

East Cobb Christian School

Middle School Parent-Student Handbook

East Cobb Christian School
4616 Roswell Road
Marietta, GA 30062
770.565.0881
www.eccs.org
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Section 1: General Information

As a ministry of East Cobb Presbyterian Church, our mission is to covenant with Christian parents not only to teach the minds of their children, but also to reach their hearts with the love, grace, and wonder of God.

Middle School Philosophy

East Cobb Christian Middle School (grades 6-8) exists to help families educate their children to the glory of Jesus Christ. We acknowledge the Holy Spirit as the actual teacher. Under His guidance we aim to foster the collaboration of teacher, parent, and pupil. As students probe the why of reality, we strive to give proper attention to information itself, develop the concepts of reason and faith as an integrated pair, and lend assistance to students as they seek the wisdom that matters most. It is our hope that students will become responsible to their calling and be thoroughly equipped to meet the challenges of life to the glory of God.

Absence Procedure

Planned or Expected Absences:

Expected absences must be pre-arranged and approved by the school administration. Obtain the form from the school office. Parents are strongly discouraged from arranging planned absences prior to school vacation days as teachers very often schedule tests the week prior to vacation. Mid-terms for 7th and 8th grade are ***always*** scheduled the week prior to Christmas Break and the week of graduation.

Please make every attempt to schedule orthodontist appointments before or after school or during non-academic times like lunch, study period, or P.E.

Absences Due to Illness:

It is the responsibility of a parent on the day of the absence to communicate directly by calling the school office by 8:30 a.m. to verify that the student is ill. This will allow the homeroom teacher to make necessary arrangements. Please allow students to get well before prematurely sending them back to school. Students should be fever-free and throw-up free for 24 hours before returning to school.

Homework:

See the Homework Policy.

Communication

The key to the covenant relationship with parents and teachers is communication. The key to successful communication is awareness, sensitivity, and frequency.

The spirit of communication between parents and teachers should echo the spirit in Colossians 4:6, which says “Let your conversation be always full of grace, seasoned with salt, so that you may know how to answer everyone.” And Thessalonians 5:11, which says, “Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing.” Information that is shared should be helpful, specific, and useful to the building up of the student, parent, and/or teacher. Please avoid the temptation to discuss any concern with those parents/teachers who are not a part of the problem or the solution.

The middle school coordinator (Cheryl Richardson) is available to answer questions and address most general issues. It is important for parents to communicate with the coordinator or appropriate middle school teacher(s) first before seeking answers from the principal. If an issue arises with a specific teacher please address it with that teacher first.

If you have concerns about a school-related incident ***between students*** always inform the middle school coordinator. We cannot be effective if we are unaware of your concerns. Likewise, teachers will inform you of school-related incidents that involve your student in a timely manner.

Teacher to Parent

A planner is provided by the school and given to each student for daily use. This is to be treated as a textbook in that, if it is lost, it must be replaced. Students are instructed to write their assignments down in their planners daily.

Homework, projects, and tests are recorded in Renweb each week. Long-term assignments will most often be mentioned in the Fourth Wall. Teachers do their best to keep assignments and grades up to date, and parents are encouraged to check Renweb often to keep up with their student’s progress.

Renweb is also used to record disciplinary actions like silent lunch, detention, and dress code violations. While parents may receive emailed information about consequences their child has earned during the school day, teachers will make an effort to communicate about significant issues by phone or in person.

Teachers will schedule two mandatory conferences with parents of all 6th and 7th grade students during the school year. Parents of 8th graders will be scheduled for one mandatory conference during the fall semester. Parents may schedule additional conferences whenever needed.

Parent to Teacher

Anytime a parent wants to make an appointment for a conference with a teacher, the parent should make that desire known by email or a telephone call. When calling at home we ask that you don't call later than 9 p.m. While email can be used, don't assume that an email has been read by the next day.

Homeroom teachers like to get their day organized and greet their students as they start the day. Please don't try to get a mini-conference done before school without an appointment.

Students must learn to check Renweb and/or call fellow students if a question concerning an assignment arises after school. Please help us train our students in responsibility by asking them to find the appropriate information on their own. Remember also, to discuss the appropriateness of calling another student with your child. Waiting to the last minute on every vocabulary quiz and then calling a prepared student places undue stress on your student and the student being called. Students may contact teachers via email (allow 24 hours for a response) or phone if the above measures fail. Do not call teachers after 9pm.

