



Welcome to VESPA

Dear East Penn students and families,

The Virtual East Penn Academy (VESPA) offers EPSD K-12 students and families a flexible learning environment that combines asynchronous online coursework with enrollment in the East Penn School District. Students enrolled in VESPA are supported by an EPSD team that includes the Director of Educational Alternatives, EPSD teachers, school counselors, case managers, and dedicated support staff. The VESPA team onboards students and families, offers academic content support, monitors attendance, and develops individualized attendance and academic intervention plans to help students find success. Access to in-person support in the VESPA room, which is located in the East Penn Administration building, is available to all VESPA students.

VESPA students maintain their participation in EPSD clubs and athletics and are invited to attend events in their home buildings. Opportunities to foster community within the VESPA program are organized by VESPA staff. The VESPA team is committed to working with students and families to serve their unique needs while keeping them connected to our East Penn School District Community.

This handbook outlines the VESPA program. The program structure outlined in the handbook is in the best interest of our students and provides a strong foundation for their success. We look forward to working with all of our students and families.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Carolla

Director of Educational Alternatives

jcarolla@eastpennsd.org

610-966-8300

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District Mission & Vision

District Mission

The East Penn School District will provide a learning environment in which students become effective problem solvers, critical thinkers, collaborators, and communicators.

District Vision

Our students will grow into confident, adaptable, compassionate individuals who will become lifelong learners and contributors to a global society.

New Student Enrollment Process

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) may request that a student enter and/or exit the VESPA program during enrollment and withdrawal windows. The enrollment and withdrawal windows are aligned to the start and end dates of the marking periods, coinciding with the student's home EPSD school building. This is necessary to maintain continuity of academic programming and prevent disruption to a student's educational experience. Student entry and withdrawal decisions are made by building principals and/or their designee(s) in consultation with the Director of Educational Alternatives. Consideration of enrollment and/or withdrawal outside of the designated timeframes will only be given in the case of a documented extenuating circumstance with approval from the Director of Educational Alternatives..

Parent(s)/Guardian(s) must make contact with the appropriate EPSD staff member (listed below) well in advance of the enrollment and/or withdrawal window for which they are requesting a change for their student. Advanced planning is necessary to ensure time for the student to be accurately scheduled for coursework, regardless of whether they are enrolling in the VESPA program or the brick and mortar school building.

Elementary VESPA Requests: Elementary parents/guardians should direct requests for VESPA to their home building principal.

Middle School VESPA Requests: Middle level parent/guardian requests for VESPA should be directed to the student's grade level administrator and school counselor.

High School VESPA Requests: High school parents/guardians should direct requests for VESPA to their student's school counselor.

If a student with an Individualized Education Program (IEP) is interested in attending VESPA, the student's parent/guardian should contact the student's case manager and school counselor. An invitation will be generated for the IEP team to convene and further discuss the program, format, delivery of supports, and student enrollment recommendations and process.

Onboarding

Orientation sessions are scheduled at the beginning of each marking period for all newly enrolled students. Student and parent/guardian participation in an orientation session is required. Exceptions will be considered only under extenuating circumstances and require approval from the Director of Educational Alternatives.

Course Enrollment

Upon initial VESPA enrollment, students are scheduled for courses by their home building school counselor. Course requirements for elementary and middle-level students are predetermined based on grade level. High school students are scheduled into courses required for graduation and may also select electives that align with their interests.

Course selection occurs annually in coordination with the high school's scheduling process. The VESPA school counselor will contact students and parents/guardians each year to confirm their intent to continue in the program and to select courses for the upcoming school year. All families are required to respond to this communication to support the planning and scheduling process.

Dual Credit

High school students enrolled in the VESPA program may choose to participate in dual credit options through Lehigh Carbon Community College (LCCC). A selection of preapproved online college courses is available each semester at a reduced tuition rate for VESPA students. These courses are taught online by LCCC professors, allowing students to complete work on a flexible schedule.

