



Elementary Student and Parent Handbook 2022 - 2023

Welcome to Eastern Mennonite Elementary School. We are glad that you are a part of our community. This handbook has been prepared to acquaint you with the general operation policies at EMES. If you have questions, feel free to make an appointment with our principal, Maria Archer. We want you to feel welcome in our school. We hope each of you will become involved in the total life of EMES. Your participation is vital to the well-being of our school.

Vision Statement

Eastern Mennonite School aspires to reflect Christ's light as a learning community where every student belongs, thrives, and lives God's call.

Mission Statement

Eastern Mennonite School joins home and church in calling students to faith in Jesus Christ, academic excellence, personal integrity, and compassionate service in the world.

Eastern Mennonite School does not discriminate on the basis of any race, color, handicap, national, or ethnic origin, 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: Andrea Wenger, Director of Advancement, 801 Parkwood Drive, Harrisonburg, Virginia; wengera@easternmennonite.org or 540-236-6026. 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.

Gifts of Character

Since we have been created uniquely in God's own image, we each exhibit a variety of gifts and abilities. At Eastern Mennonite School, we seek excellence for all by helping each student to develop these gifts. These are not a set of criteria by which students are selected for special programs. Rather, we believe these qualities are important for each person to aspire to from elementary throughout their lives. These [virtues](#) are modeled by teachers, woven into discussions, and practiced regularly at school.

EMS Administrative Structure

Strategic Leadership Team

Head of School	Paul Leaman
Director of Advancement	Andrea Wenger
Director of Business Affairs	Mike Stoltzfus
High School Principal	Justin King
K-8 Principal	Maria Archer

Other Administrative Roles

Elementary Teacher Leader	Heidi Byler
Elementary Office Manager	Jennifer Stoltzfus
Business Office Manager	Chris Eberly
Accounting Specialist	Susan Hardy

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After School Care

The EMS After School Care Program provides parents a safe and wholesome environment for children until 5:30 p.m. each day. ASC services are preserved for EMS students in grades K-5. More specific information about the daily schedule and fees can be found on the After School Care Google form.

Athletics

EMES is part of the Blue Ridge Area Athletics Association. This league was formed primarily to give younger students exposure to team play. The two seasons include fall soccer and winter basketball. The focus is on the basic skills and allowing the players to experience being part of a team. Teams are coached by parents and officiated by either parents or high school students. Practices are generally once a week with games scheduled on Saturdays. In addition, students can participate in the Running Club during the month of May. This program is

Attendance and the School Day

School Day: The school day begins at 8:20 a.m. and ends at 3:00 p.m. Students may enter their classrooms at 7:50 a.m. each morning. If there is a need for an earlier drop-off time, you may contact the EMES front office.

Attendance: Regular attendance is essential to success in school for children of all ages. **Please make sure your child arrives at school no later than 8:20 a.m.** Classes often begin each day with choice time or morning independent work; this is an important time for students to settle in and get prepared for the day. If your child arrives at school late (after 8:20 a.m.), please enter through the elementary main office and sign them in.

Absences: When a student misses school, the parent/guardian should call the elementary office in the morning (540) 236-6001 to let the school know of the absence. Although it is difficult to recreate the lesson that a child experiences when in class, teachers will do their best to have work ready for a parent to pick up by 3:30 p.m. of the missed day. It is preferred that teachers are notified ahead of time when possible. The school calendar provides an academic break during Christmas and Spring Vacations. Families are strongly encouraged to take vacation trips during those times rather than when school is in session. However, we know that sometimes this is unavoidable. If you know your child will miss a significant amount of time because of a family trip, please let us know as soon as possible. In these cases, teachers will need at least a week ahead to prepare work to be completed outside of class.

Early Dismissals: When your child needs to leave early during the school day, please email the teacher or call the office. We will do our best to have your child ready for pickup in the EMES office.

Late Arrivals: When your child arrives late, after 8:20 am, please enter the elementary office and sign them in.

