



JOIN US FOR FAMILY VISIT DAYS 2024/25

Kindergarten open house

October 11 Friday
October 15 Tuesday
October 29 Tuesday

Middle and high school

October 25 Friday
November 4 Monday
January 22 Wednesday
February 18 Tuesday
March 28 Friday

INTERESTED IN EMS?

- **Enrollment** is filling up quickly with limited spots.
- **Complete** an inquiry form as soon as possible.
- **Interested** in Kindergarten for the 2025-26 school year?



Scan the QR code to get started!



Maria Archer with EMS students during ground breaking

Heart of EMS

by: Maria Archer, EMES Principal

This May as I watched each elementary student and teacher walk into the upper school dining hall for our final Gathering of the school year, I was once again moved by the way in which they entered our space...with respect and reverence. Why? **Because these are sacred moments** each week, a time that we value being together as an elementary school, and a space where we wait for and experience the presence of God.

Over the many years that I have worked at this elementary school, a theme I often hear from visitors is that there is something “unique happening at EMES.” They sense an ethos or particular feeling while wandering the halls of the school. I believe they experience our students not simply receiving information and curriculum, but participating in their own learning, and feeling valued, seen, and known. **Students are part of something bigger than themselves, and they practice contributing to the community.** This is what we strive for each day at the elementary school.

story continued on page 3

3 Tiers of Restorative Practice

During a spring panel discussion with current parents and guardians, middle school principal Erika Gascho taught us that restorative justice can be broken down into three tiers. Restorative justice is not a one-size-fits-all approach, and it can be incredibly rewarding and transformative when done well.

Tier one includes relationship building, which we are already doing 99% of the time. At school, it's conversations in class that connect students, celebrations throughout the school year, and experiential learning. Getting to know each other is a form of restorative practice.

Tier two happens when "this" isn't going right, how do we solve "this" together? Tier two happens when ideas don't align, or a physical or emotional boundary is crossed. It can be a one-on-one conflict or a group challenge to work on.

Tier three are the big issues: when administrators, teachers, and parents are involved to help find a solution. This tier is harder to resolve and can feel like the restorative process is slow and doesn't work. Tier one and two things are integrated into our daily lives in what feel like easy interactions. Then when tier three happens it feels big and hard, but we grow when working hard together.



Elementary school-aged students having circle time

The Practice of Restorative Justice (RJ)

EMS creates ways to build relationships with cross-grade interactions. Programs pair MS & HS students (bigs/littles) and EMES lunch seat buddies.

RJ begins before the conflict.

Reflect on your own biases, assumptions, and actions. Consider how you can improve your own behavior and interactions with others.

RJ begins with relationships.

Relationships are seen as central to understanding and addressing conflict. Building rapport is important for effective communication.

RJ is listening to each other to understand.

Try to understand the feelings and perspectives of others, even if you don't agree with them. Empathy can help build trust and understanding.

RJ takes two people to work. It's not ME, it's US.

Conflict Resolution: When conflicts arise, try to resolve them through open communication and collaboration. Focus on finding solutions that benefit everyone involved.

Community Building: Participate in activities that promote community building and inclusivity. This can include volunteering, attending community events, or joining a local organization.

Educate Yourself: Take the time to learn about restorative justice principles and practices. This can help you better understand the concept and how to apply it in your own life.

Practice Forgiveness: Forgiveness is an important aspect of restorative justice, while acknowledging there are natural consequences. Try to let go of grudges and resentments, and focus on moving forward in a positive way.

"It comes down to the biblical principle of loving the Lord our God and loving your neighbor as yourself. It's hard and it doesn't always work right but we are committed to it for a reason. Our teaching staff is really proud of our students for holding the expectations high when it comes to humanity."

- Shannon Roth, teacher



The Gathering Space...where learning and fellowship coincide.

A groundbreaking ceremony on May 1 marked the start of construction with anticipation to begin using the space in winter/spring of next year. The addition represents more than just bricks and mortar; the act of gathering nurtures cross-grade relationships, builds trust, creates leadership opportunities, and enables us to care for one another. It is the “heart” of EMES – it is our “living room!” As EMES prepares to celebrate 20 years in 2025, the EMS community has indeed “let the children come!”



