

# EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY (E.L.A.)



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**OUR PHILOSOPHY**

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**OUR FACULTY**

**OUR GOALS**



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## 1. Welcome

Welcome to Early Learning Academy. We look forward to the beginning of a rewarding and trusting relationship between your family and us. This handbook is meant to serve as a guide to what you should expect from us. It also details what your responsibilities are. Of course, always feel free to visit with an ELA staff member if you have any questions or concerns about these policies and procedures.

From all of us at ELA, please accept our thanks for placing your trust and your child with us.

Welcome to our family!

## **2. Our Philosophy**

We the staff at Early Learning Academy (ELA) are committed to providing a comprehensive educational foundation for the Jersey City preschoolers. At ELA we strive to create an environment within which we are responding to the needs of the whole child; it is our belief that a child's entire self should be developed thus allowing them to explore their inner talents ) children are exposed to the opportunity to develop lifelong traits of honesty, fairness, confidence and responsibility.

We foster self-esteem, self discipline, and a spirit of cooperation. We nurture an understanding and sensitivity to all people by encouraging reverence and respect for each person. Our staff affirm the worth and dignity of each individual and as teachers we share this vision of education with the school community (we want each child to feel nurtured, gain knowledge, and make friends).

We recognize our responsibility to support parents in their role as educators of their children and we are aware that each child learns differently hence we utilize various teaching styles to reach auditory, kinesthetic, or visual learners.

Through our core competencies curriculum (a creative curriculum) we provide the opportunity for each student's intellectual, psychological, social, physical, and aesthetic growth.

As a result we've met or exceeded the stringent requirements set forth by the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC).

## **3. Our Faculty**

We believe that a school's excellence is ultimately measured by the quality of its staff, which is why we're extremely selective when it comes to our faculty. All our classes are led by degreed teachers (some at the Masters and Doctorate level) who are supported by well-educated, experienced assistant and specialty teachers. Our administrators are extremely educated professionals also! ELA's personnel continuously participate in diverse workshops, seminars, modules and continuing education courses.

Every employee at ELA, from Director to House-keeper, is held to the highest standards and must complete a rigorous pre-employment screening process. This includes a thorough background check, fingerprinting, education and experience verification.

All faculty members are required to have emergency response training and current first aid and CPR certification. Fire, severe weather, and evacuation drills are practiced regularly. We treat each child as our own and you can be reassured that your child is always in the best hands while

he/she is at ELA.

#### **4. Peace of Mind—Our Security Procedures**

When ELA was being conceptualized and eventually developed, we kept two things in mind — safety and atmosphere, which is why every part of our facility was designed to make you and your child, feel secure and comfortable. Our building is equipped with sprinkler systems and fire alarms, which are directly connected to the Jersey City Fire Departments.

You will notice our commitment to your child's safety begins the moment you step inside our lobby. In order to access the school's interior classroom area, everyone must first participate in a "fingerprint scan" located at our reception desk. You the parents and your designated relations who are authorized to pick up your child, only after identification verification, will be entered into our "computerized fingerprint scan security system" during the enrollment process or at any time after your child begins to attend ELA.

No individual will be allowed to enter the Academy's classroom area(s) until that person's fingerprint has been correctly identified. Once inside, you'll find only students, staff, parents, and other authorized adults previously permitted to enter our classrooms during regular school hours. In addition, we've carefully positioned large hallway windows to allow for complete observation of every classroom by visitors and/or staff.

Our website is developed and tested using the latest version of Internet Explorer for Microsoft Windows desktop operating systems. It utilizes common ActiveX plug-in controls, such as Flash, Acrobat, and Axis Streaming. Accessing the ELA website using other operating systems and/or Internet browsers may produce unexpected results.

If a medical or any other type of emergency situation arises, we will immediately implement our procedures for such situations, including calling 911 if necessary, to obtain an appropriate and expeditious response and guidance. You the parents will always be contacted as quickly as possible and be advised of the situation. **Please ensure your child's information is up-to-date at all times.** It is extremely important that we are current with your emergency contact information such as current home, work, and cellular/mobile numbers. We will be proactive to ensure your child's well-being at all times, but from time to time, accidents do occur. All injuries will be documented carefully and you will be fully informed.

#### **5. Open Door Policy**

You the parents are encouraged and welcomed to visit us and your child/children anytime during the day; however we humbly ask that you schedule your visit outside of "nap-time" so as not to disturb the class during naptime. However should it become necessary for you to pick-up or drop-off your child during naptime, please advise us in advance so that we can minimize interruptions to the daily routine. On another note, if you would like to have lunch at ELA with your child, we ask that you arrange this with his/her teacher beforehand.