Students who successfully complete a dual credit course will earn college credit through LCCC and one high school credit per course toward graduation requirements. Enrollment in dual credit coursework follows the LCCC academic calendar, which may differ from the district calendar. Exceptions to the enrollment calendar cannot be accommodated.

Students interested in dual credit are responsible for:

- Reviewing course offerings and deadlines
- Completing the LCCC online application
- Informing VESPA staff **prior to LCCC enrollment deadlines**

VESPA staff do not have access to monitor student progress, pacing, or grades for dual credit courses. It is the student's and parent/guardian's responsibility to stay informed regarding assignments, due dates, and academic standing. LCCC will report final grades directly to the school district for official grade recording.

For additional information, a list of approved courses and/or guidance on the enrollment process, students should contact a member of the VESPA staff.

Course Changes

10-Day Enrollment Drops: Requests to drop a student from a course within the first 10 days of enrollment in that course should be granted, IF there is a substitute course being selected. The substitute course must be approved by the student's counselor after verifying academic status.

If there is no substitute course, approval for the drop must be obtained from the Director of Educational Alternatives after consultation with the VESPA advisor, the student's counselor, the special education supervisor (if applicable), and the parent/guardian. Consideration of the request will be given after review of the number of credits in the student's schedule. In very rare instances, approval to carry less than 5.25 credits in a high school academic schedule may be granted.

After 10-Day Enrollment Period: Requests to drop a course after the 10-day enrollment period will only be considered in cases of extenuating circumstances. If an extenuating circumstance exists, approval of the drop must be obtained by the Director of Educational Alternatives after communication with the VESPA Advisor, the student's counselor, special education supervisor (if applicable), and parent/guardian.

Grading and Report Cards

Students may be assessed using a variety of criteria, including assessments, quizzes, essays, tests, and forum discussions. Students have immediate and continuous access to grades by logging into the Genius system. At both the elementary and secondary levels, coursework is graded by the virtual teacher of record, who the course vendor employs.

The student's home school issues report cards for VESPA students. All K-12 VESPA students are assigned grades based on a 100 point grading scale. GPA, when applicable, will be calculated by the home school building on an annual basis. Please note that grade reporting at the elementary level differs between brick and mortar buildings and the VESPA program.

Grades for dual credit courses are issued directly by LCCC and reported on the student's high school transcript. Students requiring an official college transcript must submit their request directly to LCCC.

Testing Policies

Students in grades K-12 are **required to participate** in all district benchmarking and state-mandated assessments (PSSA/Keystone). Students will receive communication regarding the location, date, and time that they are to arrive for specified assessments. On the rare occasion that benchmark assessments are available to be completed online, students will be required to participate at a specified time and will be monitored virtually by a staff member during the testing period.

Optional Testing: VESPA high school students may take the SAT, PSAT, ACT, or ASVAB, provided they register by the designated deadlines. For additional information or registration assistance, students should contact their school counselor.

Advanced Placement Exams: Students interested in taking Advanced Placement (AP) exams must work with their East Penn school counselor and complete registration by the deadlines set by Emmaus High School administration. Exam testing schedules can be found on the College Board website. Students are responsible for all associated exam fees.

Graduation Requirements

Students enrolled in the VESPA program must meet all district graduation requirements. A total of 21.5 credits is required, distributed across the following content areas:

Number of Credits	Subject Area
4	English
4	Social Studies
3	Science
3	Mathematics
2	Arts/Humanities
1	Wellness/Fitness
0.5	Health
0.25	Driver Education

0.5	Family and Consumer Science
0.5	STEM
0.5	Personal Finance (Beginning with the class of 2030)
2.25	Elective

Act 158

In Pennsylvania, graduation from high school requires more than earning the locally required number of graduation credits. Under Act 158, students must also meet statewide graduation requirements by satisfying one of five Pathways to Graduation. All students are required to take the Keystone Exams in Algebra I, Biology, and Literature. Scoring proficient or advanced on each of these three assessments meets one graduation pathway. However, four additional pathway options do not require meeting proficiency on all of the assessments. The pathway options can be accessed by [clicking here](#). VESPA staff will work with each student to identify the most appropriate pathway; however, students are ultimately responsible for completing the requirements of their chosen pathway.

