



Parent/Student Handbook

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Unique Aspects of Explorer Elementary Charter School.....	3
School Information and Policies	5
Home-School Agreement	10
Assessment.....	12
Homework Policy.....	13
Discipline Policy.....	14
Special Education.....	16
Records.....	17
Parent Council.....	19
Parent Volunteer Information.....	20
Disaster Preparedness.....	22
Complaint Policy.....	23

UNIQUE ASPECTS OF EXPLORER ELEMENTARY CHARTER SCHOOL

Explorer Elementary Charter School is an independent public school, founded in 2000, that serves 340 students enrolled by lottery from across San Diego.

Explorer's mission is to create caring, confident learners in a compassionate learning community that respects and values the different interests, abilities, learning styles, ethnic diversity, and cultural backgrounds of each child. Explorer's program is based on the belief that education is a shared responsibility of students, faculty, parents, and community.

WHAT MAKES EXPLORER UNIQUE?

1. ***School-Wide Social Emotional Literacy Program:*** The Social-Emotional Literacy Program is central to Explorer's identity and differentiates it from other schools in San Diego. This program integrates social issues into the daily academic curriculum and involves all students, parents, teachers, and community members. The program teaches and reinforces core concepts such as tolerance, compassion, ethical and responsible behavior, empathy, positive conflict resolution, and collaboration. The goals of this program are (1) to raise the level of social and emotional competence in all children as part of their regular education – not just in children who are faltering and identified as “troubled;” (2) to improve academic performance by creating caring, confident learners who are self aware; and (3) to create a compassionate, ethical, socially responsible, collaborative learning community.
2. ***How Children Learn Is As Important As What Children Learn:*** Explorer's program is designed to teach children with dignity. The faculty is dedicated to providing a developmentally appropriate program that respects each child's style of learning. Critical to the program is teaching children the skills that will empower them to become self-motivated, life-long learners. Learning experiences are structured to encourage children to develop positive social behaviors by interacting with others cooperatively, collaboratively, and compassionately. Project-based approaches provide meaningful opportunities for students to make connections with the world around them.
3. ***Strategies for Deeper Learning:*** Faculty at the school have been trained in strategies to add depth and complexity to students' learning. All children, at every level of learning, are exposed to these strategies. For example, when reading literature, children might be asked to find evidence of concepts such as multiple perspectives, ethics, convergence, rules, patterns and details within the context of the book. Every grade also chooses a “big idea” interdisciplinary theme such as change, systems, relationships, influence, or power, as a lens through which they find meaning in their work. Students discuss these ideas in scholarly groups of various kinds – circles, debates, or “world cafes.”
4. ***Social and Academic Learning:*** At Explorer, we have seen that the awareness of self and others that is created through the school's social curriculum has profound academic impacts. In writing, for example, children find and use their authentic voice. In history, children see and analyze differing perspectives. In science, children analyze a problem, hypothesize a solution, and test the solution with evidence – the same way we teach them to solve a problem on the playground. Just as in social and emotional development, rote academic learning can be superficial and fleeting. Learning, both emotional and cognitive, rooted in rigorous analysis of self, others, texts, and data can be longer lasting, deeper, and more flexible.
5. ***Partnerships with Parents:*** Underlying our relationship with parents is the understanding that they have much to teach us about their children. Parents are an integral part of their children's education and are valued as contributing members of this learning

community. The Parent Education Program provides ongoing, structured support for parents. The goal of this program is to help parents deal more effectively with their children's emotional life. In this way, children receive consistent messages about social and emotional competence in all parts of their lives.

6. **University Partnerships:** The school has strong working relationships with UCSD, USD and Point Loma Nazarene. In addition, Explorer participates in the HTH Graduate School of Education, one of very few school-centered schools of education in the United States. Explorer's practices and approaches to instruction, learning and assessments are informed by current educational and neuroscientific research. In addition, Explorer's teachers and university faculty work together to ensure that research is well informed by the real-life issues that occur every day in school.
7. **Partnership with High Tech High Learning:** Explorer Elementary is affiliated with High Tech High Learning and is a member of its charter management organization. Children have many opportunities for working together with middle school and high school students and the school directors meet regularly to discuss school-related issues. Upon graduation, fifth grade students at Explorer Elementary have the opportunity to attend one of the High Tech Middle Schools.