## **6. Our Goals for Children**

ELA's goals for your children cover all the domains of child development - emotional, social, cognitive, creative, and physical.

### **Children enrolled in Early Learning Academy will:**

- develop a positive self-concept and attitude toward learning, self-control, and a sense of belonging.
- develop curiosity about the world, confidence as a learner, creativity and imagination, and personal initiative.
- develop relationships of mutual trust and respect with adults and peers, understand perspectives of other people, and negotiate and apply rules of group living - practice human values!
- understand and respect social and cultural diversity.
- know about the community and social roles.
- use language to communicate effectively and to facilitate thinking and learning.
- become literate individuals who gain satisfaction, as well as information, from reading and writing.
- represent ideas and feelings through pretend play, drama, movement, music, art, and construction.
- think critically, reason, and solve problems.
- construct understanding of relationships among objects, people, and events, such as classifying, ordering, number, space, and time.
- construct knowledge of the physical world, manipulate objects for desired effects, and understand cause and effect relationships.
- acquire knowledge of and appreciation for the fine arts, humanities, and sciences.
- become competent in the management of their bodies and acquire basic physical skills, both gross motor and fine motor.
- gain knowledge about the care of their bodies and maintain a desirable level of health and fitness.

## **7. Daily Procedures**

### **Hours of operation:**

Early Learning Academy is open from 7:30 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., Monday through Friday. Our core curriculum hours are 8:30a.m. to 5:30 p.m. As a client of ours you will be provided with a copy of the typical daily schedule for your child's class.

Note that our holiday closings are listed under Section 28.

### **Drop-off/check-in procedure:**

Children in our infant, toddler, Toddler Plus and Pre-K transition classes must always be checked in by the adult who brings them to school and cannot simply be dropped off, leaving the child

with the teacher and not signing in. **All children must be signed in.**

Pick-up/check-out procedure: When you pick up your child, please park your car and come into the lobby. You will enter the classroom area using the fingerprint scan and proceed to your child's classroom.



## 8. Your Child's First Day

You have probably visited us on one or more occasions and our intent is for you to have a smooth and informative enrollment and orientation process. In addition, we want you and your child to feel as comfortable as possible and welcomed on your first day at ELA. We understand that no matter how well prepared and excited a family may be, the newness can also be a little scary for everyone. We don't consider any questions or concerns you may have as unimportant or silly.

Please come to our lobby where our administrators will experience a warm greeting and we will assist you to check-in using our "fingerprint scan system", escort you to your child's classroom, and help you get your child settled-in. Sometimes saying goodbye isn't easy so we recommend you keep it reassuring, short, and sweet. Prolonging the inevitable often does not help the situation - ten minutes or so should do it; however, we respect your right to decide how to best handle this situation with your child and we won't rush you. As an alternative, and if discussed before hand, we welcome you to join your child in the first 2 class sessions so as to help assist in acclimating your child to his/her new surroundings.

We recommend that if you have any business or final paperwork to finalize you should do so upon your return to the lobby area in order not to keep your child waiting beforehand. Feel free to contact us during the day via cell or regular phone to follow-up on how your child is doing. Please be reassured that if we **ever** feel you need to be told about **anything** concerning your child, you will receive a call from us forthwith and if necessary, we will speak with you at drop-off or pick-up times, so that together we can ensure your child is well taken care of.

## 9. Meals and Snacks

Please have all food items labeled with your child's name and identify which item is for breakfast, snack, lunch etc. Please review the Academy's Food Policy in regards to procedures, times, and limitations. *We try to maintain a nut-free environment , so avoid food items with any nuts.*

## 10. Naptime

Every day, after enjoying their lunchtime meal, the children have a 1½ to 2 hour naptime. While all children are encouraged to take a nap, they are never forced to sleep and some may have a quiet, peaceful rest time instead. Your child may bring a "special" blanket, pillow, and/or stuffed animal for naptime, but they must be small enough to be stored in his/her backpack when not in use.

## 11. How We Communicate With Parents

We know how important it is to find out about your child's day and progress at ELA. In our toddler through Pre-k classes (Kindergarten commences September 2014), a weekly report form and the on-going, informal conversations you will have with your child's teacher(s), is one way of sharing with you what, why, and how we do things. We encourage you to read these reports and, when he/she becomes verbal, we encourage you to talk with your child about his or

her accomplishments, further reinforcing the pride and competency your child will surely have.