Back to School Night

This event is an informal time when students can visit their classrooms, find their cubbies, and become reacquainted with their friends and teachers. This is a great way for new students to become familiar with the EMES environment, and for their classmates to welcome them.

Behavior Guidelines

We believe that all students have the right to a safe learning environment. Therefore, we expect each person to be treated with respect and dignity and to respect God and God's creation. The teachers model positive behavior and include the students in daily discussions about what it means to be a member of a respectful community.

We believe that children need to be a part of setting class guidelines. Although the school has overarching guidelines and expectations of the community members, individual classes take time each fall to develop more specific expectations for their classroom. When students are a part of the development of guidelines, they are more invested in making sure they are followed. Throughout the year, time is taken for students to review the guidelines and evaluate the class' adherence to them.

Conflicts are a part of everyday life. The school community works at solving conflicts in school peacefully. Each class takes time throughout the school year to learn and develop skills that are needed to resolve conflicts in a restorative way. The peace building class, once a week, reinforces these skills and values. If students fail to respect classroom or school expectations, teachers will have a private conversation with the student to help guide them. If the behavior continues, teachers may use a variety of strategies such as, moving the student to a different location, giving a logical consequence, or communicating with the parent. If the support of the administration is needed, a conference may be called for the student, teacher, principal, and the parent. We believe that by working together as a team, these behavioral issues can be resolved in a positive way.

Hate speech and physical aggression are taken seriously at EMES and will be addressed right away. We believe that elementary school is a good time for all students to be aware of ways that people are hurt or excluded. These behaviors are addressed clearly and with care for all parties.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special times for our students. We invite parents to eat lunch with their children on their birthday. Parents may also choose to bring a snack for their child's classmates on his/her birthday. Parents should communicate with the teacher to coordinate a time for this snack. We encourage healthy snacks during this time.

Class Parent Representative

Each class has one or two parent representatives. These representatives assist teachers or elicit assistance from other parents with events as needed, encourage interaction of families outside the classroom, coordinate parent drivers for field trips, and help to coordinate one school-wide function or community event.

Communication

A weekly newsletter is published from the office and distributed through email. It contains information for the school-wide community. In addition, each classroom teacher publishes a newsletter or calendar regularly, giving more detailed information about curriculum and class projects. The office newsletters are sent weekly by e-mail. Classroom newsletters are sent by e-mail and/or hard copy. We believe that parents play an important role in a child's education. Parents often have helpful information to share about their children. Our doors are open, and we welcome your communication with us. If you have a question or concern about your child, please contact the classroom teacher first. If the issue cannot be resolved, then make an appointment to meet with the principal. A joint meeting by all three parties can be arranged as well.

Crisis Alert

In the event of a school-wide crisis, we will communicate with families by way of our Emergency Text Alert system. There will be the opportunity for families to sign up for this service at the beginning of the school year.

Curriculum Overview – see appendix A

Drama/Theater

All fourth and fifth graders participate in a Dessert Theater experience. Dessert Theater is an evening performance where students perform one or two plays with their classmates and dessert is served to the audience. Practices will take place during the school day. The purpose of this event is to give students the opportunity to experience practicing and performing on stage. Informal drama presentations are integrated throughout the curriculum at all grade levels.

Dress

Students should dress comfortably and in “weather appropriate” clothing. Writing on some t-shirts can be offensive; students and parents should keep this in mind when choosing clothing to wear to school.

In order to participate in P.E. and music classes, all students should have a pair of sneakers each day. If students don't wear sneakers to school, they should bring a pair of sneakers to change into before P.E. class begins.

Students at EMES will play outside every day if possible; they will also have art class twice a week. Therefore, keep this in mind as your child dresses for school as clothes may get dirty with daily work and play.

During the graduation ceremony, fifth graders wear dressier clothing; other students may choose to dress more formally as well. Any question about dress can be directed to your child's teacher.

Drop-Off and Pick-Up

Our school day begins at 8:20 a.m. Teachers will be in the classrooms ready for students by 7:50 a.m. School dismisses at 3:00 p.m. If your work schedule necessitates that you drop off your child earlier than 7:50 am, please contact the principal to arrange an earlier drop-off.