Attendance Requirements

Under Pennsylvania law, all students between the ages of six (6) and eighteen (18) must attend school every day. Once a student is enrolled in school, including students in kindergarten, they are subject to compulsory school laws until the student reaches age 18. The student can only be withdrawn if they transfer out of the District. The student will remain on the District's roll, and the student/family is subject to truancy court if they do not attend school. A parent/guardian who enrolls their child in kindergarten may formally withdraw their child from school before reaching compulsory school age (age six), at which point the child would no longer be subject to compulsory school laws until they turn six (6) years old.

Attendance for all K-12 VESPA students is generated based on WEEKLY student work completion. A school week starts on Monday at 12:00 a.m. and ends on Sunday at 11:59 p.m. All assignments must be submitted by 11:59 p.m. on Sunday of each week to count towards attendance for that week.

To earn full attendance, all students must complete a MINIMUM of **20 total graded assignments** per week and attend their weekly virtual check-in. Students are strongly encouraged to complete assignments in each of the courses they are enrolled in on a weekly basis to stay on track to complete the course by the end of the marking period. **Depending**

on the number of assignments in a particular course and the number of courses a student is enrolled in, it may be necessary for the student to complete more than 20 assignments each week to finish the course by the course end date. Assignments that are not completed by the course end dates will be factored into the student's marking period grade as a zero.

Virtual group meetings, facilitated by the VESPA school counselor and advisor, are held once a week for all K-12 VESPA students. Students are required to attend and participate with their cameras on during their designated grade-level sessions. During elementary and middle level sessions, the district's K-8 counseling curriculum is delivered along with skill-building activities specific to success in a virtual learning environment. High School sessions include marking period updates, course and college/career planning, as well as skill-building activities. All meetings are also designed to foster a sense of community and connection among VESPA students.

Students should plan their work accordingly to accommodate their desired personal schedule. Failure to meet attendance requirements and accrual of unexcused absences will initiate the district's truancy process. A Student Attendance Improvement Conference (SAIC) will be scheduled. The student's parent/guardian will receive a notice to participate with the student. During the conference, a plan will be established and implemented to help the student improve attendance and academic success in classes. Failure to comply with the plan and/or failure to attend may result in the filing of a truancy citation and/or exit from the VESPA program. State law holds that parents/legal guardians are responsible for ensuring that their student(s) attends school. If a student is 18 years or older and accrues ten or more consecutive unexcused absences, he/she may be withdrawn from the East Penn School District. Any student struggling to meet attendance expectations for any reason should be proactive in connecting with the VESPA Advisor for assistance.

Excused Absences: East Penn recognizes that circumstances might occur that may keep a student from completing daily lessons and signing into the system. These types of absences are considered excused absences and should fall into one of the categories below.

- Absence due to illness, health condition, family emergency: In order for an absence to be considered excused, a note must be submitted to the VESPA Advisor and Administrative Assistant via email within three (3) school days of the absence. The parent or legal guardian is expected to notify the VESPA Advisor and Administrative Assistant via email prior to the absence unless the situation does not provide such an opportunity.
- Absence due to participation in a school approved activity, family vacation or trip. In order to be granted an excused absence the activity must be approved

by the Director of Educational Alternatives. Students are responsible for all missed work and are expected to complete any missed plus new work within two weeks of their return. A [Trip Request Form](#) must be submitted to the Director of Educational Alternatives a minimum of three (3) school days prior to a trip.

- Absences due to temporary suspensions are deemed excused for attendance record-keeping purposes only. Students who incur a suspension are excluded from any after-school activities, and additional assistance in the building until the completion of the suspension.
- Students who are absent for 20 days or more, regardless of the reason, must provide a physician's note for each additional day or period of absence. Parents/Guardians and students will be notified at the 20th occurrence.
- Any student 18 years of age or older who misses 10 consecutive days of school may be automatically withdrawn from school per high school administration. This includes students who will be going on trips for more than 10 school days. They will be disenrolled and parents/guardians must re-enroll the student upon his/her return from the trip.