Our teachers are very special people who spend a great deal of time with your children and want to build a mutually trusting relationship with you. We know you will use good judgment and not monopolize their time while they are primarily tasked with supervising children. If you ever have any concerns, call or send an email and we'll address them as soon as practically possible. Our staff can also be contacted via our front desk and e-mail systems. For the obvious reason (distraction in the class), we do not put parent calls directly through to the classrooms. If you want to arrange a meeting or wish to have a conference with a teacher or an administrator (or both), please contact our receptionist or send an email to the teacher/or administrator and a mutually agreeable time will be arranged.

In addition, we have parent-teacher conferences scheduled throughout the school year, special programs and family events, holiday celebrations, parent education workshops, and ways for parents to volunteer their special interests and talents at which time you can chat.

## **12. Our Discipline and Guidance Philosophy**

It is our belief that the best way to prepare children to live productively and successfully is to help them develop self-control, resolve conflicts, and become increasingly responsible for their actions and behaviors. It behooves us as adults to portray model desirable behavior in order for children to learn to understand, acknowledge, and cope with their feelings. We accomplish this through the use of positive guidance techniques that offer developmentally appropriate choices and set clear and consistent rules and consequences. It is understood that children must be involved with each other, with teachers, and with materials and equipment in order to learn how to work and play harmoniously. Sometimes children may be separated from the group for short periods when they need a quiet place away from the overwhelming emotions of peers and play. At ELA, this cooling-off period, often called "Time Out," is only used judiciously and as a last resort for serious behavior problems. We firmly believe children should never be made to feel humiliated or rejected. Physical, verbal, or emotional punishment or abuse is never allowed. If we have concerns about a child's behavior, we will inform his/her parents as soon as possible and collaborate on a plan of action for positive change.

## **13. Clothing and Backpacks**

All students should be dressed in comfortable clothes that allow them to participate in everyday classroom activities. Those children who are potty training should wear pants which they can undo/open themselves. All students should have their first name written on the tag of the clothes they wear to ensure all their items remain together.

Shoes should be closed-toed athletic shoes with non-skid, non-marking rubber soles to be worn with socks. Please remember, a big part of your child's day at ELA will be participating in physical play, such as running and climbing, hence dress shoes, boots, and sandals are unsafe and unsuitable for active outdoor play.

As a result of their age, it is expected that from time to time, toileting accidents or spills will occur at school which will require your child to have a change of clothes. Please make certain you have a complete change of clothes, including underwear and socks, in your child's backpack or left within the classroom, labeled with your child's name.

Backpacks should be emptied each day and restocked with whatever items your classroom teacher suggests. Please label everything.

#### **14. Diapering**

Children who wear diapers are checked at regular intervals throughout the day. Every effort is made to change each child's diaper at the first sign of wetness or soiling. Please review our teachers' feed-back notes to ensure all items needed for changing and cleaning are provided.

#### **15. Toilet Training (*consult on our potty-training boot camp activity*)**

We recognize that toilet training is an important step in the early development of all children. At some point during the older toddler's school year, when you believe your child is ready to begin the process, discuss with his/her teacher what you plan to do. The teacher will have suggestions to assist you. Your child will have the greatest success when parents and teachers work together consistently. If the timing is right, it should be a natural progression, not an ordeal to worry about. Children who are in the toilet training process must have **several changes** of clothing on hand every day. We recommend your child wear underwear at this time. Diapers or pull-ups may be used at naptime.

#### **16. Personal Belongings**

It is your responsibility to make certain that everything your child brings or wears to school has his/her name clearly written on it in permanent marker.

Children love to bring personal items to school with them, but please understand we have plenty of toys and materials at our school already. If your child brings an item to school, it could get lost or damaged. The risk is yours and ELA cannot be responsible for personal belongings. We do our best to keep track of such items, and if it's precious, it is advisable to keep it at home. All unclaimed, unlabeled items are placed in our "Lost and Found" basket and if they remain unclaimed after 30 days they will be donated to charity.

Your child must not bring to school any weapon or replica of a weapon or any other item that may encourage overly aggressive play. Small or delicate items, such as coins and china, which could be easily swallowed or broken, should never be brought to school. All items brought to school should fit in your child's ELA backpack. Please do not bring larger items unless it's something needed for a special assignment/project that has been previously arranged with your child's teacher.

## 17. Pets and Other Animals

We are obligated by the State Licensing Standards to advise all ELA parents at least 48 hours in advance when animals (family pets or animals that are part of a special program such as a visiting petting zoo), will be present on ELA premises. Please do not bring any animal to school without prior approval from our administration.

## 18. Health and Immunization Records

The State Licensing Standards require specific medical and immunization information to be on file for each child within one week of enrollment. We are subject to random audits by the New Jersey Department of Health. Unfortunately your child will be excluded from attendance at ELA until this information has been submitted - must be current.