When dropping off your child in the morning, please pull in the gym parking lot and drive around to the bridge. There will always be an adult there to greet your students each morning.

For safety reasons, please do not pass the car in front of you unless you are directed to do so.

When picking up your child at the end of the day, use the same procedure. Students will be gathered outside near the bridge. As you drive around, a teacher will make sure your student gets into your car safely. Please remain in your car while the student is loaded, as to keep the line moving.

It is important to be on time for your child's pickup. If a late arrival is unavoidable, please call the school and we will send your child to the After School Program until you can pick them up. If 3:00 p.m. will be a difficult pickup time for you on a regular basis, you may want to consider the flexible pickup option for after school. See more information in the After School Program section of this handbook.

Please inform anyone who is picking up or dropping off your child of the drop-off and pick-up procedures. This prevents any confusion. **If there is a change in who is picking up your child, please call the office, and they will notify the teacher. Emails are not checked regularly during the school day.** A call ensures that the teacher knows how the child is getting home from school.

Elementary Counseling Program

The goal of the counseling program at Eastern Mennonite Elementary School is to assist students in social emotional learning and personal/social development through individual and group counseling as well as classroom lessons. This is a coordinated effort by faculty, staff, and parents under the direction of the counselors and principals.

There are many reasons a student might see a school counselor. Personal/social counseling assists students in developing a greater understanding of themselves as they relate to the community around them, supports healthy and wise choices, and provides support in resolving conflicts.

Individual Counseling

School counselors assist in helping students work through their unique requests or concerns. While EMS does not provide long term weekly counseling, connections and referrals can also be made with professional community mental health counselors as ongoing psychological needs are necessitated.

Group Counseling

Group counseling may be provided surrounding specific themes of social emotional development or other identified areas of interest or assessed needs. Parents/guardians are notified prior to any multi-session group counseling.

Classroom Counseling Lessons

Counselors work collaboratively with teachers to develop and bring curriculum into the classroom. Topics relate to students' social emotional development.

Access

Students may request an appointment with a counselor. Parents and teachers may call or email counselors if they would like to request an appointment for their student. Alternately, counselors may request to see a student if a counselor becomes aware of a need.

Confidentiality Statement

At all times we seek to work with and honor parental involvement. All concerns of students and/or their families are met with appropriate and careful confidentiality. Where there exists perceived threat of harm to self or others, additional protective procedures will also be followed. When necessary, other professional counsel will be obtained.

Opt-Out

If parents choose not to have their student participate in personal/social counseling or multi-session group counseling, parents should notify the school in writing.

Emergency Drills

Fire drills are conducted regularly with students; a tornado drill is conducted once a year. Intruder drills are reviewed with faculty and staff each fall and practiced with students when appropriate. Teachers will communicate with parents regarding these drills as needed. The school has a written procedure for all emergency drills, and teachers are proficient in drill procedures.

Faith Building Philosophy – see Appendix A

Field Trips

All students will participate in field trips during the school year. Teachers will prepare students for the trip, carry out the trip with a plan, and will follow up with activities after the trip is completed. The purpose of field trips is to enhance the classroom learning and to add “real-world” experiences to the curriculum. All field trip costs are covered in the General Fee that is paid when your child enrolls.

Parents will sign a permission form electronically at the beginning of the school year giving permission for all field trips. Parents will be notified by newsletter or e-mail prior to each trip. Most often students will travel by bus to the field trip destination; however, there will be times when parents will be asked to drive and/or chaperone a trip. In all grades except kindergarten, we ask that younger siblings not attend field trips as this can take away from the students’ experience.

Financial Information

We appreciate families keeping their accounts current. Please refer to your enrollment contract for detailed information regarding financial agreements with Eastern Mennonite School. A family’s account must be current before their student may participate in fee-based activities such as Behind-the-Wheel, E-Term, special field trips, and extended summer trips.