Each parent is reminded of their commitment to make every effort to attend every class meeting, campus parent meeting, and parent-teacher conferences.

Lockers

Each middle school student is provided a locker with a combination lock. Lockers should be kept locked and the combinations kept private. Only locks issued by the school may be used on the lockers. Lost locks will be replaced by the school, and the student will pay a \$10.00 replacement fee. The locker area needs to be clear of all items after school hours. Items left outside of lockers will be taken to Lost and Found or the Confiscation drawer in Room 217.

Removing anything from another person's locker without permission is considered stealing. All lockers are the property of East Cobb Christian School and are subject to search at any time.

Students should take great care not to cause any damage to lockers. The inside of each locker may be personalized to display individual character, but the decorations must reflect good choices. Care should be used in attaching things to the walls of the locker. At the end of the year lockers must be cleaned of everything, including sticker and tape residue. All tape residue must be removed. It is the responsibility of the student to keep their locker clean.

Students may not store any type of **open** liquid container in their lockers. Students should be careful not to slam their lockers. Kicking doors closed is not allowed.

Lockers may be decorated to celebrate a student's birthday. The decorations must be removed by the end of the school day on Friday

Lost/Misplaced Supplies and Clothing

Lost or misplaced academic supplies are placed in the confiscation drawer located in Room 217. Students must pay 50 cents to retrieve any items from the drawer. Lost or misplaced clothing and lunch supplies will be taken to Lost and Found.

Overnight Class Trips

Purpose

Class trips are designed to enhance the educational process and provide Christian fellowship for our students. The 6th and 7th grades combine for consecutive year trips to Space Camp and Savannah. The 8th grade goes to Washington D.C. The trips are designed by the school faculty and administration to provide the following:

- An educational experience outside the classroom that will provide hands-on and on-site learning for our students.
- A social experience to promote Christian fellowship and cooperation among students, teachers, and their parent chaperones.
- A fun experience that allow all students to enjoy and bond with one another in a wholesome way.

Trip Funding

Class trips are primarily funded by the individual family with opportunities organized by parents and students to help students raise money to finance the trip.

- Parents are asked to organize class trip fund-raising activities throughout the year. Pizza lunch is one source of these funds. For students to share in the credit for pizza lunch, parents of the student must help serve and shop.
- Parent organizers will provide the bookkeeper with documentation of student fundraising. The bookkeeper will keep an account of each student's balance.
- Fundraisers must be approved by the administration (The Middle School Coordinator and the Principal).
- Cost of the trips may vary from year to year. 6th and 7th grade trips usually average \$350-\$450 and the 8th grade trip ranges from \$950-\$1,100. Eighth graders participate in additional fundraising throughout the year. Details and payment schedules will be presented as early in the year as possible. Trips must be paid in full prior to departure date.

School Schedule

The school hours are 8:15 a.m. to 2:40 p.m., Monday through Friday. Students will be considered tardy if they arrive in their classroom after 8:15 a.m. Punctuality is greatly encouraged to teach our children to be dependable and good stewards of their time. Students should be seated and ready to work at

8:15 a.m. We recommend arrival time at 8:00 a.m. Please do not arrive prior to 8:00, because the teachers are not available to supervise students and the doors to the building will be locked.

Students and parents will receive a class schedule at the beginning of every year.

Tardy Procedure

Students arriving after 8:15 a.m. must be taken into the school to be signed in by the parent driving to school. Tardy slips will be issued by the office personnel and marked unexcused or excused.

Should a student, for reasons other than unusual traffic tie-ups (as deemed by the administration), accumulate an excessive number of tardies, the principal will contact the parents to encourage punctuality. Excessive non-traffic tardies of five or more times per semester will result in notification to parents. Tardies exceeding ten per year will result in re-enrollment interviews by the School Ministry Team. Middle school students in the building at 8:15 a.m. but not in their homeroom are still considered tardy. They will be sent to the office for a tardy slip.

