



2019-2020

**FAMILY
HANDBOOK**

www.earlylearnersacademy.org

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Bloomington Public School's Community Education would like to take this opportunity to welcome your family to Early Learners Academy (ELA).

This family handbook outlines what you may expect from ELA and what our program expects from you in return. We hope you will find it to be helpful and complete. Feel free to ask for any additional information you may need. Please note, Early Learners Academy reserves the right to amend its policies or procedures at any time.

We are looking forward to serving you and your child in Early Learners Academy as well as introducing you to the Bloomington Public Schools. We hope your family's experience with us will be a positive one.

Philosophy and Position Statement

Early Learners Academy is designed to meet the needs of working families who need full-day childcare and desire an early education experience for their three-, four- or five-year old child.

Your child will be in the care of nurturing instructors who provide small group learning opportunities and focus on your child's social and emotional development. Early Learners Academy will support the educational development of your child and prepare him or her for the existing kindergarten curriculum in Bloomington Public Schools.

Students eligible for enrollment

Early Learners Academy accepts three-, four-, or five-year old children who are at least three years old by September 1 of the current school year (September through August of the following year) and independently toilet trained. All students must have their early childhood screening completed, as well as their immunization records updated and approved by the school district before the first day of attendance in ELA.

Re-enrollment for current families that wish to enroll their child for another school year in ELA will occur in the winter.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF PROGRAM, STUDENTS AND PARENTS/GUARDIANS

Program Responsibilities:

Provide a safe, positive and enriching environment, which meets the developmental needs of students.

- Provide caring staff who show genuine respect for students and provide positive role models
- Keep parents/guardians informed through regular newsletters, flyers and verbal communication

Student Responsibilities:

- Be friendly
- Be safe
- Be Responsible
- Have fun

Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:

- Observe the rules and policies of Early Learners Academy
- Share concerns with ELA instructors about your child's needs in the program
- Listen to concerns of ELA staff members about your child's behavior and work towards an agreeable solution to any problems
- Keep your child's file complete and up-to-date. This includes:

- * Immunization Form

- * Health History

- * Growth and Development Form

- * Emergency Contacts

- Contact your child's ELA site when he or she will not be in attendance
- Inform ELA staff, in writing, if someone else will be picking up your child
- Read handbook, billing documents and posted information at the site
- Abide by all contract obligations and keep financial account current

Bloomington Public Schools has a Respectful Workplace policy. It states: "Staff shall not engage in unprofessional or disrespectful behavior, or be subjected to unprofessional or disrespectful behavior from co-workers, parents/guardians, or people doing business with the District." The entire policy can be found on the district's website. Family members are expected to model respectful and positive behavior when working with program staff either in person, on

the phone, or via e-mail. Any family member treating a staff member unprofessionally or disrespectfully may have the child's contract terminated.

Parent/Guardian Involvement:

We encourage parents/guardians to visit the program, volunteer in the classroom, participate in special events, complete annual parent/guardian feedback surveys and share information whenever possible. Families are also encouraged to attend and participate in any school and district offered events. Please note, all volunteers must go through a district background check.

Communication and Conferences

Parents/Guardians have the opportunity to meet with the ELA instructors in a specially scheduled conference each fall and winter. Both conferences will include a written report from the ELA instructors on the status of your child's cognitive, physical, social and emotional development. Daily communication with your child's ELA instructors is desirable and additional conferences can be arranged if needed. Parents/Guardians can expect daily communication through posted lesson plans and information as well as verbal contact.

Questions and Concerns

If you have a question or concern regarding the Early Learners Academy program or staff person:

1. Immediately set up a time to discuss it with the ELA instructor.
2. If the issue is not resolved, discuss it with the on-site Youth and Family Coordinator (see phone numbers on last page).
3. If the problem is still not resolved, contact the Program Coordinator at 952-681-6117.

Written grievances are to be submitted to the Administrative Office.