- When payments are late or missed, the following protocol is enacted:
 - a. Immediately after a payment due date is missed or returned for non sufficient funds (NSF), the parent is notified via email from FACTS. FACTS continues to automatically communicate with parents as payments come due, with reminders of missed payments sent via the communication methods parents requested when they set up their FACTS account (email, phone, text).
 - b. When an account is 45 days past due (at least two missed payments), a letter from the Director of Business Affairs is sent via certified mail reiterating the importance of keeping the account up to date and outlining consequences of continued non-payment.
 - c. When an account is 60 days past due (two-three missed payments), the family is contacted via email with a follow-up phone call requesting a meeting to discuss next steps for resolution of the account, to include the following, in order of priority:
 - Student privilege limitations - the student will not be able to participate in optional co-curriculars that incur additional costs, including athletics, optional field trips, higher cost E-Terms, AP exams, behind the wheel, summer experiences, etc.
 - Re-configuring Payment Agreement - if there are temporary financial hardships, payments can be adjusted short-term, but will require catch-up payments before the end of the current year. (Mid-year changes to a payment agreement may result in future financial aid limitations.)
 - Securing a loan through a third-party financial institution to cover any past-due balance and remaining cost for current year. (This may result in a requirement for prepayment of at least a portion of tuition in future years.)

- d. When an account is 90 days late (at least three missed payments), the Director of Business Affairs will initiate withdrawal for student(s) at the end of the current semester unless the account is brought current prior to withdrawal date. If balance remains unpaid at the time of withdrawal, transcripts will be held until a signed Promissory Note (including payment plan) is signed. If any post-withdrawal payments are missed a warrant-in-debt is secured and a collection option is pursued (wage garnishment, judgment lien, etc).

Gatherings

The “Gathering” is an important time for all students and teachers to meet and fellowship together as a community. Gathering takes place once a week on Wednesday mornings. This time may include singing, faith lessons from Pastors, student sharing of Bible verses or stories, hearing from community members about their experiences, and discussing upcoming events in the school. This can also be a time for students to practice speaking or performing in front of the group.

Graduation

Graduation takes place on the last day of school. All students participate in this ceremony in which the graduates are honored. Parents and other family members of the graduates are welcome to attend. A reception for the graduates and their families follows the ceremony.

Homework

The role of homework at EMES is to provide time for practice and reinforcement of skills. Some examples of homework might be reading, math, spelling practice, or a study guide for a test in the upper grades. Each teacher will communicate homework expectations with students and families at the beginning of the school year. We want to support family time and activities outside of the school day as well. We invite parents to communicate with their child’s teacher in order to ensure that homework matches each individual child’s needs.

Illness or Injury

When the school cannot safely cope with a student illness or injury, parents will be contacted immediately, if possible. Student records are kept up to date with current telephone numbers for home, parents’ work places, physician, and who to call in case of emergency. Parents should notify the school of any changes which occur throughout the year.

It is important for us to have a healthy school, so we ask that parents keep students home when they are ill. Students do not learn well if they don’t feel well. Please notify the school if your student is home with an illness.

We ask that your student remain home for the following reasons:

- Fever: If your student’s temperature is 100 degrees or more, keep him/ her home. Please be fever free without the use of fever reducing medicines for at least 24 hours before returning to school.
- Cold/ sore throat/ cough: If your student has frequent, congested coughing, keep them home. For strep throat, the student needs to be on antibiotics for at least 24 hours before returning to school.
- Vomiting/diarrhea: Students should be free of persistent vomiting and diarrhea in the 24 hours before

returning to school.

- General illness or malaise: Students should stay home until they feel well enough to participate in school activities.

Inquiry Projects

We believe students learn best when they take ownership in their own learning; therefore, teachers find many ways during the school year for students to have choices, ask questions, and pursue answers. In the spring, students in second through fifth grade will plan and implement projects of their interest. For the most part, these projects are completed in class and guided by the teacher; however, there may be students who need to complete some of the work at home. Students in kindergarten and first grade participate throughout the year in inquiry based projects as well.

