



Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School  
Student and Family Handbook Addendum  
School Year 2023-2024

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## Letter from the Principal

Dear EPACS Students and Families,

My name is Terry Kawi, and I am excited to serve the EPACS community as the new school Principal. I have been a part of the wider Aspire network since 2018 when I joined as a middle school ELA teacher at Aspire ERES Academy. After ERES closed in 2021, I transitioned to Aspire Berkley Maynard Academy where I taught 7th grade ELA and ultimately decided to take a break from the classroom after nearly 10 years teaching middle school. This past year, I served on the Bay Area Regional Team as our region's Secondary Humanities Program Manager. Over the last five years in these different roles, I have gained experience, knowledge, perspective, and sharpened my skills as an instructional leader, transformational coach, and culturally responsive practitioner. I am excited to be able to serve EPACS in this capacity and feel fortunate to be able to bring my skills, criticality, and commitment to antiracism and equity to EPACS. In addition, I feel fortunate to be able to work with and alongside as well as learn from all of my new teammates. Lastly, I am looking forward to meeting you all. I know that the EPACS team is hopeful that we will be able to strengthen our partnerships with families in the coming school year, and I am confident that family engagement and presence will only increase from here.

Thank you,  
Ms. Kawi

## About the School

Over a decade ago, a group of parent advocates proposed the idea for a charter school to the Ravenswood City School District. In 1997, we opened our doors after receiving start-up funds from the School Futures Research Foundation, a non-profit education foundation started by John Walton of WalMart. In 2003, we merged with Aspire Public Schools, a non-profit charter management organization that provides underserved students with high-quality college prep education across the state. In 2002 and 2007, with the help of Ravenswood, we renewed our charter to continue to bring quality education to the community.

Our unique program ensures students receive the education and attention they require while exposing them to activities and opportunities they otherwise would not experience. We enhance our students' learning with exposure to technology, diverse cultures, environmental education, community service and character development both inside the classroom and out.



## School Site Mission and Vision

**Vision:** We will celebrate students' **identities, skills, intellect, and criticality** to nurture **belonging** and work towards dismantling systemic racism. Our students will be **advocates, allies, and changemakers** who are leaders of joy and love within our community.

**Mission:** In service of our East Palo Alto TK-8 community and families, we will cultivate communities that foster **inclusive, joyful, and safe learning environments**.

## General School Information

### School Contact Information

1286 Runnymede Street  
East Palo Alto, CA 94303  
650-614-9100 Fax 650-614-9183

### PowerSchool and ParentSquare

Our school site uses PowerSchool and ParentSquare to help communicate with families regarding grades, attendance and important school updates. All parents and guardians have access to PowerSchool and ParentSquare, and we encourage you to check both websites often for the most up to date information. Please be sure that you update your contact information, including email, with the front office if there are any changes in how to reach you.

If you need help with accessing your PowerSchool or ParentSquare account, please reach out to the front office.

# School Site Calendar

You may pick up a paper version in the front office.



## Aspire East Palo Alto Charter School 2023-2024 Family Calendar

July '23							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
25	26	27	28	29	30	31	
2	3	4	5	6	7	8	
9	10	11	12	13	14	15	
16	17	18	19	20	21	22	
23	24	25	26	27	28	29	
30	31						

January '24							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1-5: No School (Winter Break)
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	8: No School (Staff Development)
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	9-12: Minimum Week
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	12: Winter Talent Show
28	29	30	31				15: No School (Dr MLK Jr Birthdays)
							18: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin

Closure Dates
September 4: Labor Day
September 15: Staff Development
October 2 to 6: October Break
October 9: Staff Development
November 10: Veteran's Day
November 20 to 24: November Break
December 18 to January 5: Winter Break
January 8: Staff Development
January 15: Rev Dr MLK Jr Birthday
February 2: Staff Development
February 19: President's Day
March 25 to April 5: Spring Break
April 8: Staff Development
May 27: Memorial Day



Our school uses ParentSquare for all whole school announcements and communication. Use this QR code to download the app!

