

John I. Dawes Early Learning Center

Parent Handbook 2023-2024

38 Gordons Corner Road
Manalapan, NJ 07726



Melissa Foy, Principal

Rebecca Fittipaldi, Assistant Principal

Phone: 732-786-2830

Fax: 732-786-2840

District Website: www.mersnj.us

We are looking forward to an exciting school year full of new experiences and learning opportunities. Children learn best when the home and school form a partnership in the learning process and support each other. Our goal is to make this initial educational experience positive and valuable for your child. We hope your child has a happy and successful school year!

This handbook provides important information about the operations of our school. Please read through the handbook and review the contents with your child.

SCHOOL DAY

The **preschool** school hours are as follows:

	Regular Day	4-Hour Day Dismissal	90 Minute Delay
AM Preschool	10:00 AM- 12:15 PM	10:00 AM- 11:15 AM	11:30 AM- 1:20 PM
PM Preschool	12:45 PM- 3:00 PM	11:15 AM- 12:30 PM	1:20 PM- 3:00 PM
Full-Day Preschool	10:00 AM- 3:00 PM	10:00 AM- 12:30 PM	11:30 AM- 3:00 PM

The **kindergarten** school hours are as follows:

	Regular Day	4-Hour Day Dismissal	90 Minute Delay
Kindergarten at CM	8:10 AM- 2:30 PM	8:10 AM- 12:10 PM	9:40 AM- 2:30 PM
Kindergarten at ELC	9:20 AM- 3:40 PM	9:20 AM- 1:20 PM	10:50 AM- 3:40 PM

SCHOOL OFFICE

As in most schools, the Main Office is the heart of our organization. Information travels to and from our office constantly and quickly. Our secretaries, Mrs. Eve Scheck and Mrs. Gina Grande, work hard to ensure that our office is not only efficient, but also helpful to our students, staff and parents. Many common questions can be answered through our website or our handbook. If other questions arise throughout the course of the year, please contact the teacher or staff member directly via email or voicemail. Of course, our office staff will be happy to assist you as well. We can be reached at **732-786-2830. School office hours are 8:00 AM- 4:00 PM.**

Principal	Mrs. Melissa Foy
Assistant Principal	Mrs. Rebecca Fittipaldi
School Secretaries	Mrs. Gina Grande Mrs. Eve Scheck
School Counselor/Anti-Bullying Specialist	Mrs. Jill Berlin LoGatto (732-786-2757)
School Nurse	Mrs. Maria Milazzo (press 3 when prompted)
Attendance Line	Press 2 when prompted

HOW TO EMAIL A STAFF MEMBER

Most staff members can be emailed by first initial, last name, and district address. For example, John Doe may be emailed by entering jdoe@mersnj.us into the address line. For our newer staff members, you need to use their full name in the address line, such as johndoe@mersnj.us. You may also contact every administrator and teacher through voicemail. Simply follow the menu after dialing the school's main number.

Note: If you experience difficulty reaching a staff member via email, or receive a notice that you have been blocked by our server, please send an email to emailproblems@mersnj.us explaining the issue.

PARENT DROP OFF/PICK-UP

The Manalapan-Englishtown School District provides bussing for ALL students and everyone is encouraged to ride the school bus on a daily basis. Parents and guardians may, however, drive their children to school. If you drive your child to school, you may drop him/her off at the following times:

Preschool:

AM & Full Day- 10:00 AM
PM- 12:45 PM

Kindergarten:

Clark Mills- 8:10 AM
ELC- 9:20 AM

There is a designated area for parent drop off. School personnel are present and will make sure your child enters the school safely. Please remain in the car until you see an adult. If your child arrives after these times, you must park in a parking space and bring your child to the main office of the Early Learning Center for a late pass. **Do not leave your car unattended in the drop off area. This is a safety issue.**

Parents/guardians picking students up at the end of the day must send a note to the teacher that day or contact the main office. Do not use the visitor management system for parent pick-up. If you pick your child up every day or on a specific day of each week (for example every Monday to attend Karate) one note is sufficient for the entire year.

