

FAMILY HANDBOOK

**Elysian Charter School
Of Hoboken**

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School Day

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival

School begins at 8:30 a.m. Elysian staff members will be at the entrance in the morning beginning at 7:30 a.m. Older children may be dropped off at the entrance doors and will be let into the building at 8:20 a.m. Kindergarten parents/caregivers may walk their children up to the classroom. Adults are asked to leave quickly so that the class' activities may begin. There is a 5-minute grace period from 8:30-8:35 AM then late passes are issued beginning at 8:35. Classes begin promptly with students engaged in school work immediately. It is important to be on time.

Dismissal

Students are brought out of the building for dismissal. Pick up is in front of the building. Kindergarten is dismissed at 2:35. 1st through 6th grade students are dismissed at 2:45 p.m.. 7th and 8th grader are dismissed from their rooms at 2:55. Children not picked up by 3:00 p.m. will be brought to the office and may be placed in the After School program, with the cost charged to the parents. Children in After School will be dismissed directly to After School staff.

At the beginning of the school year, each family must complete a dismissal form listing the adults who may pick up their child at the end of the school day. Students 4th grade and up may also be self-dismissed. We are very careful with dismissal and children will not be released to anyone not listed on the form. For play dates and daily changes, a written note sent in the morning or verbal permission to your child's teachers is best. If you must call the office during the day, we will do our best to get the message to the classroom. Most teachers do not check email during the day so we do not recommend emailing changes. The school phone is not available for students to call their families to arrange play-dates and/or change their personal dismissal arrangements on their own.

It is a good idea to call the school if you think you will be late for pick-up. If we receive a call, we can automatically send your child to the After School Program so he or she doesn't have to sit in the office while waiting to be picked up.

If you need to pick up your child before the school day ends, you will need to go upstairs to the office and sign your child out. The school is legally responsible for your child until the end of the school day unless you sign your child out.

Entrances

Please use only the designated Elysian Charter School entrance/exit and staircase. Use the buzzer at the Elysian door and be sure to identify yourself loudly and clearly.

The elevator is locked and may only be used based on handicapped needs or deliveries. Students may not use the elevator unless approved by the nurse or director. At no time may a student ride the elevator alone. To access the elevator in case of need please call the office on the buzzer system or at 201-876-0102. It will be sent down to you.

Parking

The area in front of the building is a Drop Off Zone only. Cars may not park there, even for a short time. Drivers may never leave the car. Students should be dropped and the driver must leave immediately. There is a turnaround at the end of the street that allows for a safe U-turn. Parking regulations will be enforced by the Hoboken Police Department

Attendance Policy

Lateness

Students who arrive late to school (after 8:35 AM) are officially late and are to report directly to the office to receive a late pass. Most children need a "settling in" time in the morning to transition to school. Arriving late deprives them of this time and is disruptive to

the class. Latenesses are recorded on students' reports and are often of interest to transferring schools, particularly high schools.

Absences

Please call the office by 9:00 AM if your child will be either late or absent from school. When your child returns to school after an absence or illness, he or she must have a written note explaining the circumstances. If a child has been absent for more than 3 consecutive days, a doctor's note must be brought to school on the child's return.

Regular attendance is important. Our classrooms engage in long-term, hands-on studies that are not easily sent home as make up work. That said, there are legitimate reasons for a student to be absent and your child should not come to school sick. Elysian Charter School does not give awards for perfect yearly attendance for this reason. If your child comes to school ill, he/she will be sent home. We understand the difficulty for working parents. Nonetheless, to ensure a good recovery and prevent the spread of illness to other children and staff, it is important for the child to remain home until he or she is symptom free.

It is our hope to work together with families to find solutions to chronic attendance and lateness problems. However, it should be noted that a continued violation of this attendance policy could result in fines as stated under the provisions of the Title 18A, Chapter 38, Article 3 of the Revised Statutes of the New Jersey Department of Education.

Health and Safety

The general rule of thumb is that students should not attend school when they are ill, if you suspect they are coming down with something, and/or until you are quite sure they are well again. Coming to school sick is not a positive or productive day for your child and puts classmates and teachers at risk. If your child becomes ill in school or comes to school ill, he or she will be sent home.

A child who is not well enough to go outdoors is not well enough to come to school. Outside time is an important part of our daily schedule, and we have no scheduled supervision for children who

would like to stay inside. Please make sure that your child is appropriately clothed.

Many of us on the staff are or have been working parents, and we understand the difficulties of making a morning decision. Students should not attend school if any of the following signs are present:

- Students with a fever of 100.2 degrees and above should not be sent to school. They must be fever-free for at least 24 hours before returning to class. One normal temperature reading is not sufficient.
- A child who has a cold should stay at home until nasal secretions are clear. Children with productive or discolored nasal discharge or cough should also remain home. One of the most common ways for viruses and colds to be spread is from droplet infection. If a cough is persistent your child should be seen by your family physician to rule out bronchitis or other serious respiratory illnesses.
- A child with a rash of unknown origin should be kept at home until the diagnosis is clear. Children who have received the Chicken Pox vaccine have been known to come down with mild cases. Chicken Pox has an incubation period of 14 to 21 days. They are also contagious 24 hours before a child begins to show signs of a rash. Even though most rashes are benign, some can be contagious and spread to others in our school community.
- A child who has had chicken pox should be kept at home for at least 24 hours after the eruption of the last spot, and should not return until all pustules are completely dry and scabbed over.
- Those suffering from diarrhea or vomiting need to be kept home from school. They should be symptom free for 24 hours before returning. If a child is vomiting or has diarrhea in school, state and health regulations require that they be sent home.