GOVERNANCE

Explorer Elementary Charter School is incorporated as a nonprofit public benefit corporation and is governed by a Board of Directors. All Board meetings are public and minutes are available in Explorer's front office. Board meetings are attended by a faculty representative as well as a representative from the Parent Council. Board meeting dates and times are posted on the school calendar, available at www.explorerelementary.org. Board meeting agendas are posted in front of the school 72 hours before each meeting.

SCHOOL INFORMATION AND PROCEDURES

Arrival and Dismissal Policy

School begins at 8:15 am. Families are not allowed to enter the school until 8 am. School ends at 3 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and at 12 pm on Wednesdays. If your child is late, please stop by the office on your way in. Doors to Explorer School will be locked at 3:30 pm every day; 1 pm on Wednesdays. The Truxtun entrance is open from 8 am to 8:30 am and 2:45 pm to 3:30 pm Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday and locked at 1 pm on Wednesdays. If you will be picking your child up after these times, please enter and exit through the side gate to the playground. For the safety of your children, hallways are closed when teachers are no longer supervising and students are never allowed to leave Explorer School without an adult.

WEDNESDAY is a MINIMUM DAY with 12:30 pm DISMISSAL after lunch

Attendance Policy

All classes begin each day with a morning meeting. This meeting fulfills many objectives including building community, sharing with one another, and imparting important academic information.

It is essential that children be at school on time each day at 8:15 am. When children enter the classroom late, it is difficult for learning to successfully begin. It is also difficult for a child to enter when a meeting is in progress or work is ongoing. **If a child is tardy or you need to pick your child up early, please stop by the office to sign your child in/out.**

Our attendance policy is that any student who has missed five consecutive days of school, without any contact between their family and the school, will be withdrawn from the school. Additionally, any student who has missed fifteen consecutive days of school, even with contact from their family to the school, may be withdrawn from school. In either of the preceding situations, any student who has been so withdrawn may reapply for admission for the next school year, but acceptance is not guaranteed.

Our policy also states that any student who is tardy, which is defined as more than 15 minutes late or after 8:30 am, in excess of 8 times will receive a warning by letter. If the student continues to be tardy after the receipt of this letter, a meeting will be held between the Principal and the parents. If after the meeting, the student continues to be tardy, the student may be withdrawn from school. Any student who has been so withdrawn may reapply for admission for the next school year, but acceptance is not guaranteed.

Illness Policy

For the protection of your children and our staff, we must ask you to carefully read our Illness Policy. Please keep your child home if he or she has:

- ◆ A fever. A child should stay home until he/she has a normal temperature for 24 hours.
- ◆ An unusual rash that may be a symptom of a contagious disease.
- ◆ A contagious disease such as measles, mumps, roseola, or chicken pox.
- ◆ An eye infection with discharge or that is unusually red. After being examined by a physician and placed on medication, your child may return.
- ◆ An ear or throat infection. Once examined, on medication, and comfortable, your child may return.
- ◆ A cold. Your child should stay home until the symptoms of a cold such as coughing, sneezing, watery eyes and thick, green mucous secretions have subsided.

- ◆ Diarrhea and/or symptoms of flu. A child who has been vomiting, has had diarrhea and/or complaining of a headache, often gets even worse at school.
- ◆ A persistent, hacking cough.
- ◆ Been breathing rapidly or noisily with effort.
- ◆ Head lice and/or nits (lice eggs) on the shafts of the hair. Your child may return to school once all head lice and nits are removed. Explorer has a NO NIT policy.

You will need to assess the comfort of your child before leaving for school. If your child has been listless, complains of a headache, is pale, or unusually irritable, then this would be a good day to stay home.

Please call the school office no later than 9 am at (619) 795-3600 if you keep your child home due to illness or for any other reason. If you have to leave a message, please leave the following information:

- **Child's Name**
- **Teacher's Name**
- **Specific illness, i.e. cold, flu, etc.**

Even if you notify your child's teacher of the above, please contact the front office with this information as well.

The staff needs to be aware of the illnesses which may be present among children. Please remember to keep your emergency information up to date. You will be contacted if your child becomes ill at school.