Heart of EMS *Continued from page 1*

What does this look like at EMES?

- Students in class developing their own set of guidelines or classroom standards together.
- Two children standing outside talking about a disagreement they had in music class.
- A student sitting in a quiet place for a few minutes until they regain their composure and can return to the activities at hand.
- Several students meeting with the principal because they have a passion for caring for the earth and want to lead the school in eliminating the trash problem they have observed on campus.
- Classes in a circle discussing what went wrong at recess.

We want our students to feel both accountable and empowered. They learn that their actions affect others, that relationships are most

important and might need to be repaired when harmed, and that mistakes are often the best way to learn. Compassion, forgiveness, and restoration are deeply ingrained into the ethos of EMES. Students watch their teachers listen to each student, create spaces for choice and variety in the classroom, expect participation and leadership. They watch their teachers work collaboratively and have fun together. They soon learn that this is a place of excitement, of challenge, and of purpose.

The Gathering Space

This spring, we have watched as our new Gathering Space has begun to take shape right outside our windows. This will be the new place, a much more convenient space in which we will meet for Gathering each week. We’ve watched many dedicated workers plan, calculate, build, pour concrete,

and complete many other tasks that have been unseen. Tyler Kauffman, our onsite project manager, spoke to each group of students this spring explaining the building process. This is a great teaching opportunity, one where we will all be called upon to practice patience and flexibility as we watch and learn.

As this project gets underway, we eagerly anticipate this new space giving us opportunities to continue to build community. We will meet weekly for Gathering, eat lunch together daily, hold multi-grade book buddies, invite special speakers, work on projects, and much more. It will be the hub of EMES. It will provide many opportunities to practice the messy, energetic, and beautiful work of being a community, where students are seen, known, and valued, and where they can learn to join in God’s work in the world.

Flames News

The EMS athletic program had another successful year! Each season provided life-long memories and learning opportunities for our student athletes. Sarah Drooger and Ryan Slonaker signed letters of intent to Division 1 colleges. Sarah will continue her soccer career at Virginia Commonwealth University and Ryan will be playing golf at Virginia Tech.

Just a few weeks ago, our 4x800 relay team won the VISAA D2 Championship Race for the third year in a row! Team members included Adam Rhodes, Calvin Bixler, Jedrek Sneary, and Luga Samson. Luga finished second in the 800m race, setting a school record with a time of 1:56.41.

Speaking of records, Sarah Drooger set the all-time scoring record for Varsity Girls Soccer. Over her career, she scored 109 goals and had 44 assists for 262 career points.



Andrew Gascho, Varsity Girls Soccer Head Coach, had his 100th career win (pictured above right with balloons to celebrate). As the heart of the athletic department, Mr Gascho's influence extends far beyond the scoreboard, leaving a lasting impact on the lives of our student athletes.

The athletic department also inducted three athletes into the Hall of Flames: Sarah Drooger: Soccer, Ryan Slonaker: Golf, and Drew Hatter: Basketball.

CONGRATULATIONS ON ALL THE INCREDIBLE MILESTONES THIS YEAR!

Stepping up to Middle and High School

Photos:
5th-grade class (left)
8th-grade class (right)

As the school year closes, we celebrate our 5th and 8th-grade students as they shift to middle and high school. These milestone years are marked by excitement, anticipation, and a sense of achievement. Moving forward, they embrace new challenges, friendships, and opportunities for growth. We commend their readiness to embark on this journey.

Supported by families, teachers, and peers, they step into the future with confidence and optimism (and maybe a few nerves!). As they rise up to meet the challenges ahead, we applaud their achievements and wish them success. Congratulations to our rising 6th and 9th-grade classes – may they shine brightly in the next chapter of their education!





Graduation photos by Joaquin Sosa

EMS Graduation Highlights

CONGRATULATIONS CLASS OF 2024

How can we keep from singing? With 41 graduates on Saturday, June 1, Eastern Mennonite School held its 106th commencement ceremony. This day marks a significant achievement in the lives of our students. The weeks leading up to graduation are filled with milestones.