Library

The elementary library is located on the first floor of our building. Students have access to these books on a regular basis and have library class once a week. Students check books out for a week at a time, but are encouraged to renew them as needed. EMES library doesn't charge late fees, but households are asked to reimburse the library when books are lost.

In addition, students will travel to the Massanutten Regional Library regularly. This trip allows students access to a wider selection of books and engages them in life-long library skills. Parents are responsible for fines and books not returned.

Combined, these two library experiences encourage regular student reading, an excitement for books, and an opportunity to develop research skills.

Lost and Found

Lost and found items will be placed in a box located near the EMES office. These items are donated to a local organization if not claimed.

Lunch

Lunch at EMES is a time for positive all-school interaction. Most often students sit with a variety of ages; however, on occasion, students sit with their classmates. Students will have the option of sitting outside or indoors.

Students have the option of purchasing a school lunch from our dining hall. A menu will be provided each month so that families can decide on the meals they want their child to purchase. In addition, several special lunches are planned during the year. Parents and students are notified of the dates and costs of these special lunches.

Medicine and First Aid

If a child needs to take medicine during school hours, please put it in its original container and take it to the office. **All medicine, including cough drops and vitamins, need to be kept in the office.** Students will receive their medicine from the office assistant so that it can be documented properly. For unexpected illness or

emergency, Advil, Tylenol and Benadryl will be kept in the office. The office assistant will call a parent for permission if this medication is needed. The school maintains first aid supplies in the office for minor injuries.

The school must be made aware in writing of any special medical problems or allergic reactions which could cause a serious medical emergency. A medication authorization form will be provided by the school and needs to be signed by a physician.

Parent Night

Parent Night takes place in September of each new school year. This evening is a time for parents to hear from teachers about the routines and expectations of the school year. Parents are able to see the classroom, ask questions, and learn to know other parents in the school community. This event is not a time to discuss an individual child's progress. If you wish to have a conversation with the teacher about your child, please make an appointment at a different time.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Two conference days are scheduled each year. This gives the parent an opportunity to receive specific information about his or her child's progress. These conferences are very important; parents have important insights to share about their child's learning. Teachers will communicate with parents about signing up for a conference time that suits the family's schedule. Conferences can also be scheduled at other times during the year as needed.

Parent Teacher Fellowship – PTF

The PTF operates as a support to the school's mission. As part of our mission, we value the connection between home and school. Parent volunteers are important to the success of the school. They offer time, talents, expertise, and wisdom to us and our students. We encourage each parent to consider volunteering 10 hours each school year as a way to support the school.

The PTF executive team oversees the various activities and projects of the organization throughout the school year. The funds raised each year are used to support the school's program. All parents are members of the PTF and are invited to participate in the PTF sponsored activities throughout the year. Parents are invited to contact one of the executive team members to inquire about current needs. A survey is sent out each summer giving parents the opportunity to volunteer in specific areas.

Privacy Statement

Unless the school is notified in writing and until the school is notified in writing by a parent or legal guardian, the following are considered items of public information and may be released publicly upon request, or as needed in school publications: student name, address, phone number, age and year in school; and parents' names, address, phone number and email addresses.

Progress Reports

Progress reports are sent quarterly. They include checklists for skills as well as narrative comments. Fourth and fifth grade progress reports include percentages for each subject area. This is calculated by averaging a variety of scores taken throughout the quarter. During the second semester, third, fourth, and fifth graders will be given test averages for some of the subject areas as well.

Conferences are held twice a year, in the fall and spring. Teachers contact parents to set up a meeting time. This is a time to celebrate your child's accomplishments and to look at areas that need improvement. Parental presence at conferences is important.

Readmission

A readmission Form will be sent to the home of each current student in February. This should be returned by March 15. The Student General Fee will be billed on the April statement and is due by April 17.

School Closings

When there is inclement weather, listen to TV3 as well as various radio stations for closing announcements. The announcement will be made as "Eastern Mennonite School" and includes elementary, middle and high school. An Opt-in Text Alert Service is also available to parents. More information about this service will be available at the beginning of the school year.