Wellness Policy

Goals for Nutrition Education:

- A nutrition poster displayed in the lunch room for students to read
- Lunch program will offer organic when available and always serve fresh vegetables and fruit each day, healthy carbohydrates and lean protein
- Serve 1% milk only
- Nutrition education taught by coach during physical education
- Nutrition taught through on-site gardening program

Goals for Physical Activity:

- 1st through 5th grade students will have two 20 minute recesses each day with free play time
- Kindergarten students will have two 1 hour recesses with free play time
- All students will have a structured Physical Education Class twice a week with a coach
- For 100% of fifth grade students to pass standard physical fitness test ***Fitness Gram***

Other School-Based Activities that Promote Student Wellness:

- Yearly Jog-a-Thon to promote physical activity
- Yearly Field Day to promote physical activity
- Suzie's Farm monthly delivery of organic, locally grown fruit and vegetables to promote nutrition
- School garden program
- Yearly Hearing and Vision tests
- Two to three school wide Skate Nights per year to promote physical activity
- Enrichment classes/activities offered after school such as Yoga, Karate, walks to the park, free play time, organized sports

Snack Policy

Please provide a nutritious snack for your child each day. We will have a limited amount of snacks available in the office for *emergencies only*.

Lunch Policy

Explorer provides a catered nutritious hot lunch for children for a fee. Pizza is served every Tuesday. Forms are sent home twice a year to sign up for hot lunches. If you do not sign up for hot lunch, please pack a healthy lunch daily for your child. Because we know lunches are left at home or misplaced at school from time to time, we do provide **emergency** lunches for a fee of \$5 per lunch. You will receive an invoice every 4 to 6 weeks for *emergency* hot lunches issued by the front office. This \$5 charge applies to families who qualify for REDUCED lunches as well.

All families will be provided with a School Meal Application form for each new school year to determine eligibility. A new School Meal Application must be filled out every year. If during the school year your status changes, please stop by the front office for a new form. You must be pre-approved for FREE or REDUCED lunches through the Explorer School office before signing up for FREE or REDUCED lunches using our Hot Lunch Registration Form. In addition, we are required to perform a random annual audit of 3% of our qualifying reduced and free families once a year. If your family is selected to be audited, please abide by the due date in order to avoid termination of your family's free or reduced lunch status.

Aftercare Policy

Explorer's aftercare program runs from 3 pm to 6 pm every Monday, Tuesday, and Thursday; 12:30 pm to 6 pm every Wednesday; and, 3 pm to 5 pm every Friday. Aftercare is open to all students and drop in care is available. Children not picked up in front of their classroom by 3:15 pm will automatically be escorted to aftercare. The charge per hour is currently \$6 and you will receive a statement every two weeks. Payment is due upon receipt of statement. Invoices are available upon request. Each invoice will show the hours your child was in aftercare each day.

If you are late picking up your child (i.e. after 6 pm Monday through Thursday or after 5 pm on Friday) you will be charged a \$20 late fee per child. We know that you understand how important it is to be on time. Therefore, even if your child qualifies for aftercare at reduced or no charge, you will still be held responsible for the \$20 late fee. *If a child is picked up late more than two times, a conference will be held and your child may not be eligible for aftercare.*

Children must remain in aftercare until an adult signs them out; therefore, older siblings may **not** take younger siblings from Explorer School to any of the High Tech schools. Children need to be enrolled in a formal program after school hours to ensure their safety and High Tech High is not responsible for the care of Explorer students.

If you think your family might qualify for FREE or REDUCED aftercare, please fill out a School Meal Application form for pre-approval through the Explorer School office.

School Communications

The Explorer School office sends an update each Friday called the **Explorer News** which has reminders, calendars and information about the various activities and events occurring at Explorer. The Explorer News is always posted on the bulletin board outside the front door as well. In addition to the Explorer News, you will receive informational emails during the week. Please make sure that

we have your correct email address so that you will receive these updates and set your email program to accept all emails from jeconomy@explorerelementary.org and pcamarda@explorerelementary.org.

Explorer maintains a website with general school information and an updated school calendar at <http://www.explorerelementary.org>. The Parent Council also maintains a website that is updated weekly with current news, schedules, and forms at <http://pcee.info/>. This website has an up-to-date school calendar which includes enrichment class and hot lunch schedules.

You will receive a communication from the Connect-Ed. Emergency Phone System at the beginning of the school year as a test of this system. If after receiving your test Connect-Ed call, you would like to change the number or add an additional number, please let the front office know. A total of two numbers can be called. In the event of a “real” emergency, we will use this system to contact you.