Senior presentations are a vital component of a capstone course called Kingdom Living, where seniors explore the practical aspects of living out their faith. EMS literally gives students a microphone and asks them to share their stories – reflecting on their upbringing, their experiences at EMS, and their aspirations for the future. These presentations provide a unique platform for students to express their journeys and dreams, offering a rich tapestry of life stories centered around faith, education, and relationships.

The commencement concert featured EMHS instrumental groups, followed by three choirs. The 100+ mass choir joined together to sing “And the Glory” from Handel’s Messiah to close. It was a beautiful way to come together and begin the celebration of the senior class.

Jon Carlson, commencement speaker, shared that this is not a big ending – but a big beginning. Commencement, which means a beginning, begins a promise of new possibilities. New beginnings are the base of the Christian faith. He asked the seniors, “What could be your moment of new creation?” challenging them to choose God’s love for others. As seniors begin the next chapter of their lives, we are filled with pride and anticipation for the bright futures ahead. May God bless the class of 2024 and as Mr. King always says, “I am somebody,” encouraging people to be the one who helps. Be the blessing and show God’s grace in your new beginning!

EMS 2024 Graduate Blessing

by Bible Teacher,
Karen Suderman

Here you are seen; now go out and see with wonder and curiosity so that you may observe God’s movement in the world.

Here you are known; now go out to know, to learn, experience, and grow so that you may more deeply understand your part in God’s unfolding story.

Here you are loved; now go out in love so that you may offer your gifts, knowledge, and wisdom to the world around you.

Now you are sent with the peace of Christ before you, behind you, and under your feet.



E-Term Highlights: Experiential learning at Eastern Mennonite School

With 17 trips, 37 dedicated faculty and staff, and numerous chaperones, over 270 students embarked on unforgettable journeys filled with enriching experiences. Groups went hiking, biking, and learned about the environment, theater, and self-care. Each had a service day, collaborating with non-profits to reinforce compassion and community service. Whether local or out-of-state, students gained new perspectives, appreciated a larger world, and formed lasting friendships.

Middle School Experiences: Philadelphia, Williamsburg, and Local Water Explorations

The 8th-grade E-Term trip to Philadelphia included a service project and exploration of the city's rich history and culture. Students, working in small groups, planned their day – visiting museums, art galleries, and monuments. A highlight was appearing on the jumbotron at a Phillies baseball game, wearing neon yellow hats. Meanwhile, the 7th graders traveled to Williamsburg Christian Retreat Center, engaging in team-building activities, including meal preparation. They learned about early American settlers at Jamestown, Colonial Williamsburg, and the Mariners' Museum through hands-on activities, bringing history to life.

The 6th graders explored water and ecosystems. They spent a day at a local lake fishing, canoeing, and studying insects, fostering team building and class bonding. Another day, they traveled to Riven Rock to release trout and enjoyed discovering crawfish in the river. They also visited a water treatment facility providing practical insight into the water treatment processes. The week concluded with a memorable campout, marking the end of their water adventures.

Key West and Everglades

The E-Term trip to Key West and the Everglades was transformative, with activities showcasing the natural beauty and emphasizing conservation. Students kayaked through red



6th grade Stream Safari



Self-Care - Local



Environmental - Key West/Everglades



Museum of Illusion - Philadelphia



Mennonite Disaster Service - Florida



Mountain Biking - Local

mangrove tunnels, enhancing their communication skills and learning about the ecosystem. Encounters with diverse wildlife enriched their experience. At Bahia Honda State Park, they deepened their understanding of marine life, particularly sea turtles. In the Everglades, they toured the Ernest F. Coe Visitor Center and the Nike Missile Site, reflecting on the intersection of wildlife and human history. The trip ended with an exhilarating airboat ride, observing alligators and birds in their natural habitat.