In addition, children should always be kept at home if they have:

- o Episodes of acute vomiting
- o Sore throat
- o Yellow eyes or jaundiced skin

- o Red eyes with a discharge
- o Skin rashes lasting longer than 24 hours or infected patches of skin
- o Swollen joints
- o Visibly enlarged lymph nodes
- o Stiff neck
- o Blood in urine

Communicable Illness

If your child is sick with a communicable illness, please let the office know of his or her diagnosis. Parents of other children in your child's class will be notified when appropriate.

Communicable illness includes:

Chicken Pox	Acute Diarrhea
German Measles	Giardia Lamblia
Hemophilus	Hepatitis A
Influenza	Salmonella
Measles	Shigella
Meningococcus	Impetigo
Mumps	Scabies
Strep Throat	Lice (see below)
Tuberculosis	
Whooping Cough	

Head Lice

If you have dealt with head lice before you probably know what a pain it is, and if you haven't you have been very lucky! Head lice are a problem of epidemic proportions in the United States. Over five millions cases occur annually, many among school children. Head lice pass easily from child to child and are difficult to get rid of. Their presence is not a reflection of your hygiene, your child's hygiene, or the cleanliness of your house. Elysian students and families are used to lice and feelings surrounding them are of sympathy, rather than blame or disgust. Please inform the school nurse as soon as you know your child has lice. The school will check the rest of the class

and other children, as appropriate, and clean the classroom, to prevent reinfection.

Head lice are not a medical problem, but are a big household and school problem because of the cleaning required to avoid transference. The school may check each student's head for lice at the beginning of the school year, and at intervals thereafter. Should there be an outbreak, checks are given with regularity. All checks are performed by qualified persons—generally health professionals—and are performed in a non-threatening manner.

A child found to have even one louse or nit (louse egg) will be sent home immediately. Students with nits only may return the following day if they have been treated and all nits are removed. Students with live lice must stay home one more day after treatment.

It is, therefore, a good idea to regularly check your children's heads for lice or nits yourself. The louse egg is a small teardrop-shaped globule, clear or light tan in color. A louse egg clings stubbornly to the hair and cannot be blown away. There are many treatments to eradicate the live lice (homeopathic as well as OTe), but no treatment other than the removal of each and every nit is fully effective. Once one family member has been found to have lice, every other one must be checked.

In addition:

- All underwear, clothes, pajamas, bed sheets, blankets, and towels should be washed in very hot water and dried for at least 20 minutes in a very hot dryer.
- Vacuum mattresses and pillows
- Boil or steam combs and brushes. Encourage children not to share combs, hair accessories or hats.
- Seal any stuffed animals and other non-washable items that may harbor lice in plastic bags for at least 72 hours (CfX' recommends up to 2 weeks).
- Lice will not survive without light or food for more than 72 hours.
- If possible, try to vacuum and disinfect rugs, car seats and/or backs of upholstered furniture.
- Lice like to live on the scalp in a light and airy environment. Hair that has gel on it, especially close to the scalp, tends to deter lice

from settling in on the head. Hair should be kept in braids or ponytails.

Sick or Injured Children

School personnel are trained in methods of dealing with injury. At the beginning of the school year, parents may give permission for school personnel to treat minor scrapes and bruises. More serious injuries are recorded on an accident form and will be reported to a parent at dismissal, or sooner, as appropriate. A parent will receive a call from the school if the nurse, teacher or office staff thinks there is a need for follow up care with your doctor. The school does not hesitate to call an ambulance when warranted. It is imperative that parents provide phone numbers to call in case of emergency, and that these numbers are kept up to date.

Medication

Please contact the school nurse directly if your child has special medical needs. She will work with you to find the needed protocols.

Student medication (including homeopathic medicine) may not be kept in the classroom or in student lunch boxes or backpacks. These regulations are set by statewide school protocols. The school is not permitted to distribute or administer any medication without written permission. Even over the counter medication cannot be given without a doctor's consent form. This includes Tylenol, Advil, Benadryl, cough and cold remedies or allergy medications. If prescription medication needs to be administered in school, neither the nurse nor any school staff may administer it without a physician's consent form. These forms are available in the office.

Should you have any questions or concerns, please call Elysian's school nurse. She is available from 9:00 AM until 2:30 PM daily.

Food Allergies

Elysian works very hard to keep all of our students safe, including those with food allergies. We teach every day that each of

us is different with different needs- sometimes that includes food allergies. Our students are very supportive of each other and take it in stride. Please be sure the school nurse is informed of your child's allergies. A warning is posted outside each classroom with allergic students and teachers are kept informed of children's needs.

Breakfast

All students are welcome to participate in the breakfast program. Those eligible to receive free lunch will also receive free breakfast. For those who pay for their lunches, there is a small fee for breakfast. Those who wish to eat breakfast **MUST** arrive 8:10 a.m. to have enough time to eat. . Students who participate in the Early Morning Drop-Off Program, will eat their breakfast at an earlier time.

Students participating daily in the breakfast program (who are not eligible for free lunch/breakfast), may pre-pay for the month by purchasing packs of 10 tickets *-OR-* they may be billed each month.

