



Elmwood Park Public Schools Preschool Handbook

elmwoodparkschools.org

Connect 4 Learning

Dear Preschool Families,

Thank you for trusting your child's education with us at Elmwood Park Public Schools. We love the opportunity to work with the youngest learners of our community through our Connect 4 Learning preschool program. The Early Childhood Advisory Council (ECAC) has created this handbook to guide you along the path of preschool. Early education encompasses the whole child and this includes family and community. Early Childhood Education (ECE) is a bridge between home and school. We are eager to work together with you to facilitate a meaningful early childhood educational experience with your children. Together, we will support a strong foundation of education with a high-quality preschool program. The Board of Education has chosen an enriched curriculum that supports student-directed learning with a play-based approach. The elements of a high-quality preschool allow continuous collaboration from the community, home, and school to support an inclusive learning environment for all children in the preschool program.

In this handbook, you will find the procedures and policies that we will use to foster learning from preschool and beyond. The information that you will receive is based on the Board of Education approval along with the ECAC and the New Jersey State Guidelines for a high-quality preschool program.

We want to support you all throughout your child's educational journey and encourage you to stay connected with the school through our Parent Portal, school website, and our social media outlets. This is where you will find information about all topics related to preschool and the Elmwood Park school district. Your child's teacher and our community liaison will help facilitate home and school throughout the year.

Thank you,

Dr. Anthony Iachetti, *Superintendent*

Mrs. Allison Jackter, *Principal of Gantner Ave School*

Mr. Kurt Mathews, *Assistant Principal of Gantner Ave School*

Mr. Michael Alberta, *Principal of Gilbert Avenue School*

Mr. Gi Shin, *Assistant Principal of Gilbert Avenue School*

Mrs. Danielle Sharples, *Principal of Sixteenth Avenue School*

Mrs. Candice Rowan, *Assistant Principal of Sixteenth Avenue School*

School Mission Statement

We are a community dedicated to creating an educational environment where students are empowered to exceed their potential through a challenging, innovative, and interdisciplinary curriculum. By fostering character, dignity, and respect for self and other cultures, students will become creative thinkers and global citizens able to thrive in a diverse and evolving society. Early childhood education is essential in building a foundation for a successful educational career. Our mission is to provide an inclusive learning program that meets the educational, social, emotional and developmentally appropriate milestones in early childhood education with a partnership of staff, families, and community members to nurture our youngest learners. We are committed to providing a safe, caring, and nurturing environment for all students to thrive and grow throughout their educational journey. The Board of Education will offer each child in our early educational program the elements of a high-quality preschool. The school district will develop and explore the New Jersey Preschool Teaching and Learning Standards to deliver the curriculum with fidelity to our youngest learners. Our goal is to deliver a program where children are encouraged to think independently and whose social, emotional, and creative abilities are developed and nourished to their fullest potential.

Arrival and Dismissal

ELMWOOD PARK PUBLIC SCHOOL HOURS

- Full Day: 8:45 am - 3:15 pm
- Delayed Opening for Full Day Students: 10:45 am - 3:15 pm

KINDERCARE SCHOOL HOURS

- Full Day: 8:45 am - 3:15 pm
- Delayed Opening for Full Day Students: 10:45 am - 3:15 pm

NOTIFICATIONS

We use the Realtime Parent Portal Student Information System for communications and notifications. Parents will receive an email with login instructions. Changes can be entered from a smartphone, tablet, or computer. All changes will be reviewed by the main office prior to submission in order to be accepted.

Before and After School Program

The Before and After School Program is only offered at Kindercare. This program is available when calling the school directly and setting up the program needed for your family.

Attendance

TARDINESS

Being on time is a life skill that should begin now. Please instill in your child the understanding that being prompt is important. At this age, it is the parent's responsibility to ensure their child arrives at school on time. Students who are tardy three (3) times will accrue an (1) unexcused absence. If the tardiness continues, a conference with the school may be needed.

According to Board Policy 5240, the Board of Education believes that promptness is an important element of school attendance. Pupils who are late to school or to class miss essential portions of the instructional program and create disruptions in the academic process for themselves and other pupils.

The Board of Education understands the importance of education at the youngest of ages throughout high school graduation. Regular attendance facilitates and supports academic achievement. Children thrive on structure and routines. We at Elmwood Park Schools follow the Board Policy 5200 with attendance and expect all children to attend school regularly. If a student has 18 unexcused absences, the student will be disenrolled and will have to be re-registered into the register system. A student that misses more than 10 unexcused absences consecutively will be disenrolled on the 11th day. The student will have to re-register for placement. Placement is not guaranteed.