Visitors

All visitors and parents must obtain a visitor badge from the school administrative office. Parents/students must obtain permission from the school administration prior to bringing any visitors on campus. Former students may visit during lunch time or at various other times during the day with permission from the middle school faculty. Due to liability issues, students not enrolled at ECCS may not go on field trips.

Section 2: Middle School Academic and Behavioral Policies

Academic Honesty Policy

East Cobb Christian School desires our students to live their lives for the glory of God. Academic honesty is an essential part in developing integrity in behavior, relationships, and scholarship.

Responsibilities of Students:

- Complete their own work---tests, quizzes, projects, reports, homework assignments, essays, papers, and in-class assignments.
- Students acknowledge contributions of others when they collaborate or use other sources of information.
- Students do not participate in other students' academic dishonesty

Responsibilities of Parents:

- Encourage student compliance with this policy and have appropriate academic expectations.
- Support their children's academic efforts but do not complete assignments for them.

Responsibilities of Teachers:

- Review this policy with students in each class at the beginning of each year, providing examples of appropriate and inappropriate behavior.
- Provide correct citation methods for outside sources and stress the importance of individual thought and productivity.
- Handle all cases of academic dishonesty with the individual students, and report incidents to the Middle School Coordinator and the Principal.

Consequences

In all cases of academic dishonesty, the teacher or principal will contact the parents.

Consequences for dishonesty or lack of integrity could include requiring work to be redone and submitted for significant grade reduction or giving the students a zero for the assignment, paper, project, report, or test, and detention. For repeated dishonesty or significant violations such as intentional plagiarism or blatant cheating, more serious consequences may be considered including an "F" for a quarter grade or suspension from school for one or more days (Bethany 2006). In the case of repeat offenses, expulsion may be the consequence.

Definition of plagiarism:

“The unauthorized use or close imitation of the language or thoughts of another author and the representation of them as one’s own work.” (Bethany 2006) This includes:

- Putting your name on someone else’s paper or even just their phrases.
- Putting your name on someone’s work and changing only a few words.
- Taking someone else’s idea and presenting it as your own.
- “Recycling” your old work to fit new assignments.
- Failure to put a quote in quotation marks or provide correct source information.

Academic Policy

A grading system is best reflected by assessing three distinct areas—academics, effort, and attitude/behavior. Grades should provide the student with some accountability and personal responsibility as he grows and matures. It also should help prepare the student for the rigorous grading pressures that he will inevitably face once he leaves ECCS.

Grading will be done on a quarter and semester basis. There are two quarters in each semester and two semesters in a school year. Semester one ends at the Christmas break, and Semester two ends at the end of the school year.

Academics Grades

The middle school grading scale is aligned with the State of Georgia so that our students in eighth grade earning credit for math are rated the same. High school credits impact placement in upper level courses and eligibility for the Hope Scholarship. The scale used for academic grading is:

90—100	A
80—89	B
74—79	C
70—73	D
0—69	F

The criteria for academic grading are as follows:

- A = Excellent**
Displays a high level of performance
Demonstrates confidence and command of material
- B = Good**
Displays an above average level of performance
Demonstrates command of subject material
- C= Satisfactory**
Displays an average level of performance
Shows partial command of subject material

D = Poor

Displays a low level of performance

Shows little command of subject material

Non Academic Grades

Two other areas are essential for reflecting a student's educational achievement. These are Effort and Attitude/Behavior. PE, Music, Art, and Study Skills receive these two grades.

Conduct or "citizenship" grades will also be issued by each academic teacher.

Criteria for conduct grading is as follows:

E = Excellent

Goes above and beyond normal expectations

G = Good

Above average

S = Satisfactory

Meet expectations in a satisfactory way, not above or below average. No improvement needed.

N.I. = Needs Improvement

Does not meet behavioral expectations, disruptive or inattentive.

Improvement is needed.

Homework Policy

Homework is important as a valuable aid in helping students make the most of their experience in school. Homework is given because it may reinforce what has been taught in class, prepare students for upcoming lessons, or help students develop self-discipline, responsibility, and organizational skills.

Homework will normally be assigned Monday through Thursday nights and occasionally over the weekend. Parents should expect more time applied to homework than in elementary grades. Most homework assignments will involve reading chapters in textbooks, answering study questions, working problems, and working on long range projects.