Snack

Families provide snack for the classrooms on a rotating basis. Each teacher will set up a system- usually a schedule, sign up or periodic requests for donations. Snacks should be healthy and substantive. Your classroom teacher will often have suggestions, but cereals, fruit, raw vegetables, cheese, crackers, yogurt, pretzels and granola bars are often good choices. Carbonated beverages, candy and items containing sugar as a first ingredient are not permitted to be served during school hours. This is in accordance with the NJ State and Elysian Charter Wellness Policy. The classroom teacher will let you know if there are specific requirements due to allergies in a classroom. There may be circumstances when a child with food allergies needs to bring his or her own snack.

Lunch

Students may bring their lunches to school in lunch boxes or paper bags. We do not provide refrigeration, cups, appliances or containers

for heating foods. There is no opportunity for students to heat food at school. It is important to send lunches that do not require the use of a microwave oven. Please include everything your child will need when the lunch is packed. The trading of lunch items among students is not allowed because some children have food allergies or cultural prohibitions.

All students may eat school lunch in lieu of bringing lunch from home. Every family (as required by the government) must complete a "Free Lunch Application" form even if their child/ren brings lunch from home. The school is required to keep one lunch form on file for every student enrolled at Elysian Charter. For those requesting free or reduced-price lunch, their forms will be used to calculate the category for which they are eligible.

Elysian participates in the National School Lunch Program. We offer a variety of foods with nutritionally balanced menus. Our food vendor, Karson Foods, delivers hot food daily. Lunch is ordered monthly, but you may choose day to day whether to bring lunch from home, order a hot lunch or to order one of the regular alternatives such as peanut butter and jelly sandwiches, cheese sandwiches, bean and cheese burritos, and vegetarian lunches. All students must turn in lunch orders by the beginning of the month. No orders will be processed without payment (if payment is required). Until payment is made, you must make other lunch arrangements for your child, such as sending lunch from home. Credit towards the next month will be issued in the event of student illness and/or absence. Credit will not be issued for students who decided not to eat after ordering. It is important for parents to keep a menu calendar and mark which days a child is eating.

Children with special food requirements or allergies should contact the Food Service Director at the school.

Dress Code

We support individuality at Elysian. We also engage in a wide variety of activities: recess, gym, movement, and dance. It is important for our students to work with many different materials: paint, clay, science materials, and food ingredients. Our goal is to

have everyone wear comfortable, easily washable clothing so that each student can participate in all of these activities. We also think it's important to wear simple and functional clothing so that "how one is dressed" does not distract from anyone's learning.

Outdoor recess is an important part of the curriculum. During cold weather seasons, students should be dressed appropriately for outdoor recess. We highly recommend layers as the temperature can vary greatly indoors to outdoors. Staff will have children wear whatever outdoor clothing they have worn to school. Please label everything!

Sturdy shoes should be worn for playing outdoors and walking up and down the stairs. Shoes must fit securely on one's feet. No flip-flops, high-heels, or backless shoes are permitted since they can be dangerous, particularly on the stairs.

Logos and wording on any t-shirt should be tasteful and respectful. Any designs or words that imply alcohol, drugs, violence, sexual innuendo, or racist ideas are forbidden. No hats, bandannas or scarves (other than for religious observance) are allowed.

Jeans and pants must be worn in a manner that does not allow them to drag on the floor. Pants need to be sitting at or above the hips so nothing (underwear, etc.) is exposed. Belts will be offered to those who need them. Shirts must meet skirts, pants or shorts; strapless tops are not allowed. Skirts, dresses, and shorts should be no shorter than the tips of one's fingers when arms hang down at the sides. Valuable jewelry should not be worn in school. It can be easily lost or provide an unnecessary temptation or distraction.

Bringing things to School

School Supplies

We provide most supplies for school, including: pencils, paper and various notebooks. On occasions, especially in middle school, individual teachers may ask students to purchase individual binders and/or plastic folders, calculators, and/or a few other items.

We also ask for donations of all sorts of school supplies and materials. Please watch the teachers' weekly newsletters for our wish lists. We also publish wish lists in our weekly school Elysian

Newsletter. Anytime you can contribute 8 1/2" x 11" paper, tissues, paper towels, markers, or any other office supplies, it would be GREATLY appreciated.

Toys

There are plenty of materials at school to keep students occupied. Toys from home are generally distracting and are at risk of being lost. Occasionally teachers or the Afterschool program will allow for items to be brought from home and shared, please be sure of these exceptions before allowing children to bring something to school.

Cell Phones and Electronics

Generally we ask that electronic items be left at home. **The school is not responsible for the loss or theft of electronic devices.** That said, we understand that some items, such as Nooks and Kindles, can contribute to the classroom and we know the importance of parent communication with children after school hours.

Students are permitted to bring cell phones to school so that they may communicate with their parents before and after school hours. **They may not have cell phones out at any point during the school day.** Phones must be turned off and placed in lockers or backpacks during school hours. Any student with a cell phone out during the school day will have it confiscated and held in the school office until a parent can come to the school to retrieve it. If you need to communicate with your child during school hours, please contact the main office.

Extended Day Programs

Elysian has both an Early Morning Drop-Off and an After-School Program. These are independent programs run by the school on self-sustaining basis (separate from the Elysian School Budget) because we believe that this service is important to families. Our school is open from 7:30 AM until 6:00 PM daily, including half-days. Parents may take advantage of having care for their children on any day, even at the last minute. You may use these two programs every day or only on the days and at the times that you choose.