August '23							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7: First Day of School
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	7-11: Minimum Week
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	17: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	23: Parent Event: Open House
28	29	30	31				29: Photo Day for grades 6-8

February '24							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
				1	2	3	2: No School (Staff Development)
4	5	6	7	8	9	10	7: Parent Mtg. SSC/ELAC
11	12	13	14	15	16	17	15: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
18	19	20	21	22	23	24	19: No School (President's Day)
25	26	27	28	29			24: African American Celebration

School Office Hours and Contact
Monday through Friday
7:30 am to 4:00 pm
(650) 614 - 9100
1286 Runnymede St
East Palo Alto, Ca 94303



Our school uses PowerSchool for attendance, student grades, and first day forms. Use this QR code to download the app!

District Code: TFSI

September '23							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
					1	2	4: No School (Labor Day)
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	6: Parent Mtg. SSC/ELAC
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	13: Family Night at EPA Library
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	15: No School (Staff Development)
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	21: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
							23: LA/EPB (Saturday)
							25-29: Minimum Week
							27: Photo Retake

March '24							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
						1	23: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	25-29: No School (Spring Break)
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	
31							

Important Contacts
Principal
Terry.Kawi@aspirepublicschools.org
Asst Principal (K-5)
Jimmy.Aguilar@aspirepublicschools.org
Asst Principal (6-8)
Cary.Catching@aspirepublicschools.org
Dean of Students
Samantha.Perez@aspirepublicschools.org
Dean of Students
Tanya.Mallangi@aspirepublicschools.org
Business Manager - Ext. 13100
Sunje.Estrada@aspirepublicschools.org
Office Manager - Ext. 13104
Yadira.Torres@aspirepublicschools.org
Office Assistant - Ext. 13140
Maria.Rosales@aspirepublicschools.org
After School Director - Ext. 13141
Liliana.Rosales@aspirepublicschools.org

Color Key
Principal
Full School Day 8 am - 3 pm
Minimum Day 8 am - 12 pm
Testing Day 8 am - 1 pm
No School
Family Events/Meetings
Non-School Days

October '23							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	3-6: No School (Fall Break)
8	9	10	11	12	13	14	9: No School (Staff Development)
15	16	17	18	19	20	21	16: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
22	23	24	25	26	27	28	31: Costume Parade
29	30	31					

April '24							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
	1	2	3	4	5	6	1-5: No School (Spring Break)
7	8	9	10	11	12	13	8: No School (Staff Development)
14	15	16	17	18	19	20	17: Parent Mtg. SSC/ELAC
21	22	23	24	25	26	27	25: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
28	29	30					27: Photo Day for TK/K/R Promotion
							28: Art Showcase

Free Breakfast Served Daily to all students.
7:30 am to 8:00 am

November '23							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
					1	2	1: Dia de los Muertos Celebration
						3	10: No School (Veteran's Day)
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	13-17: Carnival Food Drive
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	16: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	20 to 24: No School (Harvest Break)
26	27	28	29	30			

May '24							Important Dates
S	M	T	W	Th	F	S	
			1	2	3	4	8: Parent Mtg. SSC/ELAC
5	6	7	8	9	10	11	6-10 Educator Appreciation Wk
12	13	14	15	16	17	18	16: Parent Mtg. Coffee w/admin
19	20	21	22	23	24	25	17: SBAC Rally
26	27	28	29	30	31		19-23: Igen Dismissal for SBAC
							27: No School (Memorial Day)

Intersession
Our school offers a limited intersession/camp for students during the longer breaks. If your family would benefit from this program, please reach out to the Afterschool Director for more information.
Dates: 7/10 to 7/21, 10/2 to 10/4, 3/25 to 3/27, 4/1 to 4/5, 6/17 to 6/18, 6/20 to 6/28

Important Attendance Information
Attendance alerts are delivered via ParentSquare messaging. Simply reply to those alerts to excuse your child's absence. Absences may be excused for the following reasons: illness, medical appointments, court appointments.
We know that important learning happens during travel and family gatherings. We encourage families to plan for these during our school breaks and avoid students missing school instruction.