Parents are the key to making homework a positive experience for their children. Therefore, we ask that you make homework a top priority, provide necessary supplies and a quiet homework environment, provide necessary praise and support and contact any teacher if you notice a problem.

Each teacher has her own classroom homework policy. Please consult each class syllabus for more information.

Homework is important. Daily grades are often largely an indicator of faithfulness in doing homework. All students can earn excellent grades for homework by being diligent.

Homework and absences:

When homework is not completed for some reason other than death in the family or illness, teachers cannot be expected to judge the legitimacy of the excuse of the student or parents. **Parents must expect consequences for incomplete homework even when they are the cause of their student's failure to complete assignments.**

Expected absences and classwork/homework:

The student is responsible for obtaining all homework assignments and turning them in on the date they are due. Projects and homework assignments that are due during the absence must be finished and submitted **before** the planned absence. Students with pre-arranged or expected absences should get assignments in advance when possible. Students should check Renweb for assignments or email teachers to ask for assignments one week prior to the absence. Students are responsible for learning the missed lessons from available resources and on their own time. Do not expect teachers to reteach lessons. Physicals and orthodontist appointments are considered to be expected absences.

Student illness and classwork/homework:

When a student is absent due to illness there is the need for rest and healing . This should be a priority regarding missed homework.

Requesting homework during student illness:

Check Renweb for class work and homework assignments.

Teachers will place any necessary handouts, returned class work, etc., in a folder in the middle school hallway throughout the school day. It is best to wait until the end of the school day to obtain these. Please remove the papers and leave the folder in the bin.

Make-up class work/homework due to absences:

It is the student's responsibility to find out what material was covered (or assignments given) during any absence from class and to see his or her teacher about any work/lessons/lectures, etc., that were missed. After the student returns to school, the student will have one school day per day missed to make up homework. Make-up work from lengthy absences combined with current work can become overwhelming. Students are strongly encouraged to email or meet with teachers after lengthy absences. Teachers will do their best to assist students with make-up lessons.

Tests and quizzes will be given within 5 school days, with the time being arranged between the student and the teacher, subject to the teacher's discretion. **It is not the teacher's responsibility to schedule make-up tests.** After five days, a grade reduction will be given for any assignment that is incomplete. Make up tests and quizzes will not be given during regular class time unless the teacher schedules them.

All major projects and other homework due on the first day of a student's absence are due on the day he/she returns to school. It is not the teacher's responsibility to remind students about missing assignments.

Bullying Policy

Definition of Bullying

Bullying is sometimes difficult to identify as it requires evidence of both intent and affect and can be difficult to discern from normal relationships between students.

Bullying occurs when a person or group is intimidated, frightened, excluded, hurt or discomforted by a pattern of behaviors directed at them by others (Griffiths 2003).

It is helpful to see bullying not only in terms of a defined range of actions, but also by the impact a pattern of action has on the victim. The action itself may or may not indicate bullying is occurring, but the response of the recipient does.

The following actions in an ongoing form may be forms of bullying:

- Physical aggression—including hitting, punching, shoving, kicking, tripping, giving swirlies
- Teasing or verbal abuse—including putdowns, insults, name calling or racial/sexual remarks.
- Unjustified exclusion from activities or friendship groups.
- Gossiping or slandering
- The setting up of humiliating experiences
- Damaging a person's property/possessions or taking them without permission
- Threatening gestures, actions or words
- Written or electronic messages (email, camera, video, internet messaging, chat rooms, blogs, cell phone) that contain threats or put-downs

The Scriptures instruct us how to live in community. God intends for us to live together in a way that acknowledges differences and accepts others because we are all made in God's image. As a result of sin, our relationships with each other are not always the way that God would have them.

Bullying by nature and the hurt it causes must be responded to appropriately. It is our desire to deal with the bullying itself and also teach strategies to help students deal with bullying behaviors.

It is our desire to:

- Stop the bully behavior.
- Rebuild relationships based on biblical principles of confession, repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.
- Develop appropriate social skills and attitudes in the victims, perpetrators, and bystanders of bullying.
- To promote and reinforce at every opportunity, Christian care and respect for each other.
- To provide clear procedures to deal with bullying.
- To support and restore those who have experienced bullying.