Early Morning Drop-Off Program

For parents who need to bring their children to school early in the morning, Elysian offers an Early Morning Drop-Off Program in the Rue gym for a small fee. Students may arrive at 7:30 a.m.. Students play in the gym during this time, and if desired, may eat breakfast upstairs. Please see the Food section of this handbook for more information on the breakfast program and its fees. Parents must register for the Early Morning Drop-Off Program, which is easily accomplished online or at the main office. A new payment system allows you to use the system either daily or as you need, using an account that you set up one time when you register. For those in need of financial assistance see the Urban League section below or talk to the business office for help.

After-School Program

The After-School Program is held in the gym, several classrooms and outside, weather permitting. Students may remain in the program from dismissal time until 6:00 PM. Parents and/or caregivers are welcome to pick up their children at any time up to 6:00 p.m. Please, make sure that your children are picked up on time. Substantial late fees will be added for families whose children repeatedly remain in After School later than 6:00 p.m.

Attendance in our After-School is optional. In your After School Program registration packet, you will find the After School Program Code of Conduct. Failure to adhere to these basic rules could result in probation or dismissal from the Program. Our After School Program is open to Elysian students only. Exceptions have been made for school-age siblings; please contact the Coordinator.

The After School Program spends time in the park, weather permitting, a snack is provided and there is time set aside for doing homework. In addition to other class and play activities, we also try to provide special excursions and events throughout the school year.

After-School Program Fees

Occasional use of the After-School Program is welcome, registration is required. There is an hourly charge and a registration fee. You are billed monthly, based on the number of hours your child(ren) attended. Alternately there are discounts for prepaying monthly for 3, 4 or 5 days/week.

Failure to pay on a timely basis will result in possible termination from the program.

Elysian participates in the Urban League Program, which provides eligible families with financial assistance for childcare. The Urban League determines eligibility, not Elysian Charter. Once eligibility has been determined and a contract signed, participation begins immediately. The Urban League offers a variety of programs at all income levels. Their contact information is:

Urban League of Hoboken
253 Martin Luther King Drive
Jersey City, NJ 07305
Telephone: (201) 451-8888

Any student who attends the After School Program, even once, needs to register online and complete an *After School Program Application Form* (and registration packet) once a year, and include payment of a (once-a-year) registration fee (per family). This payment and registration process is needed whether your child(ren) participate on a daily basis or only occasionally during the year. Registration may take place any time throughout the year before a student attends his/her first session.

Sports

Sports are one way for children to engage in extracurricular activities at Elysian. We have basketball, track and flag rugby programs. Students in grades 5-8 are invited to tryout for Elysian's Junior Varsity and Varsity basketball teams. Students in grades 3 and 4 can participate on the "Little Eagles" basketball team. All students

in grades 2-8 are invited to participate in Elysian's instructional basketball clinic. Students grades K-8 are encouraged to participate in Elysian's track program. All level runners are welcome. Most of our sports teams are co-ed, with the recent addition of a middle school girls basketball option.

Please check with the main office and/or watch the weekly Elysian Charter School Newsletter to find out how to involve your child(ren) in our extracurricular sports activities, either as a participant or come to cheer them on!

After-School Enrichment Clubs

Elysian's After-School Enrichment Clubs are fun and educational groups run by Elysian Staff, parents, community members and outside vendors for the children of Elysian. The purpose of our clubs is to provide experiences, outside of school, that enrich our children's lives by exposing them to something new or expanding their opportunities to explore an interest. Prices for clubs vary depending on the vendor and/or supplies needed.

Each club runs once per week, usually for eight weeks. There are three eight week sessions per year. Clubs are open to all Elysian students, with most students getting into their first or second choice.

Clubs reflect the interests of the club leaders and the children. Clubs with low registration may be dropped. In the past they have provided opportunities in many areas. Recently we have seen clubs for chess, knitting, detective tricks, Legos, sculpture, painting, potholder-making, animals, dancing, singing, exercising, sports, sewing, jewelry making, economics, cooking and smoothie-making.

Your Classroom

Communication

Parents and teachers meet and talk frequently at Elysian, formally and informally. It's most helpful to make arrangements ahead of time for any conference or discussion you would like to have with a teacher or staff members. It's often difficult for a teacher to give you his or her complete attention with 16 students in the classroom. You are always welcome to volunteer in the school and the classrooms. It is important that you coordinate this with your child's teacher. There will also be many opportunities for parents to celebrate children's work through activities such as publish parties or museums that focus on a particular subject area. Please make sure that you always sign in at the security desk when you come in to the school.

Classroom teachers write newsletters to keep you informed. Be sure to let your child's teacher know if you prefer an email or hard copy and be sure to read it! You will receive some form of letter the first week of school with information about your child's classroom, but the most important way to learn about their upcoming year is to attend Back to School night.

There are four official times when teachers communicate about your child. In November, parents and guardians are asked to sign up for a conference with their child's teacher. This conference allows the teachers and parents to get to know one another; to ask questions, to express concerns, and to learn more specifically about how their child is adjusting to his or her new classroom, work, peers and teachers. In February, written narrative reports are sent home to each family. You may pick them up personally or wait until they arrive in the mail. At Elysian, we do not give "letter" grades until the 6th grade. In the spring, family conferences are held again. On the last day of school, another Narrative Report will be issued.

You or the teachers may request an additional conference at any time. Each teacher will let you know their preferred methods of communication: email, phone numbers, etc. If you wish to contact any staff member, you may always either send a note to school or

leave a message in the office. We make every effort to get teachers their messages, and know that they are professional in returning calls to parents. It is so important that you reach out to your child's teacher whenever you have a question or a concern about your child. We are all a team with the same interest (your child's welfare) at heart and our staff of professionals love to talk about what they do and why they do it.