Board Policy 5200 states: "In accordance with the provisions of N.J.S.A. 18A:38-25, every parent, guardian, or other person having control and custody of a child between the ages of six and sixteen shall cause the child to regularly attend school. The Board of Education requires students enrolled in the school district attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the State."

ABSENCE REPORTING

If your child will be absent from school, report the absence using the Parent Portal by 8:30 am on the day of the absence. If you do not have access to the Parent Portal, please call the nurse's office. Please leave a message stating your child's name, teacher's name and the reason for the absence.

All notes regarding absences are to be given to the main office upon return to school, but no later than 5 days following an absence. A child leaving school early must have a note from the parent and the parent must come into the building to sign the child out. If you are going on a family vacation and your child will be out for an extended amount of time, you must notify the office directly. Here are frequently asked questions about attendance:

Q: What is considered a “school day”?

A: “A day of attendance” shall be one in which the student is present for a full day. Students must be present for four hours to be considered present for a full day.

Q: What is considered an excused absence by the Department of Education?

A: The Department of Education ONLY permits the following:

- Religious holidays as recognized on the DOE website
- Take your Child to Work Day

Q: What is considered an excused absence? What does that really mean?

A: An excused absence is an absence that has been *verified* by a parent or guardian with proper documentation.

Q: If my child is home sick for one or two days 1) must I get a doctor’s note? and 2) is it excused?

A: A doctor’s note for a short term illness is not required, however, we do require that you call the school prior to the start of the school day to let us know s/he will be absent from school. The child must bring a doctor’s note to school immediately following the day of absence verifying the absence if it exceeds three days. Notes will be accepted within five (5) days of the absence.

Q: How many absences can my preschooler have?

A: Since we have a waitlist for other families in the community for a preschool spot, your child cannot miss more than 10 consecutive days. This is out of fairness to everyone. Please understand that family vacations are not excused and your child may be at risk for losing his/her spot in our program. The decision is solely up to the principal.

Important Phone Numbers and Contacts

Elmwood Park Public Schools
Phone: 201-786-8700

Gantner Avenue School

Phone: 201-786-8700, ext. 30602

Gilbert Avenue School

Phone: 201-786-8700, ext. 40603

Sixteenth Avenue School

Phone: 201-786-8700, ext. 20602

Policies and Procedures

AFFIRMATIVE ACTION

The Elmwood Park Public School District does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability in admission to its programs, services, or activities, in access to them, in treatment of individuals, or in any aspect of their operations. The lack of English language skills shall not be a barrier to admission or participation in the district's activities and programs. The Elmwood Park Public School District also does not discriminate in its hiring or employment practices. For more information on district procedures please visit our website: www.elmwoodparkschools.org

COMMUNICATION

You may communicate with the school and its personnel via email or phone. Addresses consist of the first initial of a person's first name and full last name @epps.org For example, to email Lisa Smith: lsmith@epps.org. Please refer to the school's website for a listing of email addresses and phone extensions. During the school day, it is best to contact the teachers by email, and they will get back to you in a timely manner.

BREAKFAST PROGRAM

This program is aimed at improving student learning and performance outcomes by ensuring all students have the opportunity to receive a nutritious breakfast every morning before they take part in learning. Research reflects the impact that eating a nutritious meal has improved student performance in addition to getting students to school on time.

How does it work?

Students who arrive at school receive a complete breakfast as soon as they arrive at the classroom. Students are allowed to eat breakfast in their classroom while they unpack their belongings in preparation for morning meetings and activities. The program will work as follows:

Your child's teacher will give out the breakfast to those students who signed up for it.

The students will eat their breakfast then clean-up after themselves, both practicing the responsibility and practicing how to recycle.

LUNCH AND SNACK

Meals and snacks offer excellent opportunities for students to practice independence, socialization, healthy eating habits and good manners. Lunch and snacks have a specific time throughout the day. Students eat in their classrooms with their classmates and staff. Our program offers free lunch for your children. You are welcome to send in lunch and/or communicate your preferences with the teacher.

When you pack a lunch for your child, please keep in mind these tips for their safety and ease:

- Never pack anything in a bottle or other glass container.
- Lunches cannot be heated in a microwave.
- If you pack a pre-packaged lunch, cut the wrappings and then tape the package shut. This will make it easier for your child to open lunch.
- If you put the cup section on top of your child's thermos, make sure it is loose enough to unscrew.
- On early dismissal days, lunch will not be served.
- Lunch is an opportunity for your child to practice independence. We encourage them to open their lunches and snacks on their own or use language and friendships to ask for help.

