



2020-21
Family
Handbook

WWW.EARLYLEARNERSACADEMY.ORG

DIRECTORY

General Information, Registration & Billing

Email: ELA@isd271.org

Phone: 952.681.6128

Administrative Office

Hours: 7:30am - 4:30pm
Community Education Campus – Suite 200
2575 West 88th Street
Bloomington, MN 55431

Hillcrest Elementary

9301 Thomas Road
952.681.5307

Normandale Hills Elementary

9501 Toledo Ave S
952.806.7007

Poplar Bridge Elementary

8401 Palmer Road
952.681.5407

Westwood Elementary

3701 West 108th Street
952.806.7207

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**BLOOMINGTON PUBLIC SCHOOL'S COMMUNITY EDUCATION
WOULD LIKE 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. Feel free to ask for any additional information you may need. Please note, ELA 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 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 for working families who need full-day childcare and desire an early education experience for their three-, four- or five-year old. We offer 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 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. 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.

Re-enrollment for current participating families 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, email and verbal communication

Student Responsibilities:

- Be friendly
- Be honest
- Be safe
- Be responsible
- Have fun!



Parent/Guardian Responsibilities:

- Observe the rules and policies of ELA and Bloomington Public Schools
- Share concerns with ELA staff members
- 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 online account 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, emails and messages posted 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 (bloomingtonschools.org, School Board policy 457). Family members are expected to model respectful and positive behavior when working with program staff either in person, on the phone, or via email. Any family member treating a staff member unprofessionally or disrespectfully may result in termination of the child's contract.

Early Childhood Screening

Screening helps identify children who may benefit from 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.

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 school and district offered events.

Communication and Conferences

Parents/Guardians have the opportunity to meet with the ELA instructors in a 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. 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.
3. If the issue is still not resolved, contact the Program Manager at 952-681-6117.

Written grievances are to be submitted to the Administrative Office.

PROGRAM INFORMATION

Hours

Early Learners Academy sites are open Monday through Friday from 6:30am to 6:00pm.

Class Size

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

Meals and Snack - *All food is included in the monthly tuition unless noted*

Breakfast is provided every day that ELA is in session.

Lunch is provided on days that the elementary school is in session. On non-school days (including the first week of the program), children need to bring their own lunch and beverage. Check with your site for the monthly menu.

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

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

Birthday Treats

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

Outdoor Play

Outside play is an integral part of children's developmental learning, health and well-being. Outdoor play is an important part of the student's day at ELA. Each school has an outdoor playground, which ELA will use when the weather permits. Students must be prepared to go outdoors every day with the group. You can help your child enjoy this play time by making sure they are dressed appropriately for the weather conditions. All outerwear should be labeled with your child's name.



Quiet Time

Quiet time will follow lunch as part of the daily schedule for all children. Each student is assigned a cot and may bring one blanket and/or comfort item from home for quiet time. The blanket must be labeled with their name and brought home to be laundered weekly by a family member. 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 items brought from home should be labeled. We do not allow weapons or toys that encourage aggressive or violent play. ELA is not responsible for lost, stolen or broken personal belongings.

Clothing

Children's play is often active and messy. Students should dress in play clothes they can manage by themselves. Please leave a change of clothing (including underwear and socks) at school in the event it is needed. Mark each article of clothing with your child's name and put them in a single labeled bag.

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.



Sample Daily Schedule - *Specific times and/or activities may vary by site*

6:30-8:30am - Arrival & Child-Directed Learning

As children arrive 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 activities 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.

8:30am - Breakfast

The school's food service staff prepare 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.

9:00am - Gym/Outside

For large motor development we go outside daily for recess on the school playground. If the weather does not allow for outdoor play we will use the gym.

9:30am - Morning Meeting/Hello Circle

Each day the instructor leads a circle time that includes calendar activities, weather, sharing, books, movement and songs centered around the weekly theme.

10:00am - 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.

10:30am - Child-Directed Active Learning

Activities similar to arrival time

11:00am - 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 is posted monthly for students. On non-school days children need to bring lunch and beverage.

11:45am - Art

Each day the students work on an art project using various mediums that correspond with the curricular theme.

12:15pm - Wind Down Time

Quieter activities such as yoga, book time, puzzles, etc. will be used to prepare our students for quiet time.

12:30pm - Quiet Time

See page 7

2:00pm - 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. Families are welcome to review snack choices for allergy concerns, and are free to send an alternative snack with their child.

2:15pm - Journals & Book Time

Journal time provides literacy practice related to themes.

2:30pm - Afternoon Meeting

The instructor will lead an afternoon meeting time that includes sharing, books, movement and songs centered around the classroom theme.