Birthday Policy

Since our school is small, we need to be especially sensitive to children’s feelings about celebrations and parties. We encourage celebrations of children’s birthdays with a special and healthy snack choice in the classroom. For out-of-school parties, when the entire class is not invited, please mail invitations to the invited children’s homes rather than deliver them in school. We expect you will be careful to be inclusive as children’s feelings are often hurt when they are left out.

School Visit Policy

Parents are encouraged to make regular visits and volunteer at Explorer School. In order to monitor safety, we would like parents to sign in at the front office before going to the classroom. It is also a requirement at Explorer that all volunteers have a TB test result on file with the front office. TB test results are valid for up to four years.

Field Trip Policy

Field trips complement learning. They offer students a way to meaningfully connect curriculum to experience. To participate in a field trip, all students must have a signed field trip permission slip. Each trip requires its own permission slip. These will be sent home prior to the trip by your child’s teacher and must be signed by a parent or guardian. If you would like to volunteer to drive for a field trip, please provide the front office with a copy of your vehicle insurance card and fill out the Drive Information section on the Permission Form. The vehicle insurance copy you provide will be kept on file in the front office. Please drop off a new copy if any information changes.

Returned Check Policy

All bank fees and amounts due will be your responsibility if the bank returns a check as a non-sufficient funds (NSF) check. The bank charge is currently \$15 in addition to the amount of the NSF check. If a NSF check occurs a second time, you will be asked to pay with cash, cashier’s check or money order for any future payments to Explorer School.

Parent Directory Use Policy

The Parent Directory information, including names, addresses, phone numbers and emails, is provided as a courtesy to our families. Its sole purpose is to connect families for school-related matters. Please do not use the directory to solicit non-school related business.

Parking Policy

Explorer has only limited parking available for student pick-up and drop-off. If you choose to park in the lot in front of the school OR in Lot E-1 (across from the school) please be aware that you are only permitted to park in spaces marked "Visitor." Parking in any other space may result in a ticket. If no "Visitor" spaces are available, there is ample street parking in the residential neighborhood on the other side of Farragut Road.

Please do not park in the two spots assigned to the ***Art from the Heart*** winning families (these spots are located directly to the left of Explorer School's front doors). There are signs posted. Families here at Explorer School won these parking spaces at our annual ***Art from the Heart*** auction and only they are allowed use of these parking spaces at all times.

Photography Policy

From time to time, photos and video of children learning will be featured on Explorer's website or may be used to help train other teachers. Parents who wish to exclude their children from being photographed need to let the front office of Explorer School know.

Walking Field Trip Policy

Occasionally our teaching staff will take students to one of the High Tech schools to see a performance or view a project, to the grassy areas surrounding the High Tech schools or to one of the many businesses located here within Liberty Station. Because all of these locations are within walking distance and do not require use of automobile transportation, we do not require a field trip form for each walking field trip within Liberty Station. Parents who wish to exclude their children from these walking field trips need to let the front office of Explorer School know.

Explorer Elementary Charter School

HOME-SCHOOL AGREEMENT

STUDENT

I will:

- Take responsibility to achieve my personal best and ask for help when I need it
- Attend school regularly and on time
- Complete all assigned schoolwork and homework
- Give parents all papers sent from school and return them as required
- Show kindness, respect, and consideration to all
- Wear appropriate clothing

PARENT

I will:

- Make sure my child(ren) attend school regularly and on time (An Independent Study contract will be expected for all approved absences of three days or more)
- Assist my child(ren) with homework and review schoolwork with them, including reading with or to them whenever possible. I will also provide an appropriate study area equipped with necessary materials
- Review school and class rules and consequences with my child(ren) and support the school's discipline plan
- Maintain good communications between teacher and parent, including reading, signing, and returning all papers in a timely manner
- Provide accurate, up-to-date telephone numbers and emergency contact information to the office
- Commit to being an active member of the parent/school community and show my support. Encouraged methods of support include: attending parent conferences and Back-to-School Night and Exhibition activities, attending student presentations, driving students on field trips, assisting with projects, helping with fundraisers or volunteering in class.
- Show kindness, consideration, and respect to all

Student's Last Name _____

Student's First Name _____

STAFF

All staff members agree to:

- Promote a positive school climate
- Be an excellent role model
- Show respect for all
- Provide a safe and orderly environment

As a teacher I will:

