

Any infraction of this rule will be cause for immediate disciplinary action up to and including expulsion. *Faculty, staff, and students shall report all infractions to school administration immediately.*

## **Weather Conditions**

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*El Paso Country Day School* will announce closings, early dismissals, and late starts on AM 1380 radio or KVIA Channel 7 television. The school will close if El Paso Independent School District schools close. Any bad weather make-up days will be announced with as much advance notification as possible.

Homeroom teachers will make reasonable attempts to contact students in the event of school closure. Parents should ensure that teachers have current telephone listings.

## **Web Site**

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Our web site address is **[www.epcnds.org](http://www.epcnds.org)**. The *EPCDS* web site contains information about school lunches, holidays, upcoming events, activities, upper school assignments, and opportunities for communication with the office and instructors. This site is created and maintained by the Upper School computer students.

## SCHOOL HOURS

- ◆ Class work begins immediately at 8:30. Your child should arrive by 8:25 a.m.
- ◆ Student must be in their seats ready to begin at that time.

8:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m.

Monday - Thursday

8:30 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.

Friday

**8:30 a.m. - Noon**

**Early *Dismissal Days***

### Student Pick Up and Drop Off

Parents will drive up to the front of the school. A faculty or staff member will be there to help open car doors for your child.

Please pull forward and **DO NOT** park in the school-loading zone during pick up and drop off times.

### Non-Discrimination Policy

It is the policy of the El Paso Country Day School to provide equal educational and employment opportunities and not to illegally discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, ethnic or national origin, religion, age, marital status, or disability in its educational programs, activities, or its employment and personnel policies. El Paso Country Day School admits students of any race, color, national and 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, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, financial aid and other school-administered programs.

***El Paso Country Day School***

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