A daily snack should be sent to school. Please make sure to send in a healthy snack each day. We do not allow candy as per the state nutrition guidelines, [Preschool Nutrition Guidelines](#). It is important that you pack the snack in a separate container from lunch and label it "snack" with your child's name. Please practice at home by showing your child his/her snack and lunch containers and explain the difference.

NAP/REST TIME

It is a statewide requirement that all students in the state-funded preschool programs be given at least 50 minutes of nap/rest period. Students each nap on his/her own cot. Please send in the following items for your child:

1. A fitted standard crib size sheet (28x52 inches)
2. A small blanket, no bigger than the size of your child's body. A small snuggle toy is allowed.

These items will be sent home each Friday to be washed. Please return on Monday for the start of the new week.

SUPPLIES (Please see individual teacher supply lists on the school website)

- TWO complete sets of clothes (pants, shirt, underwear and socks)
- 2 packages of diapers and wipes (if not bathroom trained)
- A fitted standard crib size sheet (28x52 inches) to cover a cot

- Small blanket for rest time
- 4 boxes of tissues
- Regular-sized folder
- 1 small container of Playdoh
- Lunch and a healthy snack
- 2 drinks (one for lunch and one for snack)

**Lunch may be purchased from the cafeteria. There will be a monthly menu on the website under Food Services.*

**Please label ALL personal items with your child's name.*

VISITORS

We ask that all guests and visitors coming to any of our schools notify the office secretary at each school.

When coming to the Elmwood Park Schools, you will enter through the front doors. In order to monitor who has entered the building, all visitors must sign in at the Main Office and receive a visitor's pass. Please wear the pass during your visit to the school. All staff members wear identification badges.

All visitors must show identification in order to pick up a child.

VOLUNTEERS

The services of volunteers can enrich our educational program, assist our teaching staff members in the performance of their duties, and enhance the relationship between school and community. Please reach out to your child's teacher to see what opportunities are available. We will also periodically send emails asking for help with school-wide events. Please remember that volunteers may serve only under the direction and supervision of a teaching staff member. Our PTO is always looking for volunteers as well.

TOYS

Children are asked not to bring toys to school except when requested for an educational activity. You will be notified in writing when your child will need to bring a specific toy from home. Toy weapons of any kind are never permitted in school.

LOST AND FOUND

The lost and found bin is located in the main office. Please label all of your child's items.

PROGRESS REPORT CARDS

The faculty at Elmwood Park schools will provide information that is reflective of your child's growth as well as the expectations for each grade level. Report cards are distributed twice a year electronically in February and June. You will receive a notification when they are available.

CONFERENCES

Conferences provide a time for parents and teachers to talk together, review the child's portfolio, and make plans and goals for improvement. Please check the school calendar for dates. Children should not attend these conferences unless requested by the teacher. Conferences may also be scheduled at any time during the school year when a teacher or parent has a concern. If you wish to arrange a conference, please contact your child's teacher.

SCHOOL SOCIAL WORKER/COUNSELORS

If you have any concerns about your child's mental health, general needs or concerns you can contact our school social worker and/or guidance counselors. Please see the staff list on the website.

HIB POLICY STATEMENT

The Board of Education prohibits acts of harassment, intimidation, or bullying of a student. A safe and civil environment in school is necessary for students to learn and achieve high academic standards. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying, like other disruptive or violent behaviors, is conduct that disrupts both a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate its students in a safe and disciplined environment. Since students learn by example, school administrators, faculty, staff, and volunteers should be commended for demonstrating appropriate behavior, treating others with civility and respect, and refusing to tolerate harassment, intimidation or bullying. Please review our HIB policy at [HIB](#). Questions regarding HIB can be sent to our school counselors as well.

Health and Medical Information

HEALTH and SAFETY are one of the most important components of our preschool program and keep our students and staff safe from the spread of germs and illnesses.

EMERGENCY CONTACTS

If a child becomes ill or injured at school, the nurse will contact parents or other responsible adults listed for the student. It is essential that this information is accurate and kept up to date.

Please use the Parent Portal or notify the school of any changes (phone numbers, employment, or emergency people).

RETURNING TO SCHOOL AFTER ILLNESS OR INJURY

Your child may return to school after 24 hours of being fever-free. Children who are limited or unable to participate in full activities require a doctor's note. Please reach out to the school nurse with any questions about the flu shot or necessary medical mandates.