- Provide regular communication between home and school. This communication will contain information regarding student's progress
- Meet the needs of all students by differentiating lessons to allow for different learning styles and ability levels
- Promote positive self-esteem and self-confidence in each child
- Welcome parent involvement
- Be available for extra help for students
- Show kindness, respect, and consideration for all

By signing below, you acknowledge that you have read this form in its entirety and have thoroughly read our policies in the Parent Handbook:

Signatures:

Student

Parent

Teacher

Administrator

Date

Non-compliance with the Home School Agreement may result in a non-renewal of the agreement or the child's removal from the school in accordance with provisions outlined in the school's discipline plan

ASSESSMENT

Explorer Elementary Charter School accepts the challenge of finding ways to assess student learning that give an authentic picture of student accomplishment.

The goal of assessment is to provide information for:

- Curriculum planning, determining and improving instructional practices
- Special needs and interests of students
- Feedback to students regarding their individual progress
- Program accountability
- Communication with parents and the larger community

Multiple measures of assessments are used to maintain a balanced assessment system. These assessments are linked to the standards for literacy, mathematics, science, history-social science, and applied learning. Each child is assessed at least twice a year in the comprehensive inventory of basic math skills, independent reading inventory, running reading records, writing prompts that are genre specific, and conceptual math testing in grades three, four and five. The assessments are rubric-scored and data is collected to chart both individual growth and school wide trends.

The school implements performance-based assessments that enable children to demonstrate what they know and articulate information they have studied and learned. This is accomplished in an annual “All School Exhibition of Learning” and in projects within all classrooms.

Students keep journals which reflect their own performance in math and writing. Charts on all classroom walls reflect student thinking, problem solving, and scholarly debates.

Parent/teacher conferences are held formally twice a year and informal conversations occur daily. It is our goal to always listen to parents and to keep them intimately informed about their child’s progress.

HOMEWORK POLICY

As a faculty we want to be fully sensitive to children's and families' needs for free time and also to do our best to prepare our students for future academic success.

- As a general rule, homework will not be assigned over weekends or holidays
- Children will be expected to read as long as they wish for pleasure
- There will be no homework in kindergarten
- First grade will have minimal homework, approximately two times per week
- Children will be given choice in how they practice necessary academic skills
- Teachers will give oral or written feedback to all children about their homework
- Homework will be accommodated for children who are in any way challenged and extensions will be given to those children who need them
- Should any child be stressed or working an excessive amount of time, please speak to the child's teacher immediately

DISCIPLINE POLICY

It is the goal of Explorer Elementary Charter School to provide experiences for children that teach them compassion, commitment, and concern for others. It is understood that children learn what they experience, and therefore all adults model appropriate behavior for children. The faculty at the school help children behave in ways that are conducive to learning and building community.

At Explorer Elementary Charter School, we are dedicated to helping children learn to meet their own needs while respecting the needs of others. Within each classroom, age-appropriate rules and consequences are decided upon in the beginning of the school year. Teachers form empathic and positive relationships with their students, holding them to high standards of behavior.

Children and teachers decide upon rules together for their mutual benefit. They also decide upon solutions that will be helpful to all concerned should problems arise. When teachers make decisions without a student's input, they use firmness and kindness, dignity and respect.

It is our strong belief that while punishment may work in the short term to stop misbehavior immediately, long-range results may include resentment, revenge, rebellion, and/or retreat. Therefore, Explorer Elementary Charter School uses discipline that is not humiliating to children. Its purpose is to achieve long-range goals as well as responsibility and immediate cooperation. It is based upon mutuality and incorporates clear and firm expectations and respect for children so that a foundation for teaching life skills, good decision-making and self control is emphasized.

The main objective in assigning consequences for misbehavior is to assist children in making good choices, whether in the classroom, at lunch time, or during recess. When a child is **unsafe, interrupts learning, or clearly does not respect the needs of others**, the following course of action occurs:

- Children are reminded of the expected behavior and previously agreed-upon school standards
- Should the behavior continue, the teacher will conference with the child to determine good decision making
- When inappropriate behavior does not change, the principal will be consulted
- Finally, a conference will be called with the parent in order to assist the child in meeting the school's expectations for behavior

If at any time a child's behavior is unsafe or dangerous to himself/herself or to another child or teacher, the child may be sent home from school for at least the remainder of the school day. Explorer Elementary Charter School regards suspensions and expulsion as a last resort. However, should a child's behavior be dangerous to self or others, expulsion proceedings will occur according to the policies designated in the school's charter.