To effectively handle bullying it is important for students, parents, faculty and staff to work together by:

Students:

- Students being bullied should report it to a teacher or the principal and their parents.
- Students who are aware of bullying should report it to a teacher.
- Students should take appropriate steps to discourage or prevent bullying.
- Students should be willing to resolve bullying situations, employing forgiveness and some change in behavior.

Parents:

- Parents are encouraged to listen to what their children say and report bullying concerns to the Middle School Coordinator.
- Parents need to accept that the whole story may be quite complex and trust the school to resolve bullying matters according to the aims and procedures set out.
- Parents not satisfied with the action taken may refer the matter to the chairperson of the School Ministry Team.

Faculty and Staff:

- Faculty and staff members should refer all allegations of bullying to the Middle School Coordinator.
- Faculty members should establish whether an incident is isolated or an ongoing pattern of bullying behavior.

Procedures for establishing whether an incident is an isolated incident or an ongoing pattern of bullying behavior.

- The school administration (Principal and Middle School Coordinator) will speak to all parties (the alleged victim and bully, and sufficient bystanders) to establish the facts of the situation. All parties will be asked to give a verified account of what has happened in order to understand the whole picture.
- The school administration will make a decision regarding whether the incident was an isolated incident or a pattern of behavior that indicates bullying has occurred.
- All incidents are to be documented and written reports will be kept on the behavior section of Renweb.
- Investigations into bullying allegations must be undertaken in a timely manner and should be carried out in such a way as to minimize the risk of escalation.
- Parents of the alleged victim and bully will be informed and involved in the process.

Computer Policy

Students will adhere to Christian principles and will:

- Be responsible and courteous in all communications.
- Be responsible with all computer hardware and software.
- Keep their passwords to themselves
- Respect the confidentiality of folders, work, and files of others
- Learn about and observe copyright laws.
- Be financially responsible for intentional damage done to computers

Students will not:

- Attempt to access or alter unauthorized areas of a computer system.
- Access email during school hours
- Use instant messenger or any online method of communication during school hours
- Any activity not in compliance with any of these rules may result in a loss of access, as well as other disciplinary or legal action.

Discipline policy

Students are expected to exhibit responsibility and use their class time wisely. This means being on time, coming prepared, and displaying courtesy and respect for their fellow students and the teachers. This applies to activities outside of the classroom as well.

The goal of teachers is to maintain an atmosphere that is academically challenging, spiritually nurturing, and relationally fulfilling. Teachers aim to address the heart in discipline. However, physical consequences are often necessary to help the disciplinary process. In order to develop the habits of courtesy and responsibility in middle school students, the following consequences have been established:

Dress Code Violation

If students are out of dress code, they must wear dressy uniform on Friday of that week. If the same student is out of dress code a second time that week or continues to have a problem adhering to the dress code, more serious penalties may be used, including wearing dressy uniform every school day/remaining in the office until a parent provides correct dress. Girls in violation of the length requirement for shorts and skirts will be required to wear a uniform skirt provided by the school. Parents will receive a Renweb behavior notice for all dress code violations.

Tardies

Students may receive a tardy notice for being late to class. In most cases parents will not be notified of classroom tardies. If a student is tardy to the same class twice within a quarter, silent lunch will be assigned.

Silent Lunch

For general misbehavior (speaking out of turn in class, interrupting, playing rough, etc.) silent lunch may be assigned. Students serving silent lunch on a certain day will report to the appropriate classroom and eat their lunch quietly at a desk. Silent lunch is always supervised by a teacher. Parents will receive a Renweb notice for all silent lunches, as well as a phone call from the teacher involved.

Detention

For serious misbehavior (disrespect, direct disobedience, dishonesty, cheating, etc.) a detention may be assigned. Detentions are served in the afternoon from 2:50 to 3:50 p.m. Failure to report for detention will result in an additional detention being assigned. Parents will receive a Renweb notice for all detentions, as well as a phone call from the teacher involved.

Suspension

For patterns of serious misbehavior or severe single instances, suspension may be assigned by the principal. Suspension may be served in school or at home. Parents will be expected to pick up their child immediately if an out-of-school suspension has been assigned. Examples of behavior that may warrant suspension are repeated/severe disrespect, repeated/severe disobedience, repeated or intentional cheating, bullying, and fighting. Situations involving suspension will be discussed with parents by phone or in person, as well as recorded in Renweb.

