



Family Handbook

2025-2026 rev6 /25

Elysian Charter School

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Susan Grierson, Director

Mission Statement

At Elysian Charter School, our mission is to build an active community of lifelong learners by providing a safe, nurturing environment where every child is supported to reach their fullest potential.

A Message From The Director

Welcome to Elysian!

Whether you're a prospective or current parent, student, teacher, or community member, I hope this handbook provides helpful insight into life at our school. It is intended to serve as your guide to the daily routines, expectations, and values that define the Elysian experience.

That said, our programs and policies evolve as our students grow, and this handbook may not cover every detail. If you have questions or concerns not addressed here, I encourage you to reach out, we're here to help.

Just as Elysian thrives on collaboration, this handbook reflects the collective contributions of our families and staff. For the most current updates, please read our **weekly Monday newsletter** and stay in close communication with your child's teacher(s). These are our most important channels for sharing information.

As our practices continue to be shaped by current research, health guidance, and NJDOE recommendations, we appreciate your partnership and flexibility.

Warmly,
Susan Grierson
Director

Core Values

At Elysian, our teaching and decision-making are rooted in the following core values:

- **Community Engagement**
- **Diversity and Inclusions**
- **Child-Centered Learning**
- **Experiential Education**
- **Social, Emotional and Physical Well-being**
- **Social Awareness and Responsibility**
- **Shared Leadership**
- **Learning as a Lifelong Process**

Our ultimate goal is to inspire children to become curious, compassionate, and confident learners. We nurture their academic growth, foster appreciation for the arts and diverse cultures, and help them understand the importance of community and collaboration. Every child has unique strengths—and at Elysian, we work to recognize and build upon them to support meaningful growth.

Board of Trustees

Elysian Charter School operates under a charter granted by the New Jersey Commissioner of Education and is independent of the Hoboken Public School District. Our school is governed by an **independent Board of Trustees**, per state law.

The Board is responsible for overseeing the management of the school's business, property, and affairs. Meetings are held **monthly via Zoom**. These meetings are **open to the public**, and notice is posted on the school website and in local publications. A Zoom link is shared with the school community prior to each meeting.

About Elysian Charter School

Founded in 1997, Elysian Charter School is one of New Jersey's original 13 charter schools. We serve approximately **288 students** across grades K–8, with **small class sizes** of around 16 students. This intimate setting supports our hands-on learning model and strengthens students' critical thinking skills.

Elysian was established by a group of local parents known as **Mile Square Families**, who envisioned a more engaging and community-focused educational experience for their children. That same spirit guides us today.

The name **“Elysian”** comes from Greek mythology, referring to a paradise where mortals go after life. Historically, Hoboken's **Elysian Fields** were a peaceful retreat from busy city life. Similarly, our school strives to be a welcoming, inspiring space for students to learn and grow.

In **Fall 2016**, we moved to our current location at **15th and Garden Street**, where we continue to foster excellence in education.

Family Involvement

Family engagement is a vital part of the Elysian community. Parents and guardians are partners in shaping a positive school culture, supporting classroom learning, and building strong connections across our community.

We encourage participation in a variety of ways—whether through classroom volunteering, community events, fundraising, or sharing your ideas and talents.

Friends of Elysian & PTSO

Shortly after the school's founding, the nonprofit **Friends of Elysian Charter School** was established as a 501(c)(3) organization to raise funds in support of Elysian's programs and operations.

To streamline and strengthen family involvement, Friends joined efforts with the **Parent Teacher Student Organization (PTSO)**. Together, Friends and the PTSO aim to live the adage, "It takes a village to raise a child."

We want every child to feel excited about school and connected to their peers and community. Through joyful participation and generous support, families help us create a strong, inclusive foundation for the Elysian experience.

Why do we Fundraise?

Elysian receives **approximately 35% less funding per student** than the Hoboken district public schools. Additionally, **charter schools do not receive public support for building expenses or maintenance**. With city and state funding essentially flat since 2014, we rely on fundraising to bridge the gap and enhance our school's resources.

Where Do Donations Go?

Funds raised through Friends support both essential services and enrichment experiences, including:

- Literacy and Science curricula (K-8)
- Classroom library
- Professional development for teachers
- Chromebooks & educational technology
- Security and PA systems
- Facility, maintenance

- Arts, science, and tech resources
- Community events (e.g., Field Day, Picture Day, Book Fair, School Dances)
- Teacher-led activities and class celebrations
- Graduation and high school placement support
- Teacher & Staff Appreciation
- Cultural events, including Kuumba Day
- PTSO initiatives like Pizza Fridays and class parent communication

How can I help?