Parents/guardians picking up students at the end of the day must come to door **A5** on the left-hand side of the building when looking at the ELC to sign out your child. **Kindergarten students running on Clark Mills school hours will be picked up at door D4 in the back of Clark Mills School by the gym if you are picking up at dismissal time.** If you are picking your child up at any other time, please come to the main office of the ELC. Students may also be picked up by an authorized person designated by the parent or guardian. In the case of divorced or separated parents, the non-custodial parent must have the permission of the custodial parent to pick up the student.

The custodial parent has discretion to give permission to another person (ex. babysitter/ family member) to pick up the child from school. The non-custodial parent may not prohibit the other parent from doing so. Accordingly, the school district may release students to those persons whom the custodial parent has designated. In the case of joint legal custody, the parent who may designate who may pick up children is the parent who has residential custody on that day of the week, as specified in the divorce judgment. In cases not described above, please contact the school office for further clarification.

Please do not tell your child that you “might” pick them up from school because it causes a great deal of confusion for our young children and the school. If the school does not have a note indicating that the student will be picked up, the student will be sent home on the bus. In an emergency, a parent must advise the school by a phone call to the school office that a request is being made not to place a child on the bus, and the student will be held in the main office for parent/guardian pick up.

Please note that when picking up a child from school, you must park in a parking space. The parent drop-off section is not for parking! In addition, all adults must present photo identification in order to take a child home. No exceptions will be made. We appreciate your understanding and cooperation!

PAPERLESS COMMUNICATION

The ELC is a paperless school! At the ELC, we no longer rely on paper communication, but we will provide our parents with instant information through email and our website. All of our school correspondence is placed on our school website in a backpack that you can view on-line. If you provided an email address in Genesis, you will automatically receive our email notifications. To access the backpack, go to <https://www.mersnj.us/elc> and follow the link at the top of the page.

In order to maintain a proper educational environment and keep our school, staff, and students free of danger and disruption, we have developed the following handbook, which includes the code of conduct for our school. Please understand that the rules you are about to read in this handbook/code of conduct supplement our broad, discretionary authority to maintain safety, order and discipline inside the school zone. The rules/policies contained within this handbook support, but do not limit, our authority. In addition, please note that the code and the aforementioned authority extend to ALL who enter the school zone and/or attend school-sponsored events.

ABSENCES

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 to attend school regularly in accordance with the laws of the State. In accordance with the provisions of N.J.A.C. 6A:16-7.6, the district has adopted Policy and Regulation 5200 regarding student attendance. Please see the complete version of the policy for details regarding student absences.

When a student is absent from school, the parent/guardian is required to call the attendance line (732-786-2830 and press 2) or the school nurse to inform her of the reason for the absence. Upon the student's return to school after an absence, the parent/guardian must send the nurse a note that includes the student's name, date(s) and reason for absence, as well as the signature of the parent/guardian.

Late to School

Students who arrive in their classrooms ten minutes after the start of school time are considered to be tardy. Students who are tardy MUST report to the Main Office for a late pass before going to the classroom. According to Board Policy 5210, the Board of Education believes that promptness is an important element of school attendance. Students who are late to school miss essential portions of the instructional program and create disruptions in the academic process for themselves and other students.

Procedure for Excessive Tardiness

Tardiness is defined as arriving late to school (ten minutes after the start of school).

- At 5th tardy, a letter from administration will be sent to parent/guardian and placed in the student's file.
- At 10th tardy, a second letter from administration will be sent to parent/guardian and placed in the student's file; and the parent/guardian will be contacted by an administrator.
- At 10+ tardies, at the discretion of the building administrator, a consequence may be assigned to your child.

Attendance in School – After-School Activity

To attend or to participate in an after-school or evening activity, the student must attend a full day of school that day. Students who are on a school suspension (whether in-school or out-of-school suspension) may not participate in any aspect of an after-school activity during the day(s) of the suspension.

ACADEMIC ETHICS – BOARD POLICY #5701

Pupils are expected to be honest in all of their academic work. This means that they will not engage in any of the following acts:

- Cheating on examinations, including but not limited to the non-authorized use of books or notes; the use of crib sheets; copying from other students' papers; exchanging information with other students orally, in writing, or by signals; obtaining copies of the examination illegally and other similar activities.
- Plagiarism is not permitted in term papers, themes, essays, reports, images, take-home exams, and other academic work. Plagiarism is defined as stealing or use without acknowledgment of the ideas, words, formulas, textual materials, on-line services, computer programs, etc. of another person, or in any way presenting the work of another person as one's own.
- Falsifications, including forging signatures, altering answers after they have been graded, the insertion of answers after the fact, the erasure of grader's markings, and other acts that allow for falsely taking credit.