Probation

The following is the SMT Policy for recurring behaviors. The consequence for recurring behaviors may result in probation. There are two types of probation.

School Probation

School administrators will meet with the parent and if appropriate, the student will be placed on probation. At any time during the probationary status, the level of discipline can be increased or decreased depending upon the level of severity related to the offense or events transpiring after the student has been placed on probation. In such cases, school administrators retain primary discretion to apply such changes.

Notwithstanding action taken by the school administrators to the contrary, the school policy will include a three offense approach in dealing with unacceptable behavior.

First offense: The student is sent to the School Administrator. The school Administrator will apply the appropriate discipline and place the student on suspension and school probation. The School Administrator will contact a parent. A parent is required to take the child home from school for the remainder of the day. Probation will extend to a specific date or to the end of the year.

Second offense: The student is sent to the School Administrator. The School Administrator will apply the appropriate discipline and place the student on suspension.

The School Administrator will contact a parent. The parent is required to take the child home from school for the remainder of the day for the next two days.

Third Offense: The student is sent to the School Administrator. The School Administrator will apply the appropriate discipline and place the student on suspension. The School Administrator will contact a parent. A parent is required to take the child home from school for the remainder of the day and a determination is to be made as to whether the school is the right environment for the child.

Class Trip Probation

Procedure for review:

1. Administration and faculty will meet to discuss and make a recommendation at least four weeks prior to the trip.
2. Administration will meet with the parents of the student to get input from the parents and to discuss the concerns of the faculty/administration.
3. Administration and faculty will meet again to make the final decision for the trip. The administration will determine if such student's attendance is in the best interest of the school and the student.
4. The parents will be notified of the decision at least two weeks prior to the class trip. Parents will be refunded the portion of the trip expense they paid minus the trip deposit.

Electronics Policy

It is our desire to maintain a school environment that will be as free from distractions as possible and conducive to education, study, and order. Therefore the following guidelines must be observed:

Cell Phones:

In cases where middle school students must have a cell phone for use after school hours (3:00pm), the phones must be placed in an envelope with the student's name on it and left with the school office secretary. No student cell phones are allowed in A or B Building during school hours (8:00am-3:00pm).

Rather than use a cell phone, messages that a student needs to send or receive during the school day should come through the school office. This includes any plans for after school activities. Office staff will make sure that students receive any messages during the school day.

Violation of the policy concerning cell phones will cause the student to immediately lose the privilege of possessing a cell phone on school property. If the same student is discovered again with a cell phone, that student will be suspended for one day.

Electronic devices:

Students may not bring laser pointers, any hand held or battery operated games or educational tools, iPods, iPads, headphones, CD players, Mp3 players, electronic books, calculators, etc., to school UNLESS A TEACHER HAS GIVEN SPECIFIC PERMISSION TO THE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT. Any devices found in the student's possession will be confiscated and returned to the child's parents.

Overnight Class Trip Policy

General Rules for Overnight Stay:

- Students must be chaperoned at ALL times.
- Student room assignments will be determined by the teachers with approval of the principal.
- No chaperone will share a bed with a student unless that student is the chaperone's child.
- Specific numbers of same gender parents are required according to the numbers of boys and girls within each class.
- Music policy: On overnight class trips, students may be given permission to bring music with earphones only.

Eligibility/Discipline

All class trips are a privilege. ECCS expects those students who go on class trips to have exhibited, through the school year, the habits of respect, obedience, self-government, and responsibility.

A student will automatically be up for review for a class trip if she/he has served an in-school or out-of-school suspension. If a student has earned/served multiple detentions in the areas of disrespect, disobedience, lack of self-control, or irresponsibility, he/she will also be placed on review status. When a student is placed on review parents will be contacted immediately in writing.

Students not attending the school-sponsored trip will be recorded as excused, provided they complete all assignments at home prescribed by the faculty.

Parents whose children violate established trip rules and standards may be notified to retrieve their child at their expense, resulting in an unexcused absence and other disciplinary consequences, depending on the severity of the misbehavior.