There are many meaningful ways to support Friends and the PTSO:

- **Donate:** [Give to Elysian](#)
- **Volunteer:** [Sign Up to Volunteer](#)
- **Share Your Ideas:**
 - Email: friends@ecsnj.org
 - Email: elysianptso@gmail.com

All donations are **tax-deductible** to the extent allowed by law and are accepted from individuals, corporations, and foundations.

The School Day

Morning Arrival

The school day begins promptly at **8:30 AM**.

- **Doors open at 8:20 AM** at the Garden Street entrance.
- Students arriving **after 8:30 AM** are marked late.

We encourage all families to arrive on time so students can begin their day calmly and confidently.

Early Drop-Off: Available from **7:30 AM to 8:20 AM** for a fee. Details and registration will be available on the school website.

Lateness

Any student not in their classroom by 8:30 AM is considered late.

- Students arriving late must **ring the buzzer** at the front entrance and report to the office for a **late pass** before going to class.
- Teachers record tardiness, and it appears on progress reports.

Note for Middle School Families: Excessive absences or tardiness in grades 6–8 may negatively impact high school applications.

Punctuality sets the tone for the day and minimizes disruption to your child’s learning and the classroom community.

Getting to School

Walking

If walking your child to school, please use **designated crosswalks**. Note: **There are no crossing guards** this year, so please be extra cautious.

Driving

- **Garden Street is for drop-off only.**
- Do **not** park on Garden Street or 15th Street. This is critical for emergency vehicle access.
- The Hoboken Police Department will strictly enforce parking regulations.

Visitors & Forgotten Items

If you need to drop off something during the school day—like lunch, sneakers, or homework—ring the bell at the front entrance. A staff member will assist you.

Attendance

Regular attendance is essential for academic success.

- Absences and tardiness are documented on **progress reports** and become part of a student's **permanent record**.
- Please schedule family vacations during school breaks.

Reporting an Absence

- Notify your **child's teacher**, the **school nurse**, or the **main office** by email:
 - Firstname.Lastname@ecsnj.org
 - nurse@ecsnj.org
 - office@ecsnj.org

Definitions

- **Truancy:** 10 or more unexcused absences
- **Chronic Absenteeism** (per NJDOE): Missing 10% or more of the school year (18+ days)

View the full academic calendar here:  [2025–26 Calendar](#)

Dismissal

Dismissal begins at **2:40 PM** in a staggered order, starting with the youngest students.

Where to wait:

- Please stand below the outdoor steps to avoid crowding and ensure safe dismissal.

Important Dismissal Guidelines

- Students are released **only to adults listed on their emergency contact form**.
- At the start of the year, families must provide up-to-date contact and emergency info.
- Any changes to pick-up arrangements must be emailed to both your **child's teacher** and the **main office** at office@ecsnj.org.

Early Pick-Up

If your child needs to leave school early:

- Email the **teacher** and **main office** that morning with dismissal details.
- Students may only leave with someone listed on their emergency dismissal form.

Before & Aftercare

- **Before Care:** Begins at **7:30 AM**
- **Aftercare:** Available from dismissal until **6:00 PM**, Monday through Friday
- Information on pricing and registration will be updated on the website prior to the school year.

Communication

Your child's teacher is your first point of contact for most questions.

Here's a quick guide:

Academic Questions	Classroom Teacher → Director	Firstname.Lastname@ecsnj.org Susan.Grierson@ecsnj.org
Absence or lateness	Teacher → Nurse → Office	Firstname.Lastname@ecsnj.org Nurse@ecsnj.org office@ecsnj.org
Before / Aftercare	Director of Operations	Suzanne.Heyman@ecsnj.org
Changes in dismissal	Teacher and Office	Firstname.Lastname@ecsnj.org office@ecsnj.org
Concerns with a teacher, classroom conflict, grades, and homework	Classroom Teacher → Director	Firstname.Lastname@ecsnj.org Susan.Grierson@ecsnj.org
Mental Health or Counseling	Social Worker	Batia.Krinsky@ecsnj.org
Enrichment Clubs	Director of Operations	clubs@ecsnj.org
Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying (HIB)	Social Worker	Batia.Krinsky@ecsnj.org
Information Change (change of address, phone, email, student messages)	Office	office@ecsnj.org
Lottery, Enrollment, and Transfer	Director of Operations	suzanne.heyman@ecsnj.org
Meal program - Lunch Order	Director of Operations	suzanne.heyman@ecsnj.org
Medical forms and student health	School Nurse	Nurse@ecsnj.org
Tech Help	IT	anthony.baez@ecsnj.org