Self-Care - Local

The self-care E-Term week offered valuable stress management tools and strengthened students' sense of community. Activities included yoga, barre classes, and visiting local businesses. Students enjoyed time at the Aristocat Cafe, White Oak Lavender Farm, and a service project at Willow and Pine Flower Gardens. Creative activities like crafts, reading, and journaling encouraged self-expression and introspection.

Common Themes and Cherished Memories

Despite the diversity of E-Term experiences and locations, cherished memories are a common thread. Bonding during car rides, walks, shared experiences, overcoming challenges, and service projects will be the lasting takeaway. The students at Eastern Mennonite School make these moments enjoyable, and we at EMS feel blessed to continue the tradition of E-Term.

Advancement Update

THANK YOU!

109 students received need-based financial aid and scholarships this year. These programs and their supporters help make that possible:

BLAZING SUCCESS! FORE THE FLAMES GOLF TOURNAMENT

150 golfers joined the tournament on May 3, raising more than \$40,000. Proceeds support student financial aid and the EMS athletics program. Plan to join us on May 2, 2025 for the next golf tournament!

GREAT COMMUNITY GIVE

96 supporters gave during our area's online giving day, the Great Community Give, on April 17 to raise \$10,750 for financial aid.

TAX CREDITS AT WORK

Donors contributed \$308,758 through the Virginia Education Scholarships Tax Credit program in 2023-2024 for financial assistance. This is an excellent way to provide support for student accessibility at EMS!

ENDOWMENTS

54 different endowed funds support financial aid, including the Alumni Endowment Fund. Founders name endowments after themselves, family members, or someone influential in their life. Many endowments begin with a planned gift through a will or other tool.

HELP US REACH OUR ANNUAL FUND MINI-GOAL OF \$15,000 BY JUNE 31!

Gifts fund student experiences at EMS through programs like financial aid, academics, arts, and experiential learning. easternmennonite.org/support



FAN THE FLAME AUCTION 2024! FRIDAY, SEPT 13, 2024

DINNER BY: Magpie Diner, serving a modern season-inspired menu

MUSIC BY: Clymer & Kurtz, singing a soul-filling blend with guitar and piano

HOSTED BY: Adam Yoder, EMS dad, social worker, & funny man extraordinaire

AUCTION ITEMS: Group dinners, travel getaways, home upgrades and more!

Homecoming 2024 - October 18-19

Come to Connect!

Schedule and info at easternmennonite.org/homecoming
Come build on life-long connections that gain value with each passing year.

- Friday picnic supper
- Class reunions
- Homecoming breakfast
- Concerts, volleyball, and soccer
- Alumni story celebrations
- Tours of the upper and lower buildings

Registration Opens: August 1, 2024

EV CHARGER

The class of 2022 leaves a lasting legacy with their generous donation of an EV (electric vehicle) charger to the school.



Their forward-thinking gesture reflects their commitment to sustainability and innovation. Newly installed and ready for use, the EV charger symbolizes progress and embraces the future of transportation technology.

This gift serves as a tangible reminder of the class's dedication to leaving a positive impact on the school and the environment. As students, staff, and visitors utilize the charger, they are reminded of the thoughtful contribution made by the Class of 2022, fostering a sense of pride and community within the school.

Today is written by Christine Coddington, communication specialist, and designed by Lindsey Kolb. Editorial support from Trisha Blosser, director of advancement, and Paul Leaman, head of school.

Send feedback to today@easternmennonite.org

Find past issues at easternmennonite.org/today

In admissions processes, Eastern Mennonite School does not discriminate on the basis of any race, color, handicap, national or ethnic origin, or religion, and admits students to all rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding the school's non-discrimination policies, including its Title IX policy: Debbie Katz, high school counselor, 540-236-6022. For assistance related to Title IX or other civil rights laws, please contact OCR at OCR@ed.gov or 800-421-3481, TDD 800-877-8339.

VISION

Eastern Mennonite School aspires to embody the love of Jesus as a learning community where every student belongs, thrives, and joins God's work in the world.



MISSION

Eastern Mennonite School, with home and church, invites students to faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service.



FOLLOW US:



Thank you to our supporters!

Because of your support, EMS can provide amazing opportunities for our students.