PROGRAM COMPONENTS

Hours

Early Learners Academy sites are open Monday through Friday from 6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Class Size

Each classroom will have up to 20 children with a combination of Instructors and Activity Assistants. Children will be under adult supervision at all times and the staff to child ratio is 1:10.

Meals and Snack

Breakfast: Breakfast is provided every day that ELA is in session.

Lunch: Lunch is provided on days that the elementary school is in session. For all other days (non-school days, including the first week of the program), families should send a bag lunch and beverage for their child. Check with your site for the monthly menu.

Snack: An afternoon snack is provided every day that ELA is in session.

All food provided is included in the monthly tuition.

If your child has food allergies, please inform the Instructor.

Birthday Treats

In order to encourage healthy eating habits in our students, we encourage parents to bring **non-food items** to celebrate birthdays. Examples include: pencils, stickers, erasers, a box of crayons, etc. Healthy alternatives to sugary birthday treats may also be considered. Please check with your child's Instructor. Examples of healthy birthday snacks include: apples, bananas with fun stickers, Go-Gurt tubes or individual serving sizes of pre-packaged fruit cups.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is an important part of the student's day at ELA. Each school has an outdoor playground, which ELA will use every day the weather permits. Students who are well enough to be in school are well enough to be outdoors with the group. You can help your child enjoy this outdoor play by making sure he or she is dressed appropriately for the weather conditions. All outerwear should be labeled with your child's name.

Quiet Time

For all ELA students, quiet time will follow lunch as part of the daily schedule. Each student will be assigned a cot and may bring one blanket and/or stuffed animal from home for quiet time. The blanket must be labeled with his or her name and should be laundered weekly by a parent/guardian. All students are expected to rest during this time. Quiet activities are provided for the early risers.

Toys from Home

Toys should not be brought to Early Learners Academy unless specifically discussed with the instructor. Parent/Guardians will be notified when these special days are to occur. All appropriate articles brought from home should be labeled. We will not allow weapons or toys that encourage aggressive or violent play. Please keep in mind that ELA is not responsible for lost, stolen or broken toys or other belongings.

Clothing

We urge the students to dress in comfortable, self-help style play clothes. The students will spend time outdoors each day, so it is important for their clothes to be appropriate for the weather. **An extra change of clothing must be left at school in the event it is needed.**

Please put extra clothes (including socks and underwear) in a bag with your child's name on the outside. Each article of clothing must be marked with your child's name.

Toileting

Children must be independently toilet trained when they begin ELA. We are not staffed to exclusively attend to individual diapering/toileting needs. We realize some children are recently trained and may have an occasional accident, so please make sure your child has an extra change of clothes. Public Health regulations prohibit us from rinsing soiled clothing. Those clothes will be placed in a bag to be laundered at home.

Field Trips

Parents/guardians will be informed in advance if Early Learners Academy plans to travel off site. We will travel on Bloomington Public School buses, which allow students three years old and above to travel safely.

Early Childhood Screening

Screening helps identify children who may benefit from the early childhood services before they enter school. **Your child must be screened before attending ELA.** Screening is a free check of your child's vision, hearing, height, weight and development, as well as a review of his/her communication skills. Your child will be assessed in three important developmental areas: motor skills, concepts, and communication skills. This is not an IQ test. It does not rank children according to scores.

The purpose of the screening is early detection of factors that may interfere with a child's learning, growth, and development. Please call 952.681.6200 for more information and to schedule a screening appointment. Children must be screened in the district in which they will attend kindergarten.

SAMPLE DAILY SCHEDULE

Specific times and/or activities may vary by site.

6:30 a.m. Arrival & Ease Into the Day- As children arrive in the classroom, they may choose from a variety of activities. The classroom is set up in educational centers including books, dramatic play, blocks & construction, art, writing, sensory and computers. Items in these centers may change throughout the year to align with curricular themes. Children can play and learn through educational games, manipulatives and special activities.