## Bell Schedule

TK-5	6-8
Morning Cheer: 7:55am Class begins: 8:00am	First Bell: 7:55am Class begins: 8:00am
<b><u>Lunch</u></b> TK/K:10:10-10:50 1st:10:30-11:10 2nd:10:50-11:30 3rd:11:10-11:50 4th/5th:11:30-12:10	<b><u>Lunch</u></b> 12:10-12:50
Dismissal: 3:00pm	Dismissal: 3:00pm

## Drop Off and Pick-Up Procedures

On time drop off and pick up is important to your child’s success. In order to make drop off and pick up as efficient for you, your child and other families, please follow the below procedures.

Drop Off Time: All Scholars

Monday thru Friday: **7:30 am - 7:55 am - No supervision before this**

Class begins: **8 am - After 8 am scholars should stop by the office for a tardy slip**

Pick Up Time: All Scholars

Monday thru Thursday: **3:00 pm**

Fridays: **12:00 pm**

**IMPORTANT EXPECTATIONS:** If you are DRIVING to pick-up/drop-off your student, please turn off Runnymede Street before you get to the main purple sign. Drive through the loop to the drop-off location before letting your student out. Please stay close to the car in front of you and do not double park or be unsafe. Please be respectful of neighbors and do not block cross streets and driveways.

For the safety of students, parents or guardians are not to drop students off, nor are students to arrive at school, prior to 30 minutes before the start of school, unless the student is involved in a regular school activity, meeting, or community program. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to arrange to have their student leave or be picked up right after school, unless the student is involved in a regular school activity, meeting, or community program or is staying at the request of school personnel. In case of emergency, all students should go directly to the school office at any time before or after school.

Students who cannot comply with these requirements are placing all those at the school at risk by disregarding safety considerations. Students placing themselves or others at risk by violating the above policies may be subject to disciplinary action, including suspension and expulsion.

## **Early Pick-Up Policies and Procedures**

We highly recommend that all appointments be made outside of the school day. If you need to pick your child up early or drop them off late due to an appointment, please let the office know. Any lost instructional time will be tracked and any patterns may result in a family meeting.

For the safety of students, parents or guardians are not to drop students off, nor are students to arrive at school, prior to 30 minutes before the start of school, unless the student is involved in a regular school activity, meeting, or community program. Similarly, it is the responsibility of the parents or guardians to arrange to have their student leave or be picked up right after school, unless the student is involved in a regular school activity, meeting, or community program or is staying at the request of school personnel. In case of emergency, all students should go directly to the school office at any time before or after school.

## **School Site Attendance and Tardy Procedures**

Regular, on-time attendance is important for your child's success. In the event your child is absent or tardy, please follow the procedures below. Multiple absences and tardies will result in a family meeting.

Call the front office 650.614.9100 by 9am if your child will be absent. Should your address or phone change during the year, please inform the front office.

If your child is late, after 8:00am, they should report to the front office to get a tardy pass. They should give the pass to their teacher when they arrive in the classroom.

### For 6-8 grade:

- Students will have 5 minute passing periods when changing classrooms. They should use the restroom, get water, and go directly to their next class (waiting at the door). Teachers will keep track of students who are tardy after passing period and multiple tardies will result in a student/family meeting.

## **School Site Specific Dress Code**

At EPACS, students are expected to be in full uniform every day, except when the school has earned a free dress day. School uniforms are also required when participating in off-campus field trips.

Families will be notified via ParentSquare if students have earned free dress in any event. The uniform must be worn at all times during the school day. If a student arrives out of uniform or is observed out of

uniform, a parent/guardian will be contacted to bring a uniform or a school-approved shirt, sweater, pants (shorts or skirt), and/or tennis shoes.

For **grades TK - 5** the uniform consists of a **white** collared shirt, khaki pants, shorts, or skirt, and tennis shoes. Only a plain **gray** sweater or sweatshirt (no hoods), white undershirts and white or gray tights may be worn with the uniform inside the classroom (no decorations).

For **grades 6-8** the uniform consists of a **black** collared shirt, khaki pants, shorts, or skirt, and tennis shoes. Only a plain **black** sweater or sweatshirt (no hoods), black tights may be worn with the uniform inside the classroom (no decorations).

\*Undergarments should NOT be showing. No midriff.