Pupils found guilty of academic dishonesty, may be subjected to a full range of penalties including, but not limited to, reprimand and loss of credit for all of the work that is plagiarized.

ACCIDENT REPORTS

If a student is hurt on the bus, in the school building or classroom, as well as school grounds, it is **IMPORTANT** that students report their injury to the bus driver, safety assistant, teacher or nurse **immediately**.

BEFORE/AFTER SCHOOL CARE FOR KINDERGARTEN STUDENTS

For information about before and after-care programs, please refer to the school website.

BULLYING

The Manalapan-Englishtown School District has adopted policy 5512.01 on harassment, intimidation and bullying that may be accessed on the district website. A proactive series of lessons are presented to students each year beginning in kindergarten. The lessons focus on recognizing bullying behaviors as well as learning how to handle bullying situations. Students are educated about when they should use an "I-Message" (using their words instead of their hands) to express how they are feeling and stand up for themselves and when it is necessary to get assistance from an adult immediately. Our staff is committed to educating our students about bullying. More detailed information about the anti-bullying policy is available on our district website: www.mersnj.us.

CELL PHONES/SMART WATCHES/OTHER DEVICES/TOYS

Cell phones/smart watches must be turned off and placed in a backpack during the instructional day and on the school bus. Cell phones/smart watches that interfere with instruction and violate the "off and away" policy may be confiscated. The entire policy can be viewed on the district website at www.mersnj.us.

A review of Board Policy 5516- Student Use of Remotely Activated or Activating Communication Devices, Pagers, Cellular Telephones and Other Devices states that, "The Board of Education assumes no responsibility in any circumstances whatsoever for the loss, destruction or theft if any cellular phones, remotely activating paging device or similar device that is brought to school at any time or to any extracurricular or after school activity."

Use of personal gaming devices, iPods, laser pens, and any other electronic devices are not permitted in school or anywhere on school property, including the school bus. Toys are not permitted in school unless they are for a school assignment or event and the classroom teacher has granted permission. This rule is to protect the property of the students and preserve the educational environment in the school. Lost personal property is not the responsibility of the school district.

DISTRICT BUILDING ENTRY PROCEDURES

If you need to come to the school for any reason, you should log onto the visitor management system (directions will be given out separately). Please call the office or send in a note for parent pick-up. You do not need to utilize the visitor management system for this. When you arrive at the school you will be asked to ring the buzzer and state your name and the purpose of your visit. Once you report to the main office, office personnel will ask for your driver's license. This license will be scanned and checked across a criminal database. This will allow us to better monitor who is in our building and to flag any other issues that may arise. You will be given a visitor's pass that has your picture on it. On your way out of the building, you will then report to the main office to return your visitor's pass. This process has been established to better ensure the safety of students, staff, and parents that are in the building. It is imperative that you ALWAYS sign out when concluding your visit.

EMERGENCY

If a student becomes sick or hurt at school, the nurse will get in touch with their parent/guardian, and he/she will be responsible for providing transportation home. Parents must make arrangements in advance (Emergency Contacts) if they cannot be reached. **Please advise all emergency contacts that they will be required to produce proper ID before a student will be released to their care.** The school nurse may give first aid only, which is "immediate and temporary treatment."

EMERGENCY DRILLS

For the safety of the children, staff and visitors, emergency drills such as fire, lockdown, evacuation and shelter-in-place will be practiced routinely throughout the year. A letter will be backpacked to all parents/guardians at the conclusion of each safety drill.