Snacks

Students are encouraged to bring a healthy snack to school. All students have recess or another designated time when they may eat their snacks in the morning.

On occasion, there are special snacks served during the school day for birthdays and other celebrations. **All snacks that are made in school or brought to school by parents should be nut free.** This allows for the safety of all students. If a child has a specific food allergy, parents should notify the teacher so she can be aware of this and/or have a special snack stored at school for these occasions. In general, students do not receive candy as treats during school.

Specialty Class Descriptions – see Appendix C

Supply Lists

Parents will receive a supply list for their children in July. Students should bring those supplies on the first day of school or on Back to School Night. Some items children will keep in their desks for their personal use. Other items will be used collectively. Items such as paper and pencils will need to be replenished during the year.

Testing

Students in fourth grade take the ACT Aspire national standardized test each spring. These test scores are used, along with quarterly progress reports, as one measure of the students' academic success. Parents receive a summary report of their child's progress in August. Any questions regarding this report should be directed to the principal, Maria Archer.

Transfers/Withdrawals

When a parent decides to transfer or needs to withdraw a student from EMES, the parent should begin the process by notifying the Elementary Principal. They should then complete the official forms and see that all outstanding bills and accounts are paid.

Visitors

We encourage current parents to visit classes at EMES. If you want to visit a class, please contact your child's teacher to arrange a convenient time.

During the school year prospective parents and students visit EMES classes. This is a wonderful chance for us to "showcase" our school and program. We encourage our current students to be friendly and to welcome visitors. All visitors should check in at the front desk.

Yearbook

Each year a yearbook is coordinated by a parent volunteer. Photos are gathered throughout the year so they can be used in the yearbook production. Fourth and fifth graders design the yearbook cover. The cost of the yearbook is included in the General Fee paid upon enrolling.

EMES Curriculum Overview

Language Arts is the core of the academic curriculum at EMES because it permeates every other area of study. Students learn to write with clarity, organization, and creativity. Within the context of each piece, students learn grammar concepts in order to make their own writing more effective. Students read class novels, short stories, non-fiction books and articles, as well as other kinds of writing to build upon their reading skills, to learn new vocabulary, to study effective writing techniques, and to enjoy and learn from others' stories. We emphasize reading and hearing stories from varied perspectives, intentionally including BIPOC characters and authors.

EMES uses the *Everyday Mathematics* program developed at the University of Chicago. This program connects each new concept to its use in the “real world.” Students use “hands on” activities and manipulatives to reinforce the concepts. Games are played to reinforce math facts and problem-solving skills. The curriculum has review built into each new lesson so that students continue to use the new concepts every day.

The **social studies** curriculum is *Social Studies/History Alive*. This program helps students make connections between historical events and life today by integrating role-plays, small group problem-solving challenges, and simulations into each unit of study. We emphasize looking at historical events from varied perspectives. Students begin to think about how and why people made decisions in the past and how those decisions affect communities large and small even today.

Like math, the **science** curriculum incorporates experiential learning by using an inquiry approach. Students ask central questions, conduct experiments, collect data, and draw conclusions. Students also learn to gather information from a variety of sources including their own experiments, textbooks, trade books, and experts in the field. This approach to “doing” science gives students experience practicing the skills of being a scientist, not just reading about them. It also creates a culture where students are actively engaged in their own learning.

The specialty areas of study include **art, music, Spanish, physical education, and peacebuilding**. For a description of each area see Appendix B and Appendix C.

Faith Building and Peace Building Philosophy

The Mennonite values of following Jesus in daily life, peacemaking, and service to others are central at EMES. Learning to understand others and to help those around us is part of living peacefully together in community. This includes the school community, local community, as well as the global community. Therefore, the focus of spiritual growth at the elementary school centers on Jesus as an example and model for our lives. By reading and hearing about Jesus' life and the stories Jesus told to others, students see this example most clearly. Students gain an understanding of God's love for them, while opening their arms to others who are different. The faith-building program at EMES is intended to support the teaching that the students' home churches provide for them.