Interventions

The success of all VESPA students is our priority. All K-12 Students have access to a VESPA Advisor. Secondary VESPA students may also connect with EPSD core content teachers in specific content areas for additional academic support. Students are highly encouraged to schedule in person or virtual meetings with VESPA staff members any time they have questions or need additional support.

To assist students in achieving success, VESPA Advisors will regularly monitor student attendance and academic progress. Progress will be communicated regularly with parents/guardians and students. If a student demonstrates difficulty meeting attendance expectations as detailed in the VESPA Handbook or is not achieving success in coursework, the student will be required to meet with the VESPA Advisor and possibly, the Director of Educational Alternatives, to develop an individualized plan to address the area(s) of concern. For example, plans may include required individual or group check-ins with the VESPA Advisor, academic intervention meetings with EPSD VESPA teachers, and the development of student work completion schedules, among other activities. The duration of the required action items will be established at the time the plan is developed. Failure to comply with the established plan and/or lack of progress/improvement will result in a required student and parent/guardian meeting with the Director of Educational Alternatives, during which time a

probationary period for the student will begin. Students will continue to receive support throughout the probationary period. If there is no improvement, the student may be dismissed from the program and return to their brick-and-mortar EPSD school.

Probationary Period

Success within the VESPA program is measured by consistent daily attendance through weekly assignment completion and/or earning passing grades in coursework (60% or higher in a marking period) in order to make adequate progress toward skill development and/or to meet graduation requirements. Probationary periods are assigned by the Director of Educational Alternatives when a student has demonstrated a lack of progress and/or academic success during prior home building enrollment or while enrolled in the VESPA program. Probationary periods can range from one marking period to the entire year, depending on the individual student's academic history. When a student is placed on probation, the Director of Educational Alternatives will notify the student and their parent/guardian in writing via email. Expectations for the probationary period include:

1. Full weekly attendance recorded by meeting the required minimum graded assignment completion each week . (No recorded unexcused absences.)
2. Passing grades in marking period(s) course enrollments. (Must not fail more than 2 courses with a grade of less than 60% at the end of the marking period.)

Student success is the ultimate goal for all students in the East Penn School District. We recognize that a virtual learning environment may not be an appropriate placement for all learners to achieve that success. Therefore, failure to meet expectations that are meant to support student success may result in disenrollment from the VESPA program and a return to the appropriate EPSD school building at the start of a marking period.

VESPA Learning Space

The district provides a dedicated learning space for VESPA students within the administration building. Middle and high school students may reserve time in the space as needed. This environment supports in-person academic assistance, organizational skill development, social-emotional support, and quiet work completion.

Learning Space Expectations

Students accessing the VESPA Learning Space in the Administration Building are expected to adhere to the following rules:

1. Students must register in advance for their visit using the VESPA schedule.
2. Students are expected to come prepared with their Chromebook for learning.
3. Students are required to sign in upon arrival and sign out when leaving the building.
4. Student use of cell phones and electronic devices is limited to educational purposes while in the learning space. Students may listen to music with earbuds or headphones at a volume that is not disruptive to others.
5. Students are expected to show respect toward both peers and adults in the learning space and to follow the instructions provided by VESPA staff.

Failure to adhere to the expectations may result in a student being unable to access the learning space.

Student Services

School Counseling Services

The VESPA program is supported by an EPSD School Counselor who serves the program on a part-time basis. The counselor offers social-emotional learning instruction for elementary and middle school students, monitors student progress, assists with postsecondary planning, and ensures compliance with district and state requirements. The counselor is available to meet with students and parents/guardians both in person and virtually.