EMERGENT/EARLY CLOSINGS

In the event schools are to be closed or there is a delayed opening due to inclement weather, our phone chain will be activated immediately. Special announcements will also be made via the following:

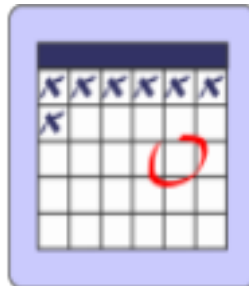
- News 12 NJ, Channels 4, 5 & 7
- District website at www.mersnj.us
- District phone line 732-786-2555 (recorded messages during appropriate situations)

Note: We will consider a delayed opening if hazardous road conditions and/or poor visibility exist. Please refer to the delayed opening times. On rare occasions, children will be bussed home early to avoid hazardous traffic conditions, unexpected storms, or for other unexpected emergencies. All parents will be notified via the district's automated phone notification system.

Please make sure that the phone numbers are accurate in our records. If you are aware of such weather conditions and have not received a call, please reference one of the announcement sites listed above. Keep in mind that road conditions and visibility are major factors in our decision making, more so than the number of inches of snow. Therefore, you should check a closing site at the slightest sign of snow or freezing weather. It is important that your child is familiar with your procedures for days with an early closing.

Please note that all pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students must be met at the bus stop by a parent/guardian or authorized representative. If a parent/guardian is not present when the bus arrives, the bus driver will contact the transportation department and continue with the remainder of the route. The transportation department will attempt to contact the parents. If a parent is reached, the driver will return to the bus stop to drop off the child after the rest of the route is completed. If transportation is unsuccessful in reaching a parent, the child will be returned to the Early Learning Center's main office. The child will then need to be picked up at the school.

Please review the school calendar (included in this handbook and posted on the district's website) carefully for early dismissal days (noted as 4 hour days), as well as keeping informed about emergent/inclement weather dismissals. If you do not want your child to take the bus on early dismissal days, you must send a note to your child's teacher, and the students will be brought to the parent pick-up line. In emergencies, please call the school at 732-786-2830.



HEALTH OFFICE GUIDELINES

Our school nurse is available to provide nursing services and emergency health care for pupils as per Board of Education policy. In order to maintain a healthy environment for all students, we request that you comply with the following guidelines:

- Please do not give your child Tylenol, etc. and send them to school. If a child has a fever, even if he/she takes Tylenol, he/she is still contagious.
- If your child has vomited at bedtime or in the morning before school, please keep him/her home at least 24 hours.
- The length of absence after a child has been diagnosed with strep throat is 24 hours after the start of medication.

Medication

Students are not to have any medication with them. Before any medication is given by our nurse, all of the following must take place:

1. A note from parent/guardian giving permission for medication to be administered by the nurse.
2. A note from a physician stating the name of medication, dosage, and length of time

medication is to be given.

3. All prescription medication must be in a labeled prescription container; over-the-counter medication must be in its original container.

4. Parent/guardian **must** transport medication to/from school.

Students with Life-Threatening Allergens

Board of Education Policy, Administration of Medication #5330 is available on the district website.

HOMEWORK POLICY

Our Manalapan-Englishtown Board of Education strongly believes in and reasserts "...its belief that homework is an integral, necessary and required part of the teaching-learning process." Therefore, homework is assigned on a regular basis to review and/or reinforce what was taught.

Homework requests for absent students must be made by contacting the teacher via email prior to 10:30 a.m. Homework may be sent home with another child at your request, or picked up in the main office.

LICE

If you suspect that your child has lice, you must contact the school nurse immediately. Children may not return to school or ride the school bus until after they have been treated and all nits are removed. The school nurse must provide clearance.

LOST AND FOUND

The lost and found box is kept in the Community Room. Valuable items will be held by the secretaries.

LUNCH

Hot lunch is served daily in the cafeteria, or students may bring lunch from home. All district schools have a computerized "point of sale" system. A detailed letter containing all pertinent information will be sent home. We request that you label your child's snack bag, lunch box and backpack with their full name.

PARKING

When visiting the school, please park in a parking space. Do not ever leave your car unattended in the parent drop-off area. If the lot is full, you may park on the streets in the development across from the school. Parking on grass areas around the school, or in the bus/emergency vehicle lane is not permitted.

PERMISSION TO LEAVE SCHOOL EARLY

Appointments for dental or medical care should be scheduled for after school hours. It is the Board of Education policy that such "...appointments be discouraged as reasons for early dismissal." If students must be taken out of school early for a good reason, your child must bring a note from home and must be picked up in the Main Office. Parents will sign the student out in the student dismissal register at the time of pick-up. Proper identification must be presented, i.e. driver's license. This helps us account for everyone at the end of the day.