3:15pm - Outside/Gym Time

Same as morning time

4:00-6:00pm - Child-Directed Learning and Departure

Same as morning time

Field Trips

When you enroll your child in ELA, you are giving permission for them to participate in off-site field trips. The program will inform you in advance of all field trips that occur. Transportation for field trips will be provided through the district, though occasional off-site walking trips may also occur. Bloomington School's buses allow students age three years and above to travel safely. Field trip costs are included in ELA tuition. All children are expected to accompany the group on the field trip as alternate care is not available. All emergency/medical procedures will be followed. Picking up and dropping off from a field trip is not allowed.

ATTENDANCE POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Sign In/Out Procedures

A parent/guardian must sign your child in every morning and out every afternoon via an electronic system, which automatically timestamps your signature. Failure to comply may result in termination of your contract.



Access Cards (for Hillcrest and Poplar Bridge families)

ELA parents/guardians use a programmed electronic card to gain access to the school building during ELA program hours before and after school. Each site will have a designated door to enter, and the access cards will only work on that door. During school hours families must enter through the school's main office.



Up to two access cards will be issued to families. There is a \$25 fee for a third card and replacements of lost cards. All cards must be returned on your last attendance day or at the end of the school year contract to avoid a \$25 per card penalty fee.

Normandale Hills and Westwood families do not use the access system, but instead have a staff member monitoring the main door and welcoming all guests. During school hours families must enter through the school's main office.

Authorized Pickups

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 them up. 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 at 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 an authorized pickup will take your child. We ask you to remind the authorized person that site staff may ask for picture identification if we do not already know him or her. We will accept your child's verification regarding identification if needed.

Late Pick-up Procedure

ELA ends promptly at 6:00 PM. Our procedures are as follows:

1. A late fee of \$1.00 per minute per child (maximum amount of \$60.00 per child, per day) will be assessed beginning at 6:00 pm (according to our electronic sign in/out system).
2. If we have not heard from a parent/guardian by 6:15 PM, the emergency contacts will be called.
3. If we have not heard from a parent/guardian or emergency contact by 7:00 PM we will notify the Bloomington Police Department.



It is understood that conditions beyond one's control exist (inclement weather, etc.). If these conditions arise you must notify the site as soon as possible to make arrangements for *someone else* to pick up your child. **Continued late pick up will result in termination of your contract.**

Days Closed

The ELA program will be closed on the following days:

- Labor Day
- Thanksgiving Day and the day after
- Christmas Eve and Christmas Day (or observed dates)
- New Year's Eve Day and New Year's Day (or observed dates)
- Martin Luther King, Jr. Day
- President's Day
- Spring Holiday (Good Friday)
- Memorial Day



Please refer to the online ELA calendar as specific dates vary.

Weather-Related or Emergency School Closings

Bloomington Public Schools weather procedures aim to minimize the loss of instructional time while being mindful of student and staff safety. School will be closed only when extreme weather poses a risk to students and staff. The Superintendent makes every effort to announce this decision no later than 5:30am. School closures are communicated via:

- The district website (bloomingtonschools.org)
- Facebook (Bloomington Public Schools)
- Twitter (@District271)
- WCCO radio (830am)
- Local TV stations (WCCO, KSTP, KARE, Fox 9, Bloomington Channel 15)



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

Early Dismissal

Every attempt will be made to avoid closing school once classes are in session. The district may decide to have an early release (school is dismissed prior to normal end time), or cancel after-school and/or evening activities on the basis of current or predicted weather conditions. In the event of an early dismissal all Youth and Family after-school programs (ELA, enrichment classes, Kids' SAFARI, etc.) will be canceled. ELA staff will call to inform you what time you must pick up your child.

Cancellation of After-School Activities

If the district cancels all afternoon programming, ELA will close at 3:00 p.m. 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.

There may be times that some, but not all afterschool activities are canceled. In the event that ELA remains open on these days, staff will not contact you. The site will remain open until 6:00pm as usual.

Please note that fees for any school closing are not refundable.

BEHAVIOR MANAGEMENT & ACCOMMODATIONS

We maintain appropriate behavior through clear consistent guidelines, consequences and positive staff interaction. When dealing with inappropriate behavior we utilize parental assistance and school staff. If a child displays a pattern of consistent inappropriate behavior, ELA reserves the right to evaluate whether the child can best be served by our program, and to suspend any child based on program or school district policies or inappropriate behavior. In the case of a suspension, a discussion and/or mandatory meeting will take place between the parent, child (if appropriate) and staff before the child can return to our program. Tuition credit or refund is not available for suspension from our program.

Biting Policy - *This policy is intended to ensure the safety of all ELA students*

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 of the child from the classroom for the remainder of the day. Parents/Guardians will be contacted to immediately pick up their child. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, the staff will contact the emergency contacts listed on the child's emergency form.