8:30 Breakfast - The school's food service staff prepare the breakfast for children to eat in the lunchroom when the elementary school is in session. Check with your site for the breakfast menu. On non-school days, ELA will provide breakfast.

9:00 Gym/Outside - We go outside daily for recess on the school playground. If the weather does not permit us to go outside, we will use the gym for large motor development.

9:30 Morning Meeting/Hello Circle - Each day the instructor will lead a circle time that includes calendar activities, weather, sharing, books, movement and songs centered around the weekly theme.

10:00 Stations/Small Group Time - Students will be arranged into smaller groups according to age and skill so that each child can be challenged according to their level. During this time we will focus on literacy, writing, math, science, social studies and health activities that will coordinate with the weekly themes.

10:30 Child-Directed Active Learning - Activities similar to arrival time

11:00 Lunch - The school's food service staff prepare lunch for the students to eat in the lunchroom when the elementary school is in session. A lunch menu will be posted monthly for students. On non-school days, families are required to provide a bag lunch and beverage.

11:45 Art - Each day the students work on an art project using various mediums that correspond with the curricular theme.

12:15 Wind Down Time - Quieter activities such as yoga, book time, puzzles, etc. will be used to prepare our students for quiet time.

12:30 Quiet Time - Each student will be assigned a cot and may bring one blanket and/or comfort item from home to use during quiet time. Early risers and non-sleepers will be provided with a book or quiet activity after 30 minutes of quiet time.

2:00 Bathroom Break & Snack Time - All students will be required to try to use the bathroom following rest time. A snack will be provided for students in the classroom.

2:15 Journals & Book Time - Journal time provides emergent literacy practice related to themes.

2:30 Afternoon Meeting - The instructor will lead an afternoon meeting time that will include sharing, books, movement and songs centered around the classroom theme.

3:15 Outside/Gym Time - We go outside daily for recess on the school playground. If the weather does not permit us to go outside, we will use the gym for large motor development.

4:00-6:00 p.m. Child-Directed Learning and Departure – Students may choose from a variety of activities. The classroom is set up in educational centers including books, dramatic play, blocks & construction, art, writing, sensory and computers. Items in these centers may change throughout the year to align with the weekly themes. Children can play and learn through educational games, manipulatives and special themed activities.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Sign In/Out Procedures

Parents/guardians must sign your child in every morning and out every afternoon. You will sign via an electronic system which automatically time stamps your signature. Failure to comply may result in termination of your contract. *Parents/Guardians must sign in and out in the school's main office during school hours and abide by all visitor policies and procedures.*

Access Cards

In order to align Early Learners Academy security practices with the school district, we will be implementing new procedures for the program. Early Learners Academy parents/guardians (except at Westwood) will use a programmed electronic card to gain access to the school building during Before and After school hours (approximately 6:30 am-9:00 am & 3:20 pm-6:00 pm). Each site will have a designated door to enter. The access cards will only work on the designated door. Westwood Early Learners Academy will not use the access system, but instead will have a staff member monitoring the door and welcoming all guests. Families will enter those schools through the main door. During school hours all families must enter through the school's main office. A fee will be assessed for any lost or unreturned cards.

Authorizations

When you register your child for ELA, please name all persons authorized to pick up your child and anyone who is NOT allowed to pick up your child. In order for us to legally stop a non-custodial parent from taking a child, a copy of the current court order must be on file with the ELA site. Staff cannot physically stop a parent from taking a child at any time.

You must inform the staff in advance, preferably in writing, if someone other than a parent/guardian is to pick up your child. We ask that you remind the authorized person that we will ask for picture identification if we do not already know him or her. We will accept your child's verification regarding identification, if needed.

Absences

If your child will be absent from Early Learners Academy, please call your child's classroom by 9:00 a.m.

Late Pick-up Procedures

Early Learners Academy ends promptly at 6:00 p.m.

ELA procedures are as follows:

1. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute per child will be assessed beginning at 6:00 p.m. (according to our electronic sign in-out system).
2. If we have not heard from a parent/guardian by 6:15 p.m. the emergency contacts will be called.