Career Readiness

Students at the elementary, middle, and high school levels are required to demonstrate career readiness. Students enrolled in VESPA are responsible for working with VESPA staff members to complete lessons and activities that support career awareness, self-awareness, and readiness for future planning. Information on how to meet the career readiness requirements will be communicated to students by the VESPA school counselor.. Students are expected to engage with the career learning activities. Record of student completion will be maintained by the VESPA school counselor and communicated to administration in the student's home building for documentation purposes.

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA)

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education. FERPA grants parents specific rights regarding their children's educational records. These

rights transfer to the student when they reach the age of 18 or attend a school beyond the high school level.

East Penn follows the FERPA Act and requires that any request for academic records be made to the school of residence, where all academic records will be maintained. The local school of residence can assist with questions pertaining to FERPA and students enrolled in the online learning program.

Special Education Services

East Penn School District is required under the Individuals with Disabilities Act (IDEA) to ensure educational services to students with disabilities. Parents/guardians who believe their child is eligible for special education should contact the East Penn School District for further assistance. East Penn will work with the parent/guardian and student to ensure that proper procedures are followed and achieve the appropriate results.

Health Screening/ Immunization

It is East Penn School District's procedure to offer various health screenings to all students, including VESPA learners. Information will be sent by building nurses specifying when these free screenings will be made available. Students are encouraged to participate in these screenings. **All East Penn VESPA students are required by state law to update and maintain their immunizations.** Failure to do so will result in suspension from the VESPA program until all necessary records are updated.

Participation in School Activities, Athletics, and Clubs

VESPA students are encouraged to participate in school-sponsored activities (e.g., prom, dances, Homecoming events, field trips, fundraisers, etc.). Students must comply with all East Penn policies and maintain good standing in attendance, academics, and discipline, as determined by their home building principal and/or the Director of Educational Alternatives. Students wishing to attend social activities must first notify their advisors and make proper arrangements with the school district.

Students wishing to participate in East Penn's athletic program or clubs must communicate with the EHS Athletics/Activities Office. The Athletics/Activities Office will provide the student the appropriate details of the club or program, including academic restrictions, contact information for coaches and/or advisors, and important dates. East Penn School District has the authority to impose academic probation on any student participating in a club or activity.

VESPA students should remember that they are still members of the East Penn School District and, therefore, the school discipline code and school rules still apply. VESPA students should appropriately conduct themselves at all times, as their conduct is a direct reflection on themselves, their families, and their school.

Graduation Activities

Students enrolled in VESPA are fully included in all senior year and graduation activities. VESPA students are required to attend all mandatory senior class meetings as scheduled by the Emmaus High School Administration.

Technology

Students must agree to and complete the East Penn School District [Acceptable Use Policy](#).

Technology Devices

- Elementary students are provided an iPad and a charger. Secondary students will receive a Chromebook and charger. This equipment remains the property of the East Penn School District and must be returned if the student withdraws or transfers from the school district.
- Student(s)/parent(s)/Guardian(s) should report any malfunction of computer hardware as soon as possible using the [One to One Plus Help Desk](#). The Office of Technology staff will discuss the specifics with the student/parent/guardian to determine if the problem is hardware-specific or software-related, and will determine a plan of action.
- Wireless or wired Internet access is required. If internet access is a financial difficulty for the family, please contact the VESPA Advisor.
- A student who does not return EPSPD-issued equipment when withdrawing or transferring from the school district will incur a debt.

Technical Support

- Technical Support will be provided to VESPA students for the equipment supplied by the district. Technical Support cannot and will not be provided on local area networks in the home or on computers not given to the student by the district.
- All use of the Internet and computer technology must be related to or in support of the educational goals of the student. Use of the Internet and computer technology for any illegal or non-educational activity, including but not limited to profit purposes, lobbying, gambling, advertising, transmitting offensive materials, hate mail, discriminating remarks, or obtaining or housing obscene or pornographic material, is strictly forbidden.