RECESS

In accordance with P.L.2018, c.73, schools shall provide a daily recess period of at least 20 minutes for students in kindergarten through fifth grade. The recess period will be held outdoors, when weather is acceptable. For the safety of our students, appropriate footwear is required. A school district is not required to provide a recess period on a shortened day due to a delayed opening or early dismissal. A student may not be denied recess for any reason, except as a consequence of a violation of the school's code of conduct, or based upon the advice of a medical professional, school nurse, or the provisions of a student's Individualized Education Program (IEP) and/or 504 plan. For denials based on violations of the school's code of conduct, students may not be denied recess more than twice per week.

REPORT CARDS

Kindergarten report cards are issued twice per year in February and June. The kindergarten report cards are Standards-Based and are based on a five-point coding scale rather than typical report card grades of A, B, C, D, & F to rate student performance. Report cards for kindergarten are only available on the Parent Portal. Paper copies will not be distributed. Please ensure you are reviewing your child's report card, and, if necessary, printing a copy. Progress reports are issued twice a year (2nd and 4th marking periods) for preschool students.

SCHOOL CONDUCT

In order to maintain a proper educational environment and keep our school, staff, and students free of danger and disruption, the following code of conduct has been developed for our school. Please understand that the rules you are about to read in this code of conduct supplement our broad, discretionary authority to maintain safety, order and discipline inside the school zone. The rules/policies contained within this handbook, support, but do not limit, our authority. In addition, please note that the code and aforementioned authority extend to all who enter the school zone and/or attend school sponsored events. Each teacher will review these rules and procedures with their class. We ask that parents/guardians review them with their children.

EARLY LEARNING CENTER CODE OF CONDUCT

Expected behavior is necessary in all areas of school, both interior and exterior. These rules also apply for travel to and from school, to and from the bus stop, and while on the bus.

All students need to learn about the rights and responsibilities of good citizenship. In addition, they should know what is expected of them and be responsible for their actions.

Expectations of Student Behavior

1. Attend school regularly.
2. Demonstrate good citizenship.
3. Demonstrate respect for people and school property.
4. Take responsibility for your own behavior and learning.
5. Cooperate with all school personnel.

6. Meet the requirements of each class.
7. Complete all assignments on time.
8. Refrain from any form of physical violence.
9. Refrain from any conduct that disrupts or threatens to disrupt the learning of other students, including all forms of cyberbullying at both home and school.
10. Demonstrate the ability to work together and to share responsibilities

General School Rules

1. Students are not permitted to sell or solicit sales in school.
2. School phones are to be used only for emergencies.
3. Students are required to be prepared for class with proper materials and assignments.
4. Students who are absent are required to bring absence notes upon returning to school.
5. Advance permission from the office is required for bus stop changes on the same bus.
6. Teachers may assign students disciplinary action for inappropriate classroom conduct.
7. Students are not permitted to deface books or school property.
8. When exiting the building, students are to go directly to their buses.
9. Students are not permitted to re-enter the building during dismissal for any reason without teacher or administrator permission.
10. Students are not permitted to chew gum in school or on the bus at any time.
11. Sexual harassment is not permitted and should be reported to the teacher, school counselor, administrator, and/or parent.
12. Students are to follow the Acceptable Use of Technology Resources Agreement.
13. At all after-school and evening activities, students and guests are expected to follow district policies and the school code of conduct.

Disciplinary Action

Improper student behavior will result in disciplinary action. Consequences for breaking school rules will include but not be limited to:

- a. Warning
- b. Parent contact
- c. Detention
- d. Suspension

The severity of the consequence will depend upon the nature of the infraction and the student's previous pattern of behavior. Please note that all assemblies and after school activities are privileges which may be revoked for students who are not meeting behavioral or academic expectations.

Cafeteria and playground rules will be reviewed with students by school administrators.

We share this Code of Conduct with you so that you will be aware of our policy and will work with us to ensure the success of our program and the safety of all the students.