All staff email addresses follow the format: **firstname.lastname@ecsnj.org**

Monday Newsletter

Every Monday, families receive an email newsletter from the Director. It includes:

- Key school announcements
- Upcoming events
- Reminders and community news

Please read it from **start to finish** to stay informed about deadlines, special events, and updates.

School Closings & Schedule Changes

Emergency Closures

Families will receive an **email** alert as early as possible if school is closed or delayed due to weather or other emergencies.

Delayed Openings

- A delayed opening typically means school begins at **10:00 AM**.
- An email will be sent with details.

Half Days

- **Dismissal is at 1:00 PM**
- **Lunch is served**

Curriculum Overview

Reading & Writing

The primary purpose of the Language Arts Literacy Program is to enable all students to become effective learners and communicators by equipping them with the communication skills, strategies, habits, and attitudes necessary for success in their careers and daily lives.

Language is a primary instrument for making sense of the world. The language arts enable us to communicate with each other and to express ourselves through reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing. Daily instruction includes:

- Independent reading
- Small group instruction
- Phonics and word study
- Interactive read-alouds
- Writing across genres

Students in grades 3–8 are 1:1 with laptops; students in grades K–2 use iPads.

Mathematics

Our math program blends **skill-building, including reasoning and problem-solving**, through hands-on lessons and consistent instructional models across grades. The primary purpose of the Mathematics Program is to enable all students to acquire the mathematical skills, understandings and attitudes that they will need to be successful and confident in their ability.

Instruction includes:

- Whole group mini-lessons
- Small group support
- Independent practice

We incorporate visual models to help students **understand and retain concepts** and offer **Algebra 1** to qualifying 8th-grade students.

Science

The goals of the science program are aligned with the Next Generation Science Standards. They reflect both the science process and science content. Students will develop problem-solving, decision-making, and inquiry skills, reflected by interpreting and analyzing data, drawing conclusions, and communicating results.

Understand the interrelationships between science and technology and develop a conceptual understanding of the nature and process of technology.

Social Studies

The Social Studies program is designed for all students to acquire an understanding of American society and world cultures while learning about traditions and values. They will develop critical thinking skills, which enable them to function as lifelong learners and to examine and evaluate issues of importance to all Americans.

Additionally, they will understand world history as the context for United States history and as a record of the great civilizations and cultures of the past and present.

The Arts & Physical Education

Elysian strongly values the arts and movement as essential to child development.

- **Music, Art, Dance, and Physical Education** are taught by specialist teachers
- Creative expression is integrated into academic learning
- Students participate in performances and exhibits throughout the year

World Language

All students study **Spanish**:

- Grades K–4: once per week
- Grades 6–8: twice per week

Grades 5 - 8: Middle School Model

Our middle school experience is designed to support the **academic, social, and emotional needs** of adolescents. It includes:

- Strong teacher-student relationships
- Integrated humanities and science curriculum
- Technology-supported learning
- Seminar-style electives
- Extracurriculars and high school prep

This structured approach:

- Increases instructional time and encourages collaboration among teachers across all subject areas.
- Embeds reading and writing skills into every content area, enhancing literacy development.
- Facilitates interdisciplinary connections for a more integrated and enriching learning experience.

Middle schoolers are encouraged to explore interests and develop responsibility as they prepare for high school and beyond.

Enrichment Programming/Clubs

Elysian offers an **After School Enrichment Program** with three club sessions per year:

- **Fall, Winter, and Spring** sessions
- Clubs run for **8 weeks**, one day per week, for 1 hour after school
- Clubs vary and are designed for all grade levels

Families receive a **Google Form** to select preferred clubs. While placement is not guaranteed, we do our best to accommodate all students.

Club confirmations and payment details are emailed after placement. Please direct all questions to clubs@ecsnj.org.