Field Trips

Field trips are an important part of the curriculum at Elysian. The shared experience of a trip is a big part of community building and the information gained is used in many follow up activities. It is therefore our goal that all children travel on every trip. Beginning in the spring of 4th grade, this includes overnight trips. There will be plenty of opportunities for you to ask questions about these trips and rest assured we have conducted many of them- with fabulous results!

All parents should have signed a release for walking trips in Hoboken before the school year begins. A permission slip must be signed for each trip that involves transportation. *No student may travel on a school trip without having submitted a written, signed permission form.*

The PTSO provides scholarship money to help us make sure that all children may go on school trips regardless of their ability to pay. When you get the trip notice and permission form, please return the permission form and, if you cannot pay the entire amount, please send in an amount that you can afford. Such payments contribute towards covering the cost of the trip for your child. Trips can be expensive, and even a few dollars are appreciated.

If your teacher has invited you to participate in a class trip as a chaperone, you become a "deputy" staff member to assist the classroom teacher. The teacher will let you know what he or she needs. You will probably be asked to help keep track of the students, keep them involved in the activities, and make sure that they listen and are polite when someone is speaking to them. When you are a class chaperone, please refrain from purchasing food or souvenirs. Teachers often limit the number of chaperones on a trip; each teacher makes his

or her own decisions regarding chaperones. Elysian does not ask parents to chaperone on overnight trips. We provide plenty of staff members to accompany the students on these trips.

Birthdays

If you are having an out-of-school birthday party for your child, please do not distribute birthday party invitations in school unless you are inviting every child in the class. There is nothing more heartbreaking than to watch a child learn that he or she wasn't invited to the same birthday party to which others were invited. We appreciate your cooperation in this area.

In-school birthday celebrations vary by class. We tend to keep them low key: a special snack or activity, or a visit from someone special. Please contact your child's teacher to make specific plans to celebrate your child's birthday. Exceptions to the "no-sugar as a first ingredient" rule are made for birthdays, but alternatives to cake, cupcakes and cookies are always appreciated. In celebration of your child's birthday, we recommend you donate a book to your child's classroom, and write a commemoration on the inside of the book.

Holidays

A central strength of the Elysian community is the diversity of its members. To protect and maintain this diversity, Elysian does not celebrate religious holidays in the course of the school year, nor are holidays used to drive the curriculum. Religion and cultures may be appropriately explored as part of the curriculum and in response to children's questions. Children and parents are encouraged to share and discuss their particular customs, traditions, foods, and songs with the class and teachers. Community meetings are held around holidays, but are of a secular nature.

Gifts

Difficult to discuss but an often asked question is what to do about teacher gifts. Elysian teachers are paid professionals in a public school and certainly do not expect gifts or tips. If you should want to do something at a gift giving time, we encourage child made items. Some

class parents have coordinated a joint gift from multiple parents. Please know that this is never required and Elysian teachers would never treat a child differently because of a gift.

Class Lists

At Elysian, we have two classes on each grade. As children go through the grades together in a group of about 32 students per year, it is our policy to re-organize classes by mixing them around each year. We have heterogeneous grouping, which means that children of all levels of achievement are placed in each group. We are an inclusionary school, which means that children with special needs are in general education classes. They receive extra support. There is no "special education" class in a separate room with a separate teacher. We are very proud of our inclusion program.

Class lists are usually completed over the summer. Participating in this process are the two current teachers, sometimes the two receiving teachers, and the Director. We are always interested in discussing with parents their child's specific strengths and needs, and welcome you to come into school to discuss your thoughts. This does not imply that we will honor requests for specific teachers or classmates. During a child's school career he or she will have many teachers and get to know all of his or her grade-mates. Our goal is to find the best possible groupings with many factors in mind and we work very hard each year to meet that goal.

School Community

Communication

At Elysian we value an open and honest dialogue between parents and the school. Only in this way can we best meet the needs of our students. When things are not going well, we can be of assistance only if you bring the situation to our attention. It is school policy to address concerns on an individual basis. Please always feel free to ask questions; you will find us ready to talk about any concerns you may have.

There are many people at Elysian who can help with various problems. Always ask your teacher first. This is the person in school who knows your child best and if needed will know where to send you. Most problems can be solved by open communication with your child's teacher. If you do not feel that this resolves the issue, please contact any staff member with whom you feel most comfortable or the director. If you speak with someone other than the director, it is likely that the staff member will, at some point, discuss it with the director so the issue may be addressed. If, after going as far as the director, you wish to pursue an issue further, you may contact a member of the Grievance Committee to lodge a formal request. The Grievance Committee will launch an investigation, the results of which will be presented to the Elysian Charter Board of Trustees. The members of the Grievance Committee change each year. Please contact the office for their names and numbers.

Newsletter

The school's primary form of communication with families is the weekly newsletter. The Elysian Charter School Newsletter will be sent home electronically mostly every Monday. Reminders and other information are often sent via email throughout the week as well. For those who do not have an email address, we will mail home a "paper" copy. Our Newsletter keeps you up-to-date on everything (as does our website: www.ecsnj.org). Read it frequently. You'll know about all the meetings, special events, trips, etc.

Sports ...it's all there! Please make reading the Elysian Charter School Newsletter a part of your weekly routine. If you would like to place an item in the newsletter, please contact the main office for the Newsletter editor. Call, send an email, drop off a note, or come and see us.