Also, whenever your child gets additional immunization, it is extremely important for you to provide us with a copy of the documentation provided by your child's health care provider. This is meant to keep your child's records up-to-date.

## 19. When Your Child Is Ill

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will notify you immediately so you can make appropriate arrangements to pick him/her up; in the mean time we will do our utmost best to comfort him/her until you arrive. Be advised that in order to avoid the spread of disease, the State Licensing Standards require ill children to be isolated from their group and be picked up from school as soon as possible, but no later than one hour after notification.

It is critical that your child needs to be well enough in order to function in group care. If your child exhibits any of the following symptoms, he/she must be excluded from attendance:

- Has had a fever at or above 100 F within the past 24 hours, regardless of its cause. This includes fever that you or your pediatrician believes is caused when infants or toddlers are teething.
- Is vomiting or has an upset stomach accompanied by diarrhea.
- Have loose stools that are not able to be contained within the diaper.
- Shows evidence of a communicable disease, such as chicken pox or pink eye.
- Has an undiagnosed rash.
- Has discharge from the eyes, ears, and/or profuse, colored nasal discharge.
- Has unusual lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, or difficulty breathing.

**In order to return to school, your child needs to be free of all symptoms for 24 hours. Children who have had a communicable disease may only return to school with a written statement from their doctor stating that they are no longer contagious.**

As a courtesy to all ELA families and staff, we ask that you help us keep the transmission of colds and other illnesses to a minimum by keeping your child at home at the onset of such illness. If you know your child has been exposed to any contagious illness, let the Director know so we may alert other parents to be extra attentive to their children.

To reduce the spread of infections, children and staff wash their hands (using anti-bacterial soap) many times during the day but especially after toileting and before eating, and we do not allow children to share cups, utensils, etc. In addition, toys, doorknobs, water fountains, and all other items that are handled or contacted on a regular basis by children are disinfected regularly with an anti-bacterial solution.

## **20. Medication Policies**

We recognize the administration of medications is an important part of helping to maintain your child's overall state of welfare and health. We will administer all prescription and non-prescription (over-the-counter) medications according to the following requirements:

- All medications must be in their original containers, ingredients, directions, and expiration date clearly legible.
- A medication form (available at the front desk) must be completed in full before any medicine can be given to a child

Prescription medications will only be administered with a note or fax from your child's pediatrician stating the specific name of the medication, the dosage, and its frequency. The medication container **MUST** have the original pharmacy label with the child's and physician's name, the prescription number, dosage, and frequency (must be legible and it must be current).

For non-prescription medications, the child's name needs to be clearly written on the medicine container with a permanent marker.

- All prescribed medication will be administered as per the medical practitioner's direction
- all non-prescribed medication be administered as indicated on the authorization form.
- Clearly indicate it if the medication needs to be refrigerated.
- We recommend you have your pharmacist prepare your child's prescription in two containers, one for home and one for school, in case you forget to take the prescription medication home at the end of the day.

Medication can be very dangerous in the hands of children and must never be left in a child's backpack where it might be accidentally available to any child.

## **21. When Your Child Is Absent**

If your child will be absent due to vacation or illness, please notify the school as soon as possible.

## **22. Severe Weather Days**

If the Jersey City School District is closed due to unsafe weather conditions, ELA may also be closed. If delayed openings are announced, we will make every effort to open ELA, but since our staff commutes from different locations, we may not be able to do so. If school is closed for an emergency or weather related reason, an email will be sent as soon as possible to the parents/guardians as well as a phone call. In the case of a severe mid-day storm, please do not call the school, we will notify you if your child needs to be picked up early.

## **23. Children's Birthdays**

We enjoy celebrating your child's birthday at ELA. If you would like to bring a simple yet special treat for the class, please limit it to small muffins, cookies, fruit, pretzels, etc. Please include all food ingredient labels with the snack you send in to ensure the safety of those with food allergies. Be sure to avoid items with any type of nuts. For safety reasons, we do not allow candles and/or balloons to be brought to school and we ask you to make arrangements in advance directly with your child's teacher as to how much to bring and when. In addition, special birthday treats will be served at our afternoon snack time. We strongly discourage exchanging birthday gifts at school. We also discourage the distribution of birthday party invitations at school, even if you plan to invite the entire class because small envelopes are easily misplaced and some-times don't get home with children resulting in misunderstandings and hurt feelings. We suggest you mail or e-mail your invitations - please see the school Birthday Policy for more detailed information.