Sports

Sports are a great way to build school spirit, teamwork, and physical health. Offerings may include:

- **Basketball (co-ed and girls' teams)**
- **Track & Field**
- **Flag Football**
- **Volleyball (girls' team)**

Participation Requirements:

- A completed physical exam on file, dated within 365 days of the first tryout
- Signed acknowledgments of the following NJ-mandated forms:
 - Opioid Use & Misuse
 - Concussion Management
 - Sudden Cardiac Death in Young Athletes

Stay updated on tryouts and team info through the **Monday Newsletter** and announcements from the main office.

Lunch and Recess

Elysian participates in the **National School Lunch Program** and offers a hot lunch option.

Lunch Guidelines

- Students may also bring lunch from home (no refrigeration or heating available)
- **Elysian is a nut-free school** — please do not send any items with nuts
- Students may not trade food due to allergy risks

Recess

- Recess is **daily for 40 minutes. It is preferably outdoors**, weather permitting
- Recess is supervised by school staff and recess aides
- Students must follow safety rules and instructions.

Children should dress for the weather. Layers are recommended, especially during colder months.

Field Trips and Overnights

Field trips are an integral part of the Elysian experience, helping connect classroom learning with the wider world. Trips include local walking tours and visits to museums, farms performances, parks and other venues.

- Each trip requires a signed **permission slip**
- Parents may be invited to serve as **chaperones**

A general **walking permission form** for Hoboken neighborhood trips will be sent home in September.

No student will be excluded from a trip due to financial hardship.

Birthday Acknowledgements

Birthdays are special at Elysian!

- If you'd like to celebrate at school, please coordinate with your child's teacher ahead of time
- You may send in a **small treat or item to share**
- If party invitations are distributed in school, **they must include all students in the class to ensure inclusivity.**

Health and Safety

When to Stay Home

To help keep our school community healthy, please keep your child home if they are ill. Students will be sent home if they show symptoms during the school day.

Please follow these guidelines:

1. **Fever:** Children with a temperature of **100.4°F or higher** must stay home. They must be **fever-free for 24 hours without medication** before returning.
2. **Cough/Nasal Discharge:** Children with a **productive or discolored cough or nasal discharge** should remain home. Persistent coughs should be evaluated by a physician.
3. **Rash:** Keep your child home for any **rash of unknown origin** until a doctor confirms it is non-contagious.
4. **Vomiting/Diarrhea:** Children must be **symptom-free for 24 hours** before returning to school.

If your child is out for **three or more days, a doctor's note is required** to return.

Please ensure the school has up-to-date **emergency contact information** in case your child needs to be picked up.

Email the school nurse: nurse@ecsnj.org

Communicable Illness

If your child is diagnosed with a **communicable illness**, please notify the school nurse. When appropriate, we will inform the classroom community while maintaining confidentiality.

Examples of communicable illnesses:

- **Covid-19**
- **Chicken Pox**
- **Acute Diarrhea**
- **German Measles**
- **Giardia Lamblia**
- **Haemophilus**
- **Hepatitis A**
- **Influenza**
- **Salmonella**
- **Measles**
- **Shigella**
- **Meningococcus**
- **Impetigo**
- **Mumps**
- **Scabies**
- **Strep Throat**
- **Lice (see below)**
- **Tuberculosis**
- **Whooping Cough**

Due to **HIPAA privacy laws**, we do not share the names of affected students or specific classrooms.

Head Lice

Head lice are common and not a sign of poor hygiene. Early detection and prompt treatment are key to preventing spread.

- Please **check your child's head regularly**, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck.
- If you suspect lice, **contact the school nurse immediately**.
- Students may return to school after appropriate treatment.

Medications at School

To protect all students, strict rules govern medication at school.

Students may not carry or self-administer any medications, including:

- Prescription drugs
- Over-the-counter items (e.g., Tylenol, Advil, cough syrup, allergy medications)
- Homeopathic remedies

Medication may only be administered by the nurse if:

- A **physician's consent form** is completed and submitted
- Medication is provided in its **original labeled container**

Forms are available on the Elysian website:

Medication Administration Form

If your child has a medical condition or special health needs, please contact the school nurse directly at (201) 876-0102 between **8:30 AM–2:30 PM**.

Food Allergies

Elysian is a **nut-free school**. Please do not send any food containing peanuts, tree nuts, or nut

products.