If communications needs to go to more than one household in your family, please let us know the different emails and/or addresses to where they should be sent. Please inform us in writing of any special arrangements or restrictions pertaining to your child and his/her custody. We may, from time-to-time, ask for copies of Court papers. If you want copies of school documents sent to two different addresses or emails, please tell your teacher who will inform the office.

Snow Days and other school closings

Elysian will usually be closed when the Hoboken District Schools are closed for weather. Each morning of snow or very bad weather, the director will speak with the Hoboken Schools as early at 5:30 AM. Immediately, an email from Elysian to all staff and families will be sent. The Elysian Charter website (ecsnj.org) will also have a newsflash by 6:00 AM. Elysian also has a phone calling system that will be activated in order to inform all families of an emergency closing. Please note these calls will go out immediately after a decision is made to close—it may be very early in the morning. If you travel from a distance, ALWAYS consider your own safety.

School Events

Back to School Night

In the fall of each year, parents are invited to Elysian for an evening meeting (Back-to-School Night) to learn about the classroom routines and the curriculum for their children's classes. Please regard this as a "required meeting". It is the best time to get an overview of the plans and expectations for the year. This night is not the time for specific conversations about your child but parents are invited to call or come in for a conference about their individual child. This is also an opportunity to meet the parents of your child's classmates.

Class Meetings

From time-to-time, it is possible that a class meeting may be called at other times of the year to share information with parents. Please make every effort to attend. In addition, classes will often have events (often called museums) to display and celebrate students' work. These are usually short and early in the day so parents can get to work. Please join us for these joyous gatherings.

Community Meetings

About every other month, Elysian has community meetings in the gym. These events gather the entire student body. Classes share projects, songs etc. from their current classroom curricula. We do not view community meetings as "shows" so do not expect polished performances. Community meetings are to get a feel for the school community beyond your classroom, to see what life is like before and after your child's current grade (yes they really get that big!). Students get opportunities to share their talents and interests, practice public speaking, cheer for others' accomplishments and, best of all, see their buddies in other grades. Parents are encouraged to join us for these meetings. We invite you to be a part of the community. If you must leave early, we understand but please do so quietly.

Picture Day

This usually happens in the Fall. Pictures are taken at school. Packages must be pre-purchased. The PTSO ensures that every child receives at least a class photo. Please contact the school if you need financial support for pictures.

Halloween Party

Usually on a Saturday near Halloween, this event is free for families and a lot of fun! With games and activities for all ages, this event is Elysian's way of celebrating. Please do not let your child wear costumes or bring props that promote violence as this is a school event.

KUUMBADay

Held in December or January, KUUMBA day is a celebration of the traditional 3rd grade African dance residency and so much more! Free for families to attend, KUUMBA day usually has many activities to

celebrate creativity, delicious food and opportunities to purchase handmade crafts.

Chili Dinner

Originally a Spaghetti dinner, currently a chili competition, this event is a great meal and great fun. Suggested donations make it affordable for all.

Friends Auction

An adults only event, this is the Friends of Elysian's (Elysian's fundraising arm) major fundraising event. Dinner, dancing and an auction make this a wonderful evening!

Spring Fling

This event is a middle school dance party put on by the PTSO. When your children are in middle school, you will understand why we need parents of younger students to chaperone this event!

End of Year Picnic

A free community event usually held at Columbus Park, this event features a potluck picnic and a relaxed time to hang out with other community families.

Volunteering

There are many reasons why volunteerism is so important at Elysian. Elysian was founded by volunteers determined to provide a quality public education alternative in the Hoboken community. To this day, the school calls on the continued dedication of parents to fulfill its mission and the school's Board of Trustees continues to be comprised, primarily, of Elysian parents. Volunteering is a way to be involved in the educational life of your children. Your children, everyone's children, and the school benefit. When parents volunteer in the classroom, they have an opportunity to understand how and why we do what we do at Elysian. You will be exposed to our beliefs about teaching and learning, and acquire knowledge about what we value. In today's world where the majority of parents are working parents, please remember that there are many different ways to provide help without having to be in the school on a weekday during school hours. There are many different ways to volunteer at Elysian, but you don't have to pick only one, or feel obligated to volunteer in ways that don't

work for you. For example, you may not be on the Friends Committee, but you can volunteer to help at the annual Friends Fundraising Event. Or, you can work at the Halloween Party and/or Kuumba Day, but not attend evening events. So come out for events, volunteer in any way possible, get to know your child's friends and families at school, and feel great. You'll love it and so will everyone in your family! There are so many ways to help:

- ~ Class Parents
- ~ After-School Enrichment Clubs
- ~ Planning, organizing, setting up and cleaning up for school events
- ~ Fund-Raising
- ~ Community Outreach
- ~ Grant writing and/or research
- ~ PTSO events
- ~ Chaperoning class trips
- ~ Any way that one can imagine to help the school. If you'd like to volunteer, but you're not sure what you'd like to do, ask your child's teacher, call our office at (201) 876-0102 or come to a PTSO meeting- we'll help you lend a hand!

Class Parents

Each class needs one or two parents to take on the task of communicating with the other parents of the children in the class. Class parents have the responsibility of attending one informational meeting at the beginning of the school year. Class Parents work closely with the classroom teacher. He or she uses email, telephone calling, and other modes of communication to keep everyone informed about classroom comings and goings.