- East Penn School District reserves the right to deny a student's access to equipment and to prevent further unauthorized activity. Students denied such access must return all equipment issued to them.
- VESPA students will report all issues that they are having with the computer to the East Penn School District Office of Technology. Reported issues must include the student's name, enrollments that are affected, and any other details that will assist the help desk in resolving the problem. Students and Parents/Guardians can contact the helpdesk by submitting a ticket through the [One to One Plus Help Desk](#).
- Specific courseware issues within vendors can be reported to the VESPA Advisor and/or by submitting a support ticket directly to ellearn21-help@cliu.org

Lost/Damaged Property

The student/parent/guardian must notify the school within 24 hours of the occurrence or discovery of any theft, damage, destruction, or other loss of any school-owned computer equipment. The student/parent/guardian may be responsible for any costs associated with repairing or replacing lost, stolen, or damaged equipment while in the student's possession.

Academic Integrity/Plagiarism Policy

It is expected that all work submitted for the purpose of meeting online enrollment requirements represents the original efforts of the individual student. This includes, but is not limited to, exams, homework, enrollment assignments, and the original creation of essays, compositions, term papers, and scientific research. All work submitted by a student should be a true reflection of his or her own effort and ability. If such is not the case, the student has demonstrated unacceptable academic behavior and is subject to disciplinary action. Administrators, faculty, advisors, students, and families are all critical contributors to the upholding of academic integrity in the online learning community.

Plagiarism is defined as copying/stealing and passing off as one's own the ideas or words of another, using someone else's created product without crediting the source, or committing literary theft.

Examples include the following:

- Turning in a paper retrieved from an Internet source as one's own.
- Using another student's work in whole or in part and submitting it as one's own.
- Using information from an encyclopedia, book, textbook, website, database, etc., without citing the source.
- Using another person's idea, opinion, or theory without citing the source.

- Using any facts, statistics, graphs, drawings, pictures, sounds, or other pieces of information that you found from any source that is not common knowledge, without citing the source.
- Using quotations of another person's actual spoken or written word without citing the source.
- Paraphrasing (putting into your own words) another person's unique ideas, spoken or written, without citing the source.

As technology evolves, specifically with the emergence of sophisticated Artificial Intelligence (AI) tools, students must recognize the line between utilizing resources and misrepresenting their skills. Academic integrity requires that all submitted work reflect the student's own original thinking and effort. Relying on AI to replace critical thinking or to draft assignments without explicit permission is a violation of this trust. Unauthorized use of AI is considered academic dishonesty and will result in consequences for academic integrity.

Many institutions of higher (post-high school) education penalize plagiarism with student expulsion. Therefore, in the interest of the student's future education, as well as the school's role in the personal development of students, East Penn will adhere to the policy on plagiarism as outlined in the discipline code.

Student and Parent/Guardian Responsibilities

As a **STUDENT** enrolled in the VESPA program, I am aware that:

- Students are required to review all policies in the VESPA handbook.
- Students are required to attend the orientation program provided by the VESPA Advisor.
- Students must comply with the East Penn School District [Acceptable Use Policy](#).
- Students must adhere to the VESPA Attendance Requirements at each level, which requires a certain number of graded assignments to be completed each week.
- Students must complete East Penn District Benchmark Assessments & State Testing requirements at each level.
- Students should review communications from VESPA staff members and/or online teachers on a daily basis.

As a **PARENT/GUARDIAN** of a student enrolled in the VESPA program, I am aware that:

- Parents are required to attend the orientation program provided by the VESPA Advisor with their students.
- Parents should assist students in complying with the East Penn School District [Acceptable Use Policy](#)

- Students who fail to meet attendance requirements at each level will incur unexcused absences, and the accrual of these unexcused absences may trigger the EPSD truancy process.
- Parents should ensure that their child has stable Internet access and a conducive working environment.
- Parents should review weekly communications from VESPA staff members and online teachers on a regular basis.
- Parents should use GENIUS login and password information provided at orientation and monitor students' progress weekly (Secondary) or provide learning coach assistance daily (Elementary).
- Parents should assist the student in complying with all rules, policies, and procedures of the East Penn School District, and specifically the VESPA Program.