SPECIAL SUBJECT SCHEDULE

The school follows a six day rotation schedule for kindergarten students. Instead of defining a week as Monday through Friday, staff and students follow a six day rotation where each day is

labeled as A, B, C, D, E, or F. (Note- This does not mean that there are six days of school per week.) The six letter days cycle throughout the year. It is important to know the letter day for each calendar date so students are properly prepared for their special subject. For example, your child may have physical education on days A and C. A calendar will be shared and posted on the school website noting the letter day that corresponds to the calendar day.

TRANSFER TO ANOTHER SCHOOL

If you are moving out of the area or transferring to another school, please call the school office at least two (2) days before the move. At that time we can begin to work on your transfer card and mail it to your new school on the student's last day. Request for proof of residency may be asked for at any point in time by the school administrator.

TRANSPORTATION

Our Board of Education provides buses for all students. As per Board Policy #3541, only one seat on one bus route is reserved for each child going to and from school. **Students are not permitted to ride any bus other than their own.** Students may only get off at their assigned bus stop unless there is a note from the sending and receiving parent stating otherwise. The notes must be submitted to the Main Office so that a bus pass may be issued to the student. In addition, students are not permitted to ride other buses to accommodate play dates, etc. It is State law that all students wear a seat belt. The bus driver represents the authority of the school and is in complete charge of the bus. State law permits the school to exclude a student from riding the bus if, after repeated counseling, his/her conduct does not follow the district guidelines. Such a child must still attend school, and the parent/guardian must assume the responsibility for regular attendance. Please refer to the current Manalapan-Englishtown Bus Safety Rules for Children brochure or call the Transportation Department if you have any questions.

Please note that all pre-kindergarten and kindergarten students must be met at the bus stop by a parent/guardian or authorized representative. If a parent/guardian is not present when the bus arrives, the bus driver will contact the transportation department and continue with the remainder of the route. The transportation department will attempt to contact the parents. If a parent is reached, the driver will return to the bus stop to drop off the child after the rest of the route is completed. If transportation is unsuccessful in reaching a parent, the child will be returned to the Early Learning Center's main office. The child will then need to be picked up at the school.

In an emergency, a parent must advise the school by a note to the child's teacher or call the Main Office if a request is made not to place a child on the bus. The child will then be held in the office for parent pick up.

Bus Safety

In order to ensure the safe transportation of the students of the Manalapan-Englishtown Regional School District, all children are required to conduct themselves on the bus in a manner consistent with the established standards for classroom behavior. Video and/or monitoring devices are used on school owned and operated and contracted vehicles, and students may be monitored at any time. Bus drivers are not allowed to permit any parent on a bus at any time for any reason.

Bus Detention and/or Suspension

Please refer to the Bus Safety Rules for Children brochure provided by the Transportation Department. Please note that administrators have discretion to assign consequences as necessary and appropriate for the safety of all children.

VISITORS

ALL visitors to our district schools MUST register their visit through the Visitor Management System NO MATTER WHAT THE REASON IS FOR VISITING. For example, if you are dropping off a forgotten item to put in the bin outside, you MUST register your visit so that we know someone will be coming to the school. When you arrive at the school you will be asked to ring the buzzer and state your name and the purpose of your visit. Once you report to the Main Office, office personnel will ask for your driver's license. This license will be scanned and checked across a criminal database. This will allow us to better monitor who is in our building and to flag any other issues that may arise. You will be given a visitor's pass that has your picture on it. This badge MUST be worn in a visible place for the duration of your visit. On your way out of the building, you will return to the Main Office and use your badge to scan out. It is imperative that you ALWAYS sign out when concluding your visit. This process has been established to better ensure the safety of students, staff, and parents that are in the building. Our Main Office staff should ALWAYS know who is expected at our schools.

VOLUNTEERS

While volunteering, you are obligated to follow all school conduct rules and respect the confidentiality of our students. Concerns must be reported to the Principal immediately. In addition, we ask that cell phones be turned off when entering the building as ringing phones and personal conversations are a disruption to the educational environment. Please restrict your visit to the area in the building to which you are volunteering.

Primary School Philosophy

We believe that all children can learn. We further believe that a primary education should take place in a community of learners that provides a developmentally-appropriate, active environment with high expectations for all. By providing students with a strong foundation in literacy, communication skills, number sense, and citizenship, we will ensure the building blocks for success and a love for learning.



Items in this handbook are subject to change. Any changes will be noted on the school website.