

Penn-Harris-Madison Early Learning Academy



Handbook 2025 - 2026

Located at Mary Frank Elementary School
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Granger, IN 46530
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Mrs. Christie Heerschop, Principal

Contents

Parent Handbook 2025 - 20263

School Hours.....3

Arrival Procedures4

Dismissal Procedures4

Attendance Policies4

Health & Safety.....5

Dress Code.....7

Curriculum Overview8

Student Records8

Tuition Payments & Late Fees9

Communication Folders9

Lunch/Snack 10

Rest and Relaxation 10

Behavior Management..... 10

Non-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment 10

Parent Volunteers/Visitors..... 11

Child Custody..... 11

Emergency Cards 12

Recess 12

Supplies..... 12

Toys..... 12

Birthdays 12

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Handbook..... 13

Consent to Publish Student Work and Photographs..... 14

This handbook is supplementary to Board policy. Should a provision of this handbook contradict Board policy, the Board policy will prevail. This handbook supersedes all prior handbooks and other written material on the same subjects. Please note that this handbook is subject to periodic updates to ensure compliance with the latest Indiana codes and legislation. Board Approved Handbook: May 19, 2025

P-H-M Early Learning Academy

Parent Handbook 2025 - 2026

We would like to welcome you and your child to our full-time, four-year-old preschool program located at Mary Frank Elementary School. We are very excited to work together to make this year one of substantial growth and memorable experiences for your child. We will have many opportunities throughout the year for exploration and learning. It is our hope that your child's year in preschool will be a fulfilling one!

As a parent, YOU are your child's greatest advocate and the expert on their talents, abilities, and needs. Open communication between families and the school is very important to us. You can contact the teacher by email, written notes, or telephone. Email is the preferred method of communication. However, if an emergency situation arises, you may call the school office between 7:00 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. daily to leave a message for your child's teacher. (Please understand that we cannot take phone calls during the school day while we are teaching.) We will do our very best to return email and voice messages before the next school day.

We will send a monthly newsletter home with your child to inform you of our classroom/school news and happenings, classroom needs, and updates to our schedules or routines throughout the year. We will also send various notes home to alert you of any special activities or events as needed. **PLEASE check your child's Communication Folder EVERY day for important papers.** We look forward to working with you and your child this year.

School Hours

Our school day is 8:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. Monday through Friday. The teacher will greet them at the classroom door starting at 7:55 a.m. Please be sure that your child arrives on time and is ready to learn and explore! Dropping off your child closer to 8:00 a.m. means you will avoid some of the traffic congestion and foot traffic on the sidewalks as Mary Frank students arrive.

School Closings & Delay Procedures

Safety is our first concern when a conversation about closing or delaying school takes place. The decision must take into consideration early morning conditions as well as projections for the rest of the day. A two-hour delay may be called when indications are that the weather conditions will improve later in the morning. The drop off location and procedure would remain the same. However, the drop off time would be two hours later than normal (10:00 a.m.). When there is a delay, please follow our normal drop off procedure. For the safety of your child, please do not drop your child off with an older sibling. Your child must be dropped off at Door B at 10:00 a.m.

There is NO morning Kids Club when a two-hour delay is called; however, afternoon Kids Club will follow its normal schedule. When schools are closed, after-school and evening activities are also canceled. Kids Club does not operate, morning or afternoon, on days when school has been canceled.

If a decision is made to close school, Penn-Harris-Madison has again been approved by the Indiana Department of Education to use eLearning lessons on the day of a school closing. eLearning stands for *electronic learning* that can be accomplished by students working on a computer from home through the internet. The Early Learning Academy teacher will post eLearning lessons for the preschool students to complete at home in the event of a school closing. Students will have five (5) days to complete

eLearning assignments. The teacher will provide you with more details and log-in information for this at a later date.

When severe weather closes or delays school before the school day begins, the P-H-M website (www.phmschools.org) along with local television stations announce that information. Please do not call the school office for closing information. Parents will receive an automated phone call from Parent Square of any emergency closing or delay. Parents and students are responsible for knowing about emergency closings and delays.

In the rare event that severe weather or another emergency situation causes school to be dismissed early, students will be sent home for the remainder of the day. **Please sit down with your child and discuss what your child is to do if you are not at home when school is dismissed early.** Many parents make arrangements with a neighbor to provide childcare in such an emergency situation. Please make these arrangements and communicate them to your child and their teacher before the arrival of winter when weather tends to be unpredictable.