EMES students meet once a week in Gathering to sing, hear stories of Jesus, share faith stories, and to hear others share how they live out their faith in the world. It is also a time for students to hear from families in our school community that have different faith perspectives. A theme is chosen each year, and the sharing in Gathering is focused around this theme. During certain events in the Church calendar, such as Easter and Christmas, students participate in special all-school Gatherings.

Pastors from the churches that EMES students attend are invited to share in our Gathering time to contribute to the spiritual growth of the students. Students are also encouraged to participate in the Church life of their home congregations.

Students also participate in a weekly Peacebuilding class. During this time, they also discern ways they can be contributing members of the community while focusing on service to others and on taking care of our world. Students learn and practice skills to help them feel and show empathy towards others and make caring and responsible decisions; they develop and maintain collaborative relationships where they can learn to problem-solve together. Each classroom teacher integrates these themes into the daily routines. In all classes, students are challenged to follow Jesus' example by looking at the world from the eyes of others and finding ways they can help those around them.

Students' spiritual growth is fostered each day in the classroom as they are given opportunities to talk about questions they face in everyday life and to share and develop their beliefs. Students are also encouraged to celebrate God's creation as they interact with their classmates and as they study and appreciate nature around them. Every day teachers model their faith as they create a respectful classroom where everyone is heard and honesty and integrity are valued. The *Encounter* curriculum, developed by Mennonite Education Council, is used in each classroom to guide faith development.

Encounter uses a narrative approach to teaching about the Bible with the incarnation as its base. It tells stories in a way that highlights God at work through human characters in the story. Stories are told and often followed by wondering questions that lead students out of their individual worlds and into the larger world of faith. Through this curriculum students will grow in their capacity and willingness to respond to join God's work including breaking down dividing walls, working against oppression, practicing compassion, sharing wisdom, and living lives of peace, justice, and service.

Specialty Class Descriptions

Music

EMES's music curriculum is based on the Kodály approach, which uses excellent quality, authentic folksongs and singing games from around the world, art music, and other experiences to lead students to a love of music and a high level of musicianship, including music reading. The approach bases instruction on the developmental readiness of each child. It is singing-based but also incorporates musical instruments including recorder, which begins in 3rd grade. While the main goal of the music curriculum is to develop our students' musicianship, we also know that music reinforces other academic subjects. (The Kodály approach has been linked in several studies to a significant increase in test scores, especially in math.) We also believe in music's power to further our students' development as whole people and to bring us closer to God and to each other.

Art

We believe that art is fundamental to the complete education of a developing child. Because we are created in the image of God the Creator, we believe that the arts can be the vehicle to release that creativity in each of us. Through a variety of teaching strategies, art media and disciplines, students can explore and express their reactions to the world they live in, their family unit, and the faith they are developing. The teaching of art lends itself well to the development of virtues in students. It is especially useful in stimulating creative, lateral thinking and learning persistence. We aim to develop and reinforce a healthy self-concept through success in the creative process and to open the door to future creative pursuits.

Physical Education

Physical activity is critical to the development and maintenance of good health in the elementary years. The goal of physical education at EMES is to develop physically educated individuals who have the knowledge, skills and confidence to enjoy a lifetime of healthy physical activity. We know that some students are gifted in the area of physical activity and we recognize these gifts; we also believe that all students can grow to be more physically competent. Students participate in P.E. class four days a week where they learn the importance of being physically fit and living an active life. In addition, good sportsmanship is emphasized as well as fair play. Emphasis is on including all teammates as opposed to keeping score.

Spanish

The Spanish program at EMES embraces the concept that the world is a global community. Learning another language exposes children to other ways of looking at the world and helps them understand that they are a part of this global community. The curriculum in kindergarten through fifth grade focuses on conversational 2 where the topics mirror students' life experiences. In addition, the older students are introduced to Spanish grammar. Spanish is spoken for most of each class period as students play games, sing songs, listen and repeat, and read and write. Through the learning of a second language our students enhance their listening ability, memory, creativity, and critical thinking skills.