3. If we have not heard from a parent/guardian by 7:00 p.m. and the emergency contacts cannot be reached we will notify the Bloomington Police Department.

Continued late pick up will result in termination of your contract.

It is understood that conditions beyond one's control exist (i.e. inclement weather). If these conditions arise you must notify the site as soon as possible *and* make arrangements for *someone else* to pick up your child. Late fees will be applied starting at 6:00 p.m.

SNOW DAYS/EMERGENCY CLOSING

Full Day Closing

If Bloomington Public Schools are closed all day due to severe weather, ELA will also be closed.

Early Dismissal

In the event of an early dismissal (school is released at 1:00 p.m., for example) all Youth and Family after-school programs will be canceled. This includes ELA, enrichment classes, etc.

ELA will call to inform you of a time in which you must pick up your child.

Cancellation of After-School Activities

In the event of cancellation of after-school activities, Early Learners Academy will close at 3:00 p.m. ELA staff will call you to come pick up your child immediately or notify your alternate emergency contact to pick up your child as soon as possible.

Closing Notification

Emergency closing information is available on WCCO Radio (830 AM), metro TV stations (WCCO, KSTP, KARE-11, KSTC, FOX 9), Bloomington Cable Channel 15, and at the Bloomington School website (www.bloomingtonschools.org).

Tuition, which encompasses any school closing, is not refundable.



BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT & ACCOMMODATIONS

ELA staff members teach children how to problem solve and use acceptable behavior to resolve conflicts. Staff model respectful and appropriate behavior. In the event of disruptive behavior that threatens the well-being of the child or other children, a child may “take a break” in another area of the classroom visible to staff. In the case of persistent, unacceptable behavior, the staff will observe and record the behavior and will meet with the parents to develop a behavior management plan. ELA may also utilize school staff when dealing with inappropriate behavior.

Biting Policy

When a child bites a classmate or staff member, parents/guardians will be notified in writing. After 2 occurrences, any biting incidents will result in immediate removal from the classroom for the remainder of the day. Parents/Guardians will be contacted to pick up their child without delay. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, the staff will contact the emergency contacts listed on the child’s emergency form. This policy is intended to ensure the safety of all Early Learners Academy students.

Behavior Management

When a child displays a pattern of consistent inappropriate behavior, ELA reserves the right to evaluate whether they can best be served by our program. ELA reserves the right to suspend any child based on school district policies. In the case of a suspension, a mandatory meeting will take place between the parent/guardian and staff before the child can return to the program. Tuition credit is not available for suspension from the program.

Special Needs

If your child needs a special accommodation, please call our Inclusion Liaison at 952-681-6105 to schedule a meeting. We will do our best to make appropriate accommodations.



Accommodation Process

Early Learners Academy is committed to providing a safe, healthy atmosphere for the children we serve. We will provide reasonable and appropriate accommodations to any child, within the existing ELA program. We are committed to working with families to determine appropriate accommodations. When a child displays a behavior, which jeopardizes the safety of themselves or others, the ELA instructor will contact the child's parent/guardian and request that, for the safety of their child and others, the child be removed from the program for the day. When a child has persistent difficulty participating in the existing ELA program, the following steps will be taken to promote their success:

1. The child's behavior will be observed and monitored by the ELA instructor, school and/or early childhood staff. Information will be gathered from the child, his or her family and school personnel.
2. A plan for inclusion and a timeline will be developed. All involved parties will be expected to sign, date and comply with the behavior plan. A signed plan is required before the child returns to the program. Changes will be made to the plan as determined to be necessary.
3. Occasionally, the existing ELA program will not be the best environment for the child. When all integration efforts have been exhausted within the existing timeline and integration has not been successful, the ELA team will evaluate the ability of the preschool program to accommodate the child. At that time, the ELA contract may be terminated.