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION

By state law and school board policy, the nurse is the only school personnel authorized to administer medication to a child at school. Medication can only be administered if prescribed by a physician. The parents must supply the nurse with "doctor's orders" as per state guidelines. If your child needs medication during school hours, it is requested that you have the pharmacist fill and label a bottle to be kept in school and bring the medication to the nurse's office. Parents should not send medication to school with children to keep on their person. This rule is necessary to protect the safety of all children. The medication must be in its original container, with the pharmaceutical label clearly evident. Also, administration instructions and other information from the physician should be unobstructed.

The nurse is not authorized to administer over-the-counter medications. If your child's physician or dentist recommends an over-the-counter medication that you feel your child should have during the school day, ask the physician to write orders for the school nurse. The nurse has the necessary form required for all medications to be given at school. Please get in touch with the school nurse prior to the start of school, if needed.

EPINEPHRINE

"Epinephrine shall be administered via epi-pen to pupils in emergencies on field trips by the school nurse, his/her designee(s), the student's parent/guardian or the student himself/herself, in accordance with board policy."

HEAD LICE

Once a diagnosis is made, a child more than likely has had the infestation for a while. Don't panic, the school nurse will notify you. Prompt treatment of this condition is in the best interest of the child and his/her classmates. The nurse will provide further information.

PHYSICALS

Physicals are required upon entering the school system.

IMMUNIZATIONS

All children must have the required immunizations prior to entering school. To assist you with meeting this requirement, the Bergen County Board of Health holds free immunization clinics each fall and spring. Information concerning these county programs may be obtained from the Bergen County Board of Health [BERGEN HEALTH](#). Please reach out to our school nurse with any additional questions.

Flu Shots: The flu vaccine is a requirement for childcare/preschool attendance for those who are 6 months through 59 months of age. At least one dose of flu vaccine is **due by December 31st of each year**. Please reach out to our school nurse for more information. [Vaccine lists NJ](#)

TOILETING and DIAPERING

Preschool students participating in the state-funded preschool program are not required to be toilet trained prior to program enrollment. Our high-quality preschool program provides children with a developmentally-appropriate potty training program. Toilet training is a home/school partnership. Therefore, parents will be responsible for supporting the teacher's potty training efforts.

Handwashing and Disinfecting:

Our staff wash their hands after cleaning the tables, contact with bodily fluids, messy play, and before serving food. The children are required to wash their hands when entering the classroom from outside, before and after meals, and after contact with any bodily fluids. Our students wash their hands:

- Upon arrival to the classroom
- Re-entering the classroom after being outside
- Before and after eating, handling food, or feeding a child
- After using the toilet
- After diaper changing
- Before and after playing in sandboxes or water tables

These are the steps used for handwashing:

- Turn on the water and wet both hands thoroughly
- Apply soap to hands and rub hands together for 20 seconds
- Rinse all soap off of hands with water
- Dry hands with a paper towel

Table Cleaning Steps:

To clean the tables, our staff follow the steps recommended in the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale (**ECERS-3**):

- Use soapy water solution to clean tables using a clean and disposable paper towel
- After cleaning the table surface with soap and rinsing with water, disinfect tables by using a diluted bleach and disinfectant water solution



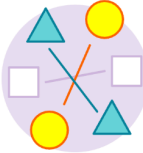







Our Curriculum: *Connect 4 Learning*

[Creative Curriculum Overview](#)

The Connect 4 Learning curriculum seamlessly weaves together literacy, science, social-emotional, and mathematics learning to ensure that each subject is addressed meaningfully and comprehensively with each child.

Connect4Learning Processes

Using research-based and classroom-tested foundations for learning, the author team designed six curriculum units that are focused on supporting children's development of ten comprehensive cognitive processes. These core processes are both domain specific and applicable across all four learning domains.