PTSO (Parent- Teacher-Student Organization)

Our PTSO is made up of parent and teacher volunteers, plus student representatives, for the purpose of creating school-wide events that enrich school life and encourage the participation of the school community as a whole. The PTSO is open to all parents and teachers.

Dues are \$25 per child per year, but you may pay whatever you can afford. These dues, and other monies raised by the PTSO, make it possible to offer free community events and financial support for school field trips, arts programs and equipment needs. Dues also help to provide free child care during many school events and meetings. We strongly encourage family members to attend the monthly, evening meetings, where child care is available and pizza served, and participate in its activities. Each meeting has a theme or speaker to encourage discussion and parent education. Meetings are announced in the school newsletter.

Friends of Elysian

The Friends of Elysian is a group, separate from the school but representing the interests of the school, dedicated to large scale fundraising to support the school (mostly in capital improvements and the possible purchase of our own building). It is an official Non-Profit Charity (501c3). Any parent in the school who is interested in assisting with major fundraising for the school should contact the Friends via the main office or website.

Board of Trustees

Elysian is managed by a volunteer Board of Trustees, which has the overall responsibility for the well-being and running of the school. The Board is elected to staggered three-year terms by the families and staff of the school, plus outside community members. All families are expected to attend the Annual Meeting of the Elysian Charter School, which is held in March. This meeting is important because we must achieve a quorum to vote for the new members of the Board of Trustees. The Elysian Board of Trustees meets on the fourth Monday of each month, subject to change. (You may call the office to confirm dates and times.) All families are encouraged to attend.

Behavior

As a K-8 school, Elysian students represent a wide age range. Parents and older students are asked to keep our youngest community members in mind, and to model appropriate language and behavior at

all times. "Discipline needs to be associated with positive acts and feats of learning, rather than negatively associated with punishing," wrote Ruth Sidney Charney in Teaching Children to Care(1999). As with everything at Elysian, foremost in our minds are children's safety and individual needs. At Elysian, we believe that two elements need to be in place: empathy and structure. Empathy helps us to know each child, to perceive his or her needs, and to hear what he or she has to say. Structure allows us to set guidelines and provide necessary limits.

The systematic teaching of discipline is a "basic curriculum that flows through every classroom activity." Teaching and learning discipline takes time and patience. At Elysian, our discipline policy is based on the creation of self-control and the creation of community rather than adult control. We teach respect for others and appreciation for differences. The time frame for learning about discipline is different for each child and for each age group.

These are the procedures that we follow at our school:

1. If a child is disruptive, he or she will be asked to stop and will be told the reason that his/her behavior is disruptive to the group.
2. If the child continues to be disruptive, he/she may be asked to leave the group. The child may return to the group when he/she feels ready to participate.
3. If the behavior continues when the child returns to the group, he/she may be asked to leave the group again, sometimes to go to another classroom, depending upon the frequency and nature of the disruptions. Sometimes, with more severe infractions, students may be required to wait in the office to meet with his/her teacher and the director.
4. Disrespectfulness, either in the form of physical aggression or verbal abuse, is cause for immediate separation from the group. Children need a serious amount of time to "cool down" from an angry episode (15-30 minutes). Talking about the problem prior to cooling down is unproductive. When the child has calmed down, it is important for him/her to tell his/her side of the story (right or wrong, accurate or inaccurate) to an adult listening closely and without interruptions. By listening, we let our children know we respect their feelings and that we will try

to be fair. We try to help students understand the cause and effect of their behavior-and the consequences. Consequences must be connected to the negative behavior.

5. Parents are called when and if there are serious and/or repetitive behavior issues. Conferences will be held. Please note that the school tries to solve many discipline issues on its own. We may decide not to call parents until multiple incidents have occurred.

Rules/Codes of Conduct

The following rules and codes of conduct will govern student behavior. Students will:

- Treat each other and adults with respect.
- Avoid engaging in sexual harassment and gender bias.
- Avoid using stereotypes of any kind, particularly related to racial groups, ethnicity, gender, disabilities, or sexual preference, etc.
- Refrain from teasing or bullying. Bullying includes making comments that are threatening, dangerous to another person's self-esteem, or makes others feel scared, intimidated, or injured.
- Not plagiarize.
- Not cheat on tests and other assessments.
- Not deface or destroy property.
- Not steal
- Not lie.
- Not create safety hazards for others or themselves.

Disciplinary action involving violations of the State law (NJ 18A:37-2, 37-22.1) or of the Code of Conduct, will be referred by professional staff and teachers to the director. The director will take appropriate action after speaking to all concerned parties. Key ingredients in the director's discipline procedures will include:

- (1) Parent conferences
- (2) Official letters of reprimand and/or warning
- (3) Consultation with teacher(s) and counselor(s)
- (4) In-house detention

- (5) Community Service
- (6) Staying after school hours
- (7) Individually designed Behavior Intervention Plan

For extremely serious infractions, the director may recommend the suspension or expulsion of the student. His/Her actions will follow the guidelines of State law delineated in 18A:37-2.3. Expulsion proceedings will be governed by NJ18A:37-2.1. Under these policies, the director would gather evidence, consult with the student's teachers, and then recommend suspension or expulsion of the student to the Board of Trustees. The Board will provide for student/parent (guardian) appeal of the director's recommendation. Any further appeal of the board's decision will be conducted in accordance with State laws and regulations.