The following offenses represent grounds for a mandatory suspension and mandatory expulsion proceedings:

- Possession of a weapon (e.g., firearms, knives or explosives).
- Unlawful sale or offer of any narcotic or controlled substance.
- Sexual assault or battery.

The following offenses represent grounds that may result in discipline in the form of suspension and expulsion proceedings:

- Acts of bullying or harassment of another.
- The threat, causation or attempted causation of physical injury to another person, including sexual assault.

- Obscene or offensive acts or habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- Disruption of school activities or willful defiance of valid school authorities.
- Robbery or attempted robbery of school or private property.
- Destruction or attempted destruction of school or private property.
- Unlawful possession, use or being under the influence of any controlled substance, alcoholic beverage or intoxicant.
- Violation of a policy or procedure by a student and/or parent as set forth in this Parent and Student Handbook

Explorer's charter, available on the school's website, outlines expulsion proceedings and due process rights of families and children in the event of an expulsion proceeding.

SCHOOL WIDE RULES

- Respect the needs and feelings of others
- Use appropriate language and demonstrate concern for the property of teachers and peers
- Be safe and be considerate of the safety of others
- Remain in the classroom or on school grounds unless permission is given by the teacher or administrator to leave

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Explorer Elementary Charter School strives to meet the needs of all children regardless of their physical or developmental challenges. A Student Study Team will be called together as needed (teacher, resource teacher, principal) based on each child's special circumstances.

In the event a learning or physical challenge hindering a student's progress significantly is documented through appropriate observation and testing, a student may qualify for participation in a formal Individualized Education Plan (IEP). This process designates a clearly identified group of professionals who, along with the parents, implement a specifically designed education program complete with formal methods, time frames, and documentation procedures.

Students may enter the school with an active IEP. In these cases, our faculty will determine the best way to provide continuity of service.

RECORDS

Student Records

Administrators take care to preserve both the integrity and the privacy of required school records. These records are retained permanently at the school site until such time that a request of records is made from another school or agency (please see below for guidelines of records requests). Each student's cumulative record includes the following minimum data:

- Directory information
- Academic work completed
- Grade or level placement
- Enrollment and attendance data
- Standardized test data
- Permanent health record

Emergency Care Information

The Principal has readily accessible records containing emergency care information for each student. Emergency care information is also available to extended day care personnel.

Access to Student Records

Parents of currently enrolled or former pupils have an absolute right to access any and all pupil records related to their child. The editing or withholding of any such records is prohibited.

School professionals and certified personnel have access to student records for legitimate educational interests only. Student records will not leave the grounds and prudence will be exercised so that the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 are not violated.

Designated clerical staff have access to student records for purposes of making entries or maintaining records under the supervision of the Principal.

Procedures for Challenging the Content of the Records

Challenges to the content of your child's records are concerned with the correction of data in the student record, not with substantive decisions on academic grades.

The parent of a student may file a written request to the Principal to correct or amend any information in their child's permanent records which they allege to be:

- Inaccurate.
- An unsubstantiated personal conclusion or inference.
- A conclusion or inference outside the observer's area of competence, or not based on personal observation.

If the request is denied, the parent will be given an opportunity to present evidence relevant to the issue raised. This should be done in a meeting with the Principal. After the hearing, a final decision will be made by the Principal, and material in question will either be retained or removed.

Release of Directory Information

Directory information includes: Student's name, class assignment, parent(s) name, address, telephone and email listings.

Explorer Elementary Charter School will provide parents with the opportunity to request that directory information not be released without their consent. Schools are never permitted to furnish a list of student names and addresses to be used for commercial purposes.

Release of Student Record Information to Schools

Student records will be released as soon as possible to requesting schools. Parental signatures will be required before records are sent to anyone.

Release of Records to Persons or Agencies other than Schools

Explorer **must** comply with a court order to release information concerning a student. However, the student's parent should be notified in advance of compliance if it is lawfully possible within the requirements of the judicial order.

Explorer **may not**, without the written authorization of the parents, permit access or release written transcripts to any person or agency not cited previously. This authorization shall be in writing, signed and dated by the person giving the consent. It must specify the records to be released, the reasons for the release, and the names of the parties to whom the records will be released.