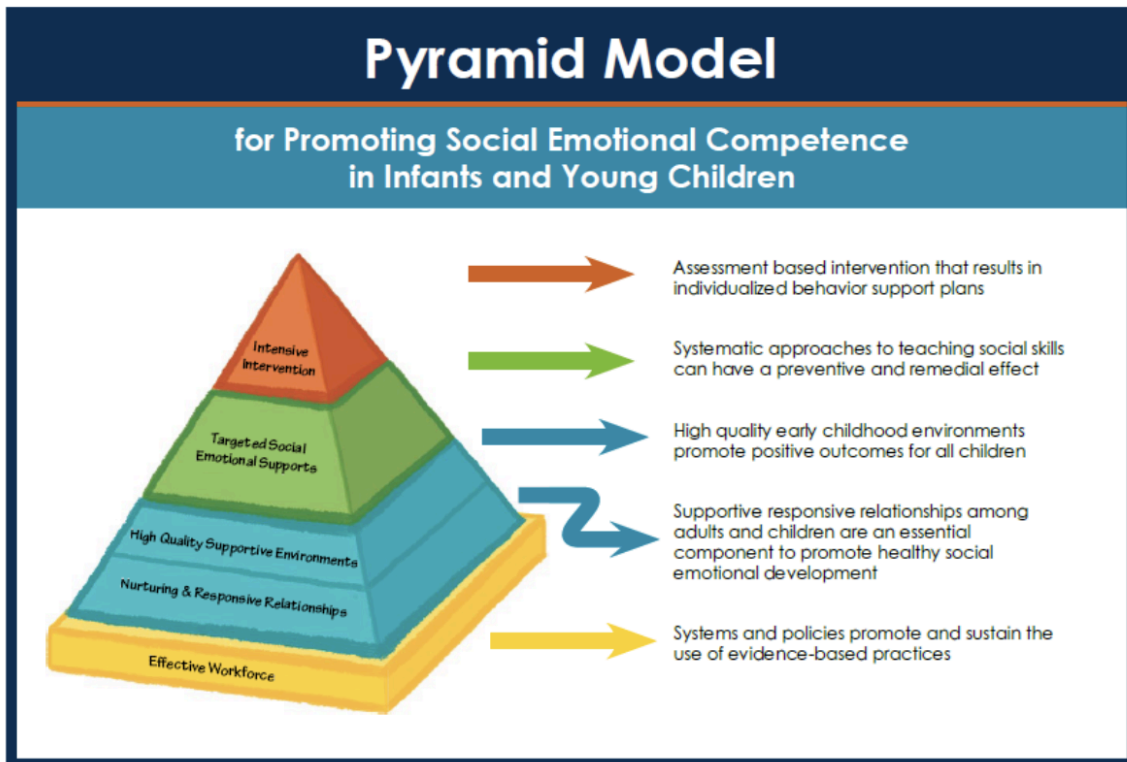
 Communicating & Representing	 Cooperating	 Comparing & Classifying	 Creating, Imagining, & Innovating	 Curiosity	 Observing
 Persisting, Attending, & Self-Regulation	 Reasoning & Problem Solving	 Making Sense	 Using Tools Strategically		

Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support

Elmwood Park Public Schools has adopted the Positive Behavioral Intervention and Support system from K-8. Preschool uses the same techniques. These tools promote social-emotional competence in young children such as:

- a. teaching behavior regulation
- b. making friends
- c. emotional literacy
- d. social stories
- e. social emotional skills

This program supports and implements strategies to prevent and address challenging behaviors. If your child requires additional support, you will be notified by the teacher and/or school staff.



National Center for Pyramid Model Innovations | ChallengingBehavior.org

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Partnership

Our school embraces a positive and productive climate. We look forward to a wonderful school year with a bridge between school and home. We welcome and strongly encourage you to be an active participant of your child’s educational experience. We would love for you to volunteer or add any of your own traditions from home to our classrooms. We want to make your child’s first years of school a positive experience and look forward to a meaningful partnership of school and home.

Elmwood Park Public Schools Early Childhood Advisory Council (EPPS-ECAC)

The Early Childhood Advisory Council is a state-mandated organization, composed of school personnel, families, and community stakeholders...As required under *N.J.A.C.6A:13A-4.6*, the district board of education shall establish a preschool through grade three early childhood advisory council (ECAC) to review the preschool program implementation of high-quality programs, serve as advisory support for the local school district's preschool program, and support transition as children move from preschool through grade three.

ECAC Members:

- **Anthony Iachetti, Superintendent**
- **, Principal**
- **Monica Naughton Brown, Director of Curriculum, Instruction, & Evaluation**
- **Jennifer Varano, Director of Special Services**
- **, School Social Worker**
- **, CPIS/PIC/PIRS**
- **, BOE President**
- **, Teacher (Grade 1)**
- **, Teacher (Grade K)**
- **, Stakeholder (Councilwoman)**
- **, Partner Site Director**

Electronic Signature Required (Mandatory)

After you have read the Preschool Handbook, complete [this form](#).