Policies and Other Information

Enrollment

You are in, but maybe your friends have questions! Elysian is open to all Hoboken children (and out-of-District children, space permitting), regardless of race, religion, ethnicity, ability or academic achievement. There is no admission requirement or testing. There is no tuition. We are a FREE, PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL. We recommend that all interested prospective parents tour the school during the school day when the students are present. Charter Schools are schools of choice; it's important to know about the school that you are choosing. Please call the office to make an appointment for a tour. Tours are held from 9-10:15 AM on the first and third Wednesdays of each month, beginning in October. We also recommend that parents attend one of our two Annual Open Houses, held on two Saturday mornings in the late fall.

Elysian accepts lottery registration forms for students from Kindergarten through 8th grade. Each year, because we have more applicants than available openings, our school (in accordance with

New Jersey State Charter School law) holds a lottery to form a waiting list. This lottery usually takes place on the 3rd Friday in January. Applicants do not have to be present at the lottery drawing.

Elysian has a policy of sibling preference. Any family with a child already attending Elysian, or accepted to Elysian, will be provided with a seat, space-permitting, or moved to the top of the waiting list. Parents who complete lottery registration forms for incoming siblings must be sure that the form reaches the school's enrollment coordinator prior to the lottery.

Immunization Records/Health Form

Each child must be immunized in accordance with State requirements for children enrolled in school. According to New Jersey State law, each child must have an annual physical examination report on file with the school nurse.

Safety Plan

Elysian has filed a comprehensive safety plan with the Hudson County Superintendent's Office, as required by law. This plan covers every type of emergency, and was created in collaboration with the Police Department, Fire Department, and the County Department of Education.

Accident Insurance

The Elysian Charter School has purchased insurance coverage to protect all students against accidental injury during all school sponsored supervised activities, whether at the school or away (including participation in interscholastic athletics). This coverage is provided by the Bollinger Insurance Company. This insurance plan is Excess coverage: i.e. you must submit all bills to your own insurance company first, and the school's policy will pick up the unpaid balances, up to the limits of the policy.

Although this coverage is very broad, there are restrictions, limitations, and the exclusions in this policy. In some situations, medical bills may not be covered in full. Parents should understand that medical expenses are their own responsibility, not the schools. Some of the important benefits and limitations of the plan are:

- Maximum Medical Benefit is \$1,000,000.
- Treatment must commence within 90 days of the injury, or there is no coverage.
- Physical Therapy Treatment (including Chiropractic) has a limit of \$1 0,000.
- Benefits are payable for up to three years from the date of Injury.

All injuries should be immediately reported to a coach, nurse or faculty advisor. Claim forms will be provided by the school upon request, but it is the parents' responsibility to submit the claim form with Part I-B filled out completely (any omissions will delay the processing of the claim) and submit all itemized bills (monthly statements will not do). Submit the statement (EOB-Explanation of Benefits) received from your own insurance company, showing amounts paid and balances due, or, a letter of denial stating the claim is not covered. One of these letters is required for any payment to be made. If you have no other medical insurance, you will receive a letter from the company requesting employer information. Fill this out and return it to the company immediately, and the claim will be processed. Failure to return this letter will result in a delay or denial of the claim. It is your responsibility, and to your benefit, to submit the necessary papers as soon as possible, as the claim cannot be paid until all papers are submitted. Only one claim form per accident is required.

All claim forms, bills, and the letters from other insurance companies are to be forwarded to, and questions regarding the coverage answered by:

Bollinger Insurance Company
P.O. Box 398
Short Hills, NJ 07078

Health Insurance For Your Child

If your child gets free or reduced price school meals, you may also be able to get free or low-cost health insurance for your child through Medicare or NJ Family Care.

Because health insurance is so important to children's well-being, the law allows us to tell Medicaid and NJ Family Care that your children are eligible for free or reduced price meals, unless you tell us not to do so. Medicaid and NJ Family Care only use the information to identify children who may be eligible for their programs. Program officials may contact you to offer to enroll your children. Filling out the Free and Reduced-Price School Meals application does not automatically enroll your children for health insurance. If you do not wish these agencies to contact you, please contact the Food Service Director at Elysian for a form.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

It is the school's responsibility to report any sign of abuse or neglect to the Division of Child Protection and Permanency (formerly DYFS).

Pest Management

The law now requires that all schools must adopt IPM (Integrated Pest Management techniques). This is a policy that uses a wide variety of practices to reduce pests without using toxic pesticides. This policy does not prohibit the use of pesticides, but requires the other options are tried first, and that pesticides are used only as a last possible option.

A copy of our school policy, along with specifics from our contracted pest control company can be found in the office. Should you have any questions or concerns, you may contact our in-house IPM coordinators: Susan Gilbertson.

Elysian Charter School Advisory Grievance Committee

In accordance with Charter School Law, we are required to establish an Advisory Grievance Committee consisting of both parents

and teachers. The Advisory Grievance Committee has the following responsibilities:

- Basic research of the nature and substance of the complaint
- Interviews (as needed) of concerned parties, and
- Development of a recommendation to the Board of Trustees

The Advisory Grievance Committee's recommendations to the Board are non-binding. The Board of Trustees reviews the recommendations and then makes a decision which will be binding on all parties. Appeals of the Board's decision can be made under the Charter School Program Act of 1995 (Section 15) which allows for appeals to the Commissioner of Education. A copy of the Charter School Program Act of 1995 (NJS. 18A:36A et.al.) is available online or in the office. You may reach the members of the Advisory Committee via the school office.

This Family Handbook is revised each year, please let us know what other information would have been helpful to you as a parent. Send suggestions to harry.laub@ecsnj.org