PARENT COUNCIL

Explorer is lucky to have an extraordinarily active and supportive parent community. The Explorer Elementary Parent Council coordinates a myriad of activities at the school every day. The Parent Council operates as an arm of the school, but has its own by-laws, which are viewable on its website <http://pcee.info/>. Parent Council is governed by an Executive Board consisting of the following positions.

- President
- VP Volunteer Coordinator
- VP Communications Coordinator
- VP Webmaster
- Treasurer
- Secretary
- Room Parent Coordinators
- Fundraising Coordinators
- Parliamentarian
- Board Liaison
- At-Large Representative
- Alumnus Representative

The Executive Board meets monthly. In addition, there is an open Parent Council meeting each month. The Executive Board includes one member who acts as a parent representative and liaison to Explorer's Board of Trustees.

The following committee positions are filled each year by parents:

- Art from the Heart
- Barton Reading Program
- Book Fair
- Box Tops, Labels & Recycling
- eScrip
- Everyone A Reader
- Explorer Wear
- Fresh & Easy
- Gift Cards
- Hospitality
- Hot Lunch
- Jog-A-Thon
- Library Volunteers
- Movie & Munchies Night
- Newsletter
- Parking Committee
- Skate Night
- Square 1 Art
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- Yearbook
- Other programs

PARENT VOLUNTEER INFORMATION

We welcome parents into our classrooms to assist the learning process. Our goal is to help you make your experience one in which volunteers feel productive and valued. Therefore, we are asking parents who wish to give time to our classrooms to engage in the following process so that your involvement will be focused and worthwhile:

- ◆ Before volunteering in the classroom, you will need to attend a mandatory parent volunteer meeting. You will be notified of the time and date of this at the beginning of the school year in our weekly emails. This meeting is typically scheduled for the first week of October.
- ◆ We will begin parent assistance after the first six weeks of school.
- ◆ Teachers will coordinate volunteer times to accommodate both your needs as well as the needs of the classroom.
- ◆ It would be helpful if all parents who wish to work in our classrooms would read, *How to Talk so Kids Will Listen* by Faber and Mazlish before beginning to volunteer (available in the library and in the parenting bookstore).
- ◆ Prior to volunteering, the teacher will meet with you to clarify expectations and goals.
- ◆ All volunteers are required to have a valid TB test result on file in the front office before volunteering. TB results are valid for up to 4 years.

As always, we appreciate your willingness to contribute to Explorer's learning community. We look forward to working together.

School Fundraising Opportunities

Explorer participates in several fundraising programs that are FREE to both you and the school, yet raise thousands of dollars for important school programs. These are as follows:

- **eScrip:** This is our most important fundraising program—our goal is to have every family enrolled in eScrip! This program lets you register your grocery and credit cards for cash back from a wide range of retailers around San Diego when you use a registered card. When you shop at Vons, Henry's, Whole Foods, or 100's of other local shops and restaurants, the school receives up to 4% of your spending back in cash! Go to www.escrip.com to register using Explorer's school ID # 4503523.
- **Box Tops for Education:** Simply collect box tops and deposit them in the box near the office
- **Printer cartridge recycling:** Place these in the green bin near the office

Explorer Annual and Ongoing Events

We want all families to feel included in our community from the first day of school through their child's graduation. Following is a list of some of the annual and ongoing events:

- **Art from the Heart:** This annual spring fundraising event features a silent auction as well as a live auction of children's artwork created by each classroom and by the art program in addition to many family and company donated items.
- **Skate Night:** Held 3-4 times a year, this fun event gets children, teachers, and parents out to have fun skating while raising money for Parent Council projects.
- **Jog-a-thon:** This springtime event gives children the opportunity to raise funds for the school through pledges and their own efforts running/walking laps.

- **Gatherings:** On pre-announced Friday afternoons, the last 20-30 minutes of the school days are devoted to these all-school assemblies. We encourage parents to attend and experience the children's presentations.
- **Parent Education:** Explorer sponsors weekly classes on various parenting topics, led by professional local therapists and educators with experience in topics such as sibling rivalry, sex education, stress management, and more. These classes are always posted on the Explorer School calendar and included in weekly emails.
- **Parent Bookstore/Children's Bookstore:** These bookstores are maintained by the Parent Council in the hallway near the office, and contain books that our parent educators recommend to address various parenting issues and children's concerns.