Arrival Procedures

When you arrive, children will enter the building through door B located to the left of the main entry doors at Mary Frank. For the safety of all students, we ask that you and your student remain in your vehicle and continue to move forward until you reach the sidewalk area at the main entry doors of the school. If needed, staff members will be available to help your child out of the vehicle. **Never drop off your child unless you see the teacher!** Parents should not park in the drop off line nor leave the car unattended to walk students to the door. Also, students can NOT be dropped off before 8:00 AM at Door B. This is a safety issue, as there is no adult supervision prior to 8:00 and the teacher may be out of the classroom. Please do NOT send your preschooler in through door A with their older siblings.

If you arrive late to drop off your child, please park your car in a parking spot and walk into the front office to sign in your child. Bus transportation is not available for preschool students this year.

Dismissal Procedures

Children will be dismissed at 2:30 p.m. each school day through door B. Please do not enter the pick-up line before 2:30 p.m. If you enter before 2:30 p.m., you will block the elementary students' pick-up. Have your carpool number displayed in the passenger side of the vehicle window for easy visibility. **Please remain in your car;** a staff member will assist your child to the car and keep the traffic flow moving at a safe rate for the children. For the safety of all students, we will load every child in their car on the **PASSENGER** side. Please adjust your child's booster seat to accommodate this procedure. If you arrive late to pick up your child, please park your vehicle in a parking spot and walk to the office to pick up your child.

If you make ANY changes to your child's arrival or dismissal routine, we MUST receive a signed note from the parent/guardian in advance. We do not release students to anyone who is not listed as the child's emergency contact unless we have received a note from the parent/guardian specifying the change in pick up routine/schedule.

Attendance Policies

Attendance should be regular. It is important that you send your child **every day**, unless your child is

Medication Administration at School

Prescribed Medications

In those circumstances where a student must take daily prescribed medication during the school day, the following guidelines are to be observed:

- A. Parents should, with their physician's counsel, determine whether the medication schedule could be adjusted to avoid administering medication during school hours.
- B. The Authorization to Administer Medication Form, available in the school Health Office or on the [PHM web page](#), must be filed with the respective building Health Office before the student will be allowed to begin taking any medication during school hours.
- C. All medications must be registered with the school Health Office.
- D. Medication that is brought to the Health Office will be properly secured. Medication must be brought to school in the original container directly by the parent, guardian or authorized adult. A two to four (2-4) week supply of medication is recommended.
- E. Any unused medication unclaimed by the parent will be destroyed by school personnel when a prescription is no longer to be administered or at the end of the school year.
- F. The parents shall have sole responsibility to instruct their child to take the medication at the scheduled time.
- G. A log for each prescribed medication shall be maintained which will note the personnel giving the medication, the date, and the time of day. This log will be maintained along with the physician's written request and the parent's written release.

Non-Prescribed (Over the Counter) Medications

A Medication Permit form, signed by a parent or guardian, must be on file in the school Health Office. Use of non-prescription medicine must comply with school regulations and will only be given in accordance with the directions on the label. This includes Tylenol, Advil, cough syrup, cough drops, herbal supplements/treatments and any other over-the-counter medication. If a non-prescribed (over the counter) medication needs to be administered on a routine bases, a physician order will be required. If you have questions call your school Health Office.

Illness or Injury at School

Students who become ill or suffer a slight injury during the school day will be referred to the Health Office Staff. In many cases (complaints of headache, stomach ache, etc.), the student simply needs to take a short rest (10 minutes) followed by a return to the classroom. The Health Office Staff can also distribute ice (for bumps or minor insect stings) and apply band-aids (on paper cuts, small scrapes or abrasions). The Health Office Staff **cannot distribute any medication unless the parent supplies it and proper forms have been filed with the staff.** In more serious cases the parent will be called to come and take the child home for further medical evaluation.

It is critical that the school can contact parents in an emergency situation. Please be sure to update information on your child's emergency card any time that information changes.

It is often hard to know when to keep your child home from school when they are not feeling well. Here are a few guidelines:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher: home until the student has been fever free for 24 hours.
- Vomiting: home until the student can keep food down and is free of symptoms for