## **24. Early Learning Academy Private Preschool Directory**

Upon request we will only provide families with a class roster listing only the children's first names to ensure privacy and safety are upheld. No other information will be given from any member of the school.

## **25. Field Trips**

Field trips are not only fun, but also educational for your child. In our Preschool programs, field trips are planned yearly occurrences. Please be assured that safety while on a field trip is of paramount concern. In order to maintain a high level of supervision during the trip and while at the destination we only take groups of manageable size at one time.

- Parents are always welcome to participate and may ride on one of our buses if space permits or drive their own vehicle.

- Field trip information will be given to you in advance.
- Depending upon the destination, there may be additional fees for field trips.
- Children must be at school and be ready to leave at the designated time.
- Children are not allowed to meet the class at the field trip location.

## 26. Holidays

Early Learning Academy will be closed in observance of the following holidays:

Labor Day	Thanksgiving
Winter Break	Spring Break
Memorial Day	Summer Vacation/Independence Day

In addition, we will be closed for staff development/preparation days. The dates will be announced 60 days in advance. There may be other infrequent special occasions when we close to allow staff to attend early childhood education conferences.

## 27. Fees and Tuition

Application and/or Registration Fees are non-refundable and non-transferable.

Application Fee: \$49.00 per child due at submission of the application - this is a onetime fee.

Registration Fee: \$250.00 per family due only once enrollment is accepted - this is a onetime fee.

Tuition: Tuition is due monthly on the 1st of each month. All checks should be made payable to ELA - Gulls Cove. ELA reserves the right to increase tuition and other charges upon one month's prior written notice. Tuition information is available at your request.

Late Payment Fee: A **10% (\$25.00)** late payment fee will be assessed to your account for unpaid balances due on the 1st. after the 5th., of the month.

Returned Check Fee: A **\$50.00 fee** will be charged for any returned check. This fee must be paid along with the replacement payment for the returned check, in cash or with a cashier's check or money order. The total amount must be paid in full in order for your child to attend ELA.

Absences: Tuition must be paid in full, without deduction for absences of any duration or for any cause, and without substitution of other days of attendance as "make-up" days. This is necessary due to staffing and operational costs that are incurred on the basis of fixed levels of enrollment. If your child is absent from ELA for two consecutive weeks without notification to the Director, your child will be considered withdrawn from our school.

Withdrawal: The obligation for full payment of tuition continues until the date indicated on the one year contract. Under extenuating circumstances a family can withdraw, such as job relocation, serious illness, divorce, etc. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis. The parent or guardian agrees to furnish ELA with at least sixty (60) days written notice of such

date of withdrawal, and failure to do so will result in forfeiture of the security deposit.

Early Learning Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, nationality or ethnic origin in the admission of children to our programs or in the administration of our policies and procedures.

## **28. Confidentiality Policy**

All personal records of children and families are kept in the strictest confidence. Information pertaining to admission, progress, health, or discharge of a child shall be confidential, unless we have written permission for disclosure from the parent or guardian.

## **29. Recommendation Policy**

The New Jersey State public schools and most private schools do not require a letter of recommendation for Pre-K, Kindergarten and Grade Levels.

Here at Early Learning Academy (E.L.A), our internal policies have been established to operate our school based on principles of serving fairly, our community. Little children learn at different rates and their learning is affected by many factors. Providing a letter of recommendation will be inaccurate and deceiving. We feel this will be defeating the purpose of sending a child to a school that may not meet a child's needs; in addition we reserve the right to protect a child in our school system and to prevent any potential liabilities.

Most schools, including E.L.A, make the decision to enroll a child based on our own assessment of each child. However, parents are welcome to submit the individual performance reports we provide during parent-teacher meetings.

## **30. Supplemental Information**

ELA administration reserves the right to exclude the new enrollment of or terminate the existing enrollment of a child at any time, including, but not limited to, children whose behavioral and educational needs cannot be met at ELA without fundamental alterations of or undue burden to our existing programs, procedures, or practices, as deemed by ELA, and/or children whose fees and/or tuition payments are in arrears.

This Parent Handbook contains general information concerning the policies and procedures of ELA. The policies and procedures described herein are not intended to be and should not be interpreted as a contract between Early Learning Academy and any other person. This information does not constitute a legal document, nor does it constitute a contract. It does not confer any legal rights, nor does it create any contractual obligations, expressed or implied.

ELA reserves the right to change, revise, supplement, or delete any of our policies and procedures, including all those covered herein, at any time. Changes will be effective on the dates determined by ELA.

***Please cut the bottom portion and return to school***

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I have read and understand the parent handbook given to me by ELA.

Parent/Guardian Name\_\_\_\_\_

Parent/Guardian Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_