To support students with allergies:

- Teachers and students are educated about allergy awareness
- No food sharing is allowed
- Safe snacks and lunches must be sent from home

Please make sure the school nurse has current information about your child's allergies. We work hard to create a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

Conduct, Discipline, & HIB (Harassment, Intimidation, and Bullying)

At Elysian, we are committed to fostering a school culture rooted in kindness, mutual respect, and shared responsibility. We believe in proactive teaching and clear expectations to guide student behavior.

Behavioral Expectations

All students are expected to:

- Treat others with kindness, empathy, and respect
- Follow classroom and school-wide rules
- Take responsibility for their actions
- Contribute to a safe and supportive learning environment

Discipline: A Restorative, Logical Approach

Discipline at Elysian focuses on restoration, responsibility, and learning from mistakes. Teachers aim to prevent misbehavior by building strong relationships and community norms.

When issues arise, staff respond using the **least invasive intervention first**, such as:

- Visual or verbal reminders
- Redirection

- Private check-ins

If behaviors persist, teachers may implement **logical consequences** and contact families.

Examples of Minor Infractions:

- Disrupting instruction
- Not completing academic work
- Socializing or roughhousing during class
- Disrespectful language or tone
- Disregarding class procedures
- Minor conflicts or unkind behavior

Possible Consequences:

- Moving seats or taking a break
- Reflection or apology letter
- Recess or lunch detention
- Making up missed work during free time
- Fixing or replacing something damaged
- Temporary removal to another supervised classroom

In-school suspension

Used for more serious or repeated behavior. The student:

- Attends school but is removed from class
- Completes academic work in a supervised setting
- Receives reflection opportunities and staff support

Out of School Suspension

Reserved for serious infractions. A student may be suspended 1–5 days, depending on severity. Parents are notified in advance.

Harassment, Intimidation of Bullying (HIB)

What is HIB?

HIB is defined by NJ law as any gesture, written, verbal, physical, or electronic act that:

- Is motivated by an actual or perceived characteristic, such as race, religion, gender, disability, sexual orientation, or any other distinguishing trait
- Occurs on or off school grounds, including electronic platforms
- Substantially disrupts the school environment or a student's rights
- Causes harm, fear, or creates a hostile educational environment

[Elysian HIB Policy \(Link\)](#)

Reporting HIB

Anyone can report a suspected HIB incident:

- Online form: [HIB Reporting Form](#)
- Paper forms: Available near the social worker's office (can be submitted anonymously)
- Contact the HIB specialist: Batia Krinsky – Batia.Krinsky@ecsnj.org

HIB Investigation Process:

1. **Report received** by HIB Specialist (ABS)
2. Report forwarded to the **Director**
3. Parents of involved students are contacted
4. Investigation begins within **1 school day**
5. Completed within **10 school days**
6. Findings submitted to the Director and shared with the Board
7. Parents notified within **5 days** of the board meeting

8. Parents may request a board hearing (must occur within 10 school days)

HIB vs. Code of Conduct Violation

Not all hurtful behavior qualifies as HIB. For behavior to meet the HIB definition, it must:

- Be **motivated by a distinguishing characteristic**
- Cause **substantial disruption or harm**
- Be more than typical conflict or misbehavior

Most incidents fall under the **Code of Conduct**, not HIB.

Conflict vs. Bullying

Conflict	HIB
Equal power dynamic	Power imbalance
Mutual disagreement	One-sided aggression
Usually not intentional	Often intentional
Can be resolved with compromise	Requires adult intervention and behavioral change
Both parties participate	One or more victims targeted

Guidance for Families

If your child reports an issue:

Step 1: Stay Calm

Your response will shape how your child processes the situation.

Step 2: Ask Clarifying Questions

- What happened?
- Who was involved?
- Has this happened before?

- Did you tell a teacher?

Step 3: Try Problem-Solving Together

Explore strategies like using "I" statements, walking away, or seeking adult help.

Step 4: Contact the Teacher

Provide clear, respectful communication. Share details and your concerns. Ask how the school can help.

Step 5: Contact the School Social Worker

If the issue continues or is more serious, reach out to Batia Krinsky, our school social worker, for further support.

When HIB Is Confirmed

The Director assigns consequences and/or support services based on:

- The severity of the offense
- The student's developmental age
- History of behavior

Responses may include:

- Counseling (individual or group)
- Written or verbal apology
- Conflict resolution or social-emotional learning
- Community service
- Detention or suspension

Important: HIB reports are not included in a student's permanent file and do not affect high school placement.