DISASTER PREPAREDNESS

As part of our Disaster Preparedness Plan at Explorer Elementary Charter School, we ask parents to supply personal use and consumable items should a disaster require that students remain at school for an extended period of time.

Please send the following items with your child by the end of the first week at school. Please check the expiration dates for the longest shelf life as these items will be kept in your child's classroom and will be returned to you at the end of the school year.

Please place these suggested items in a gallon size Ziploc bag:

- ◆ Clearly mark your child's name on a 3X5 card, readable from outside the bag.
- ◆ On the reverse side of the card, please list your name(s) and those of other people who are authorized to pick up your child.
- ◆ Provide day and evening phone numbers for everyone listed, including you.
- ◆ Provide any helpful medical information, i.e., physician's name and phone number, allergies, etc.
- ◆ Sign and date the card as parent or guardian.
- ◆ Supplies may include but are not limited to the following:
 - 2 each – 8 oz. juices (canned or boxed) with pop tops
 - 2 each – 4 1/2 oz. cans of small fruit with pop tops
 - 2 each – dried fruit snack packages
 - 2 each – peanut butter or cheese and cracker type snack packages
 - 2 each – granola bars
 - 2 each – individual moist towelettes
 - 1 plastic spoon
 - A family picture and "I love you" note to your child

We have very limited storage space, so please limit the items to those that will fit in a gallon Ziploc plastic bag. The school will have a supply of water, snacks, flashlights, hygiene and first aid supplies on hand in case of disaster. The items you supply in the Ziploc bag will be your child's own personal "comfort bag" in the event of a disaster.

COMPLAINT POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Complaint Policy

Explorer is committed to resolving concerns and complaints in a manner in which all parties feel respectfully heard and understood. Explorer encourages complainants to first contact the person involved to give them an opportunity to respond informally. If the issue is not resolved, there are two procedures outlined below. The first procedure details the steps to take for raising concerns about the operations or administration of the school. The second procedure outlines the steps to take for complaints alleging a violation of federal or state law, discrimination in programs, issues related to sufficiency of instructional materials, facility conditions that pose an emergency or urgent threat or complaints against a school employee.

In all cases, Explorer prohibits retaliation against complainants. The school will attempt to keep information about complainants confidential, except where it is necessary or appropriate to disclose it. The School has the discretion to not investigate anonymous complaints.

Procedures

Concerns

- a. First speak to the person directly involved. If it is a general concern, not involving a specific person, please address your concern to the Office Manager.
- b. If your concern is still unresolved, please contact the Principal.
- c. If, after speaking with the Principal, your concern remains unresolved, please contact the Chair of the Board of Trustees at boardchair@explorerelementary.org. You may also attend a Board meeting and speak during the regularly-scheduled public comment period. Board meeting times and locations are on the school calendar, available at www.explorerelementary.org.

Alleged Violations of Law and Complaints Against School Employees

- d. If the complaint is with a person, please contact that staff member or teacher directly to set up a mutually-agreeable time to discuss the complaint. Remember that such meetings should not interrupt a teacher's instructional time. If a complaint is with a person and is brought first to the Principal's attention, the Principal has the discretion to ask the complainant to contact the staff member or teacher before proceeding further. Any incident of harassment, however, should be directly reported to the Principal. Complaints resolved at this level do not need to proceed further in the process.
- e. Complaints not resolved directly with the staff member or teacher should be brought to the attention of the Principal or Principal's designee. The Principal or designee will meet with the employee either privately or conduct a joint meeting with the complainant. The Principal or designee will report back to the complainant if a private meeting is held. Complaints resolved at this level do not need to proceed further in the process.

- f.** If the complainant feels the matter has not been resolved informally, the complainant may formally submit their complaint in writing within a reasonable time of the incident to the Principal or designee for resolution.
 - g.** In written complaints, the Principal or designee shall consider all the facts and arrive at a resolution of the complaint.
 - h.** If the complainant is dissatisfied with the resolution arrived at by the Principal or designee or if the complaint is with the Principal, the complainant may direct their complaint in writing to the Chair of the Explorer Board of Trustees at boardchair@explorerelementary.org. The Board Chair will determine if the matter will be handled directly by the Chair or by a committee of the Board. The Board Chair or Board Chair-designated committee of the Board will meet with the complainant, discuss the facts and circumstances on which the complaint is based and make a determination of how best to resolve the matter.
 - i.** The decision of the Chair of the Explorer Board of Trustees is final.