\*No open toed/heeled shoes. Athletic/tennis shoes should be worn daily. No shoes with wheels are allowed (Heelys). Crocs are also not allowed for safety reasons.

\*No hats, beanies, bandanas, or hoods should be worn in the classroom.

\*Jackets of any color may be worn outside, but should be taken off in the classroom.

## School Culture and Student Life

Students are not permitted to use their cell phone on campus. Once on campus, phones should be turned off completely and put away. Parents may call the front office if they need to reach their child. Students should be off campus when using their cell phone.

### For K-5:

- Cell phones should be turned off and put away in backpacks. The first time a phone goes off, the student will receive a warning. Second time a phone goes off, the phone will be held in the office. It must be picked up by a parent after school.

### For 6-8 Grade:

- Cell phones (in the off position) will be collected by advisors at the beginning of advisory each day & kept in a locked box. Each student will have their own numbered slot to put their cell phone. Cell phones will be returned to students at the end of the day by a staff member.
- Any cell phone that is not turned in and goes off or is seen out will be held in the office. It must be picked up by a parent after school.
- Before, during, and after school, cell phones cannot be used on campus. Students may only use their cell phone once outside the gates. If your phone is out, it will be held in the office until a parent picks it up.



## Social-Emotional Learning (SEL)

TK-5:

- Classroom teachers use the Ruler curriculum for SEL lessons at least 3 times a week.
- Classroom teachers hold daily morning meetings and closing circles.

6-8:

- Middle school students will have weekly advisory sessions. Advisors use the Ruler curriculum for lessons as well as other resources to support SEL.
- Classroom teachers hold daily morning meetings and closing circles.

We have mental health counselors on site to support students, staff, and families.

## Family Engagement

Our families are SO important to our success as a school. We deeply value the role families play in supporting our work and hope to call you in to be a part of our school community. We expect families to complete 40 Hours of “Family Effort Units” which can be earned through regular participation in parent-teacher conferences, school events, Back to School Night, family meetings, etc. Additionally, there are extra family volunteer opportunities such as helping out in a classroom, attending Garden work days, donating items to the classroom, and more!

Our aim is to offer multiple opportunities at zero or low cost to encourage families to be engaged in our school community. We know that school to family partnerships are integral to our success.

Additionally, we have our School Site Council (SSC) and English Language Advisory Committee (ELAC) that meets regularly throughout the year, which has opportunities for family leadership and to get involved. Please refer to the Family Calendar for all monthly family event dates and SSC/ELAC meetings.

## School Site Council (SSC)

Aspire encourages parent and guardian participation in school site decision making. Please consider joining our School Site Council (SSC) to ensure that your voice is represented in school wide decisions that impact our scholars. The School Site Council helps the principal and school administration make budget decisions and oversees school implementation of the Local Control Accountability Plan (LCAP). For more information about SSC or joining our SSC, please contact Ms. Kawi at [terry.kawi@aspirepublicschools.org](mailto:terry.kawi@aspirepublicschools.org).

## English Learner Advisory Committee (ELAC)

The ELAC is a committee of parents or guardians, staff and other community members who help advise school administration on programs and services for students who are designated as English learners.



Aspire encourages parents of English learner students to participate in this important committee and help guide site specific services for English learners. For more information or to join our ELAC, please contact [Jimmy.Aguilar@aspirepublicschools.org](mailto:Jimmy.Aguilar@aspirepublicschools.org).

## **Extracurricular Activities**

Our after school Extended Learning Program includes support for homework and independent reading, as well as providing many enrichment activities. These activities include robotics, partnership with Girls on the Run, and many other activities.

## **Student Safety Policies**

Students are prohibited from being in classrooms where teachers or staff members are not present. Students are also prohibited from being anywhere on campus where there are no teachers or staff members present. There are no exceptions. Students traveling the hallways and common areas during the school day are required to have a hall pass. Students removed from school property must be signed out in the office by the appropriate caregiver as specified in the student's emergency contact folder.

## **Miscellaneous**

Students are not permitted to bring the following items to school: electronic devices, games, toys, unhealthy snacks such as chips, soda, candy etc. If students bring these items to school, they will be confiscated and/or thrown away. The items will only be returned to the parent/guardian.