Early Childhood Special Education

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) provides services for families with children from birth to 5 years who have been identified with a developmental delay. For children ages 3-5 years, services will take place in a preschool setting designed to meet your child's educational needs. There are a variety of supports and services available to assist you in meeting your child's needs. If you have specific concerns about your child's development, please speak with the ELA Instructor. Instructors will also let parents know about any concerns they have regarding your child's development or behavior in the classroom. Developmental assessments and ECSE services are conducted free of charge

MEDICAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

Immunization Record

A current and approved immunization record is required before your child begins in ELA. If a child's primary immunization series is not complete, the child's health care provider must sign the required waiver. The date of all immunizations must include month, day and year. Please

inform us of any immunizations your child receives after admission. We are required to keep our records up to date and submit annual reports to the Minnesota Department of Health.

Special Health Conditions

It is the parents'/guardians' responsibility to inform Early Learners Academy upon application, or at appropriate times, of any special health conditions/needs such as asthma, severe allergies, diabetes, seizures, heart conditions, etc. so that we can provide for appropriate care. Please notify the ELA instructor if your child is on any medication that might cause side effects.

Rules Regarding Illness and Injuries

If your child becomes ill or injured at school, the ELA staff members' duty is to provide first aid and to notify parents/guardians. *Please keep emergency information up to date.*

If a child becomes ill during the day, we will notify the parents/guardians or the authorized alternates listed as emergency contacts, to immediately pick up the child. We will isolate the child from the other students as best as we can and continue to comfort and monitor him/her. Parents/guardians are urged to come as quickly as possible to pick up their child. The child's health care provider may also be contacted.

Bloomington Public Schools and Early Learners Academy are committed to providing an environment in which students can thrive. Please keep your child home if they have any of the following:

1. A temperature above 100 degrees orally.
2. An upset stomach with vomiting and/or diarrhea.
3. A contagious disease or condition that has not had sufficient treatment to reduce the health risk to others.
4. Chicken pox, until all blisters have dried into scabs (usually 6-10 days after rash onset).
5. Contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from eye until 24 hours after treatment starts.
6. A bacterial infection, such as strep throat or impetigo, which has not completed 24 hours of antimicrobial therapy.
7. Contagious ringworm or scabies.
8. Unexplained lethargy.
9. An unidentified rash or a rash from a contagious condition.
10. An inflamed throat or significant respiratory distress.
11. Discomfort such that the student is not able to participate in the program activities.

Please notify ELA staff if your child develops a communicable disease. When a child has been diagnosed with a contagious condition we will notify the health authorities and follow their recommendations regarding notifying other families of children in the program. Information about confirmed contagious diseases will be posted near the sign in/out area in the ELA classroom.

A child may return to Early Learners Academy after:

1. Temperature is normal for 24 hours.
2. 24 hours after the last occurrence of vomiting and/or diarrhea.
3. 24 hours of treatment.

If your child is unable to attend, please notify the ELA classroom by 9:00am.

Accidents/Injuries

Parents/Guardians must provide the name, address and phone number of a relative or friend who could be contacted in case of an emergency. In the event of an injury or illness, a trained ELA staff or school nurse will administer first aid. All ELA staff and instructors are required to be certified in First Aid and CPR. In an emergency, 911 will be called.

If a student is involved in a *minor injury* that requires first aid or in an accident that the parent/guardian should be aware of, our ELA staff will provide a written report. We ask that the parent/guardian sign the report, keeping one copy and leaving the original at the site.

If a student is involved in a *serious injury*, which may need medical attention, an ELA staff member or school nurse will call the parent/guardian immediately to arrange an immediate pick up and visit to the doctor.

If a student is involved in an *emergency situation*, ELA staff will call 911 and then contact a parent/guardian. After 911 is called, it is up to the medical emergency team to decide what action will be taken. The parent/guardian will be responsible for all medical charges.