Early Childhood Special Education

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) services are available to students in Bloomington from birth to age seven. While students within this age range often qualify for services under the Developmental Delay category, eligibility can be based upon having a disability that falls under one of the other 12 areas described in Minnesota special education regulations. For children ages 3-5 years, services will take place in a preschool setting designed to meet your child's education needs. ECSE services are 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. Program staff will also let parents know about any concerns regarding your child's development or behavior observed in the classroom. Developmental assessments and ECSE services are provided free of charge.

Special Needs

If your child needs an accommodation, please call one of our Inclusion Coordinators at 952-681-6105 or 952-681-6120. We will do our best to accommodate these requests.

Accommodation Process

Early Learners Academy is committed to providing a safe, healthy atmosphere for the students we serve. We will provide all reasonable and appropriate accommodations to any student within the existing ELA program. We are committed to working with the student's family to determine appropriate accommodations. If a student displays a behavior which jeopardizes the safety of themselves or others the staff will contact the student's parent/guardian and request that the student be removed from the program for a predetermined amount of time. When a student has persistent difficulty being a part of the existing ELA program, the following steps will be taken to promote their success:

1. The student's behavior will be observed and monitored by ELA and school staff. Information will be gathered from the student, his or her family and school personnel.
2. A plan and timeline for inclusion will be developed. All involved parties will be expected to sign, date and comply with the behavior plan. A child may be removed from the program until a signed plan is in place. Changes will be made to the plan if determined to be necessary.
3. Occasionally, the existing ELA program will not be the best environment for the student. If all integration efforts have been exhausted within the existing timeline and have not been successful, the ELA accommodation team will evaluate the ability of the program to serve the student. If it is determined that the program can no longer accommodate the student the child's contract will be cancelled.

MEDICAL INFORMATION AND POLICIES

Immunization Record

ELA must maintain or have access to records detailing the child's current immunizations or applicable exemption prior to the first day of attendance. Any student not enrolled in a Bloomington district school must submit immunization information to the ELA office prior to the first day of attendance. 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 parent's/guardian's responsibility to inform ELA upon enrollment or at appropriate times of any special health conditions and/or needs such as asthma, severe allergies, diabetes, seizures, heart conditions, etc. so that we can provide for appropriate care. Please notify staff if your child is on any medication that might cause side effects. Parents/guardians are welcome to review snack choices for allergy concerns and are free to send an alternative snack with their child.

Rules Regarding Illness

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

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



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

A student may return to ELA after:

Temperature is normal for 24 hours.

24 hours after the last occurrence of vomiting and/or diarrhea.

24 hours of treatment at home or under a physician's care.

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.

Accident Reports

If a student has a minor injury that requires first aid you will be notified when you pick up your child. If a student receives a serious injury, which may require medical attention, the staff will call the parent/guardian to arrange an immediate pick up.

If a student is involved in an emergency situation, the staff will call 911 and a parent/guardian or an alternate listed on the child's account will be contacted as soon as possible. The emergency response personnel will evaluate needs and/or treatment, which may include transport to a medical facility per their agency protocols. The parent/guardian will be responsible for all charges for medical care.

Injuries

ELA makes every effort to maintain a safe environment. Staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. If your child becomes injured at ELA the staff member's first duty is to provide first aid, second is to notify parents/guardians. Emergency information must be completed online when registering for ELA. Please keep this information current.



Medications

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

1. A medical permission form is signed by the parent/guardian and doctor and on file with ELA. Forms are available upon request and may be faxed to the site when completed.
2. Medication is brought in the original container clearly marked with your child's first and last name, directions and dosage.

We are not permitted to give expired medication. Any unused medication will be returned to the parent or guardian or destroyed.

Child Abuse or Neglect

School district employees are mandated reporters and are required by law 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 through the online account and payment in full is due in *advance* of service. Payments may be made in two equal installments, due by the 5th and the 20th of the month. No refunds or credits are given for absence, including illness.

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 through your online account.

Cash- Cash payments must be made at our Administrative Office so that our staff can provide you with a written receipt.

Payments are not accepted at the ELA sites.

Statements and Receipts

Statements and receipts 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.

Vacation Credit

Vacation credit is available with a one-week written notice to the Administrative Office, once per school year and once per summer for up to 5 consecutive days within a two-week time frame. Children may not attend the program during the requested time off. If your child arrives you will be charged at the drop-in rate, and the vacation credit will be voided.

Late Payments

ELA is a non-profit, self-supporting organization and needs your prompt payment to meet expenses. There is a \$20 late fee for payments received after the 20th of each month and are applied 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 and collection agency fees. Families who have been in collection with Community Education 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 a \$30 state allowed fee. If repayment is not made within 5 business days of notification, ELA services may be suspended. To reach PayTek directly please call customer service at 1.800.641.9998. Families will be required to use a credit card for payment for any future transactions if they have previously given ISD #271 a NSF check.

Withdrawal from the Program

Withdrawal from the program requires a one-week written notice via email to the Administrative Office at ELA@isd271.org or postal mail. 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.*