Emergency Medical Care

In the event of a severe illness or injury, staff will call an ambulance to transport the child to the nearest medical facility. Parents/guardians or alternate contact(s) listed will be contacted as soon as possible. Unless there are unusual circumstances, ELA staff will not transport students in their own car.

Medications

We are not permitted by law to give any medication, including over the counter medication, without a doctor's order. ELA staff can administer medication if all of the following conditions are met:

1. A medical permission form signed by the parent/guardian and doctor. Forms are available upon request, or a doctor's permission may be faxed to the school.
2. Medicine is brought in the original container. Your child's name, directions and dosage must be clearly marked. If needed, ask your pharmacist to divide the medication between two bottles; one for home and one for ELA.
3. ELA staff are informed of any possible side effects.

Child Abuse or Neglect

We are required by law as mandated reporters to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

Registration Fees

A non-refundable registration fee of \$60 per student is required when registering.

Program Fees

Charges are generated from the online account. Payment is due in *advance* of service. Full payment is due whether or not your child is in attendance. *No refunds or deductions are made for absences including illness.* Payments may be made in two equal installments, due by the 5th and the 20th of the month.

Statements

Statements may be viewed or printed via your online account and provide the following month's account activity and the balance due on the 5th and/or 20th. They can be used to verify charges and payments and as receipts for pre-tax reimbursement plans.

Payments

Check or Money Order- Make payable to ISD #271 and either drop off or mail to our Administrative Office.

Credit Card- (VISA, MasterCard, or Discover) Families may sign up for once a month automatic credit card payments via your online account.

Cash- If you wish to pay your account in cash, please deliver to our Administrative Office so that our staff can provide you with a written receipt.

Payments are not accepted at the ELA sites

Request for Receipts

Families can manage their own accounts online at any time. This includes printing any necessary receipts.

Vacation Credit

Vacation credit is available with a one-week *written* notice to the Administrative Office, once per school year for the equivalent of the weekly contracted schedule, up to 5 consecutive days.

Children may not attend the program during the requested time off. If a child arrives, you will be charged, and the vacation credit will be voided. Please call 952-681-6125 or email dsimkins@isd271.org with questions.

Late Payments

Early Learners Academy is a non-profit, self-supporting organization and needs your prompt payment to meet expenses. There is a \$20 late fee for installments received after the 20th of each month. Late fees apply to any unpaid balance. ELA reserves the right to discontinue or limit service due to failure to meet payment obligations as defined by the contract. Accounts in default are placed with a collection agency. Clients with defaulted accounts incur all costs relative to collection, including legal fees. Families who have been in collection with ISD #271 will be required to use a credit card for their ELA account.

NSF Checks

Bloomington Public Schools uses PayTek to electronically recover any insufficient fund checks returned to the school district along with any state allowed fee. If repayment is not made within 5 business days of notification, Early Learners Academy services may be suspended. To reach PayTek directly, please call customer service at 1-800-641-9998. Families will be required to go to credit card payment if they have previously given ISD #271 an NSF check, for any future transactions.

Withdrawal from the Program

Withdrawal from the program requires:

1. A one-week written notice to the Administrative Office at dsimkins@isd271.org
2. A telephone call to the Billing Department (952-681-6128) confirming your intent to withdraw. The weekly program fee will be charged for the one week following the date in which the Billing Department receives written notice. *Payment in full is due upon withdrawal.*

DIRECTORY

General Information: 952-681-6125

Billing Information: 952-681-6128

Billing: 952.681.6128 FAX: 952.681.6101

Administrative Office

Hours: 7:30 a.m. - 4:00 p.m.

Community Education Suite 200

2575 West 88th Street

Bloomington, MN 55431

Hillcrest Elementary

9301 Thomas Road

Bloomington, MN 55431

Phone: 952-681-5307

Poplar Bridge Elementary

8401 Palmer Road

Bloomington, MN 55437

Phone: 952-681-5407

Westwood Elementary

3701 West 108th Street

Bloomington, MN 55431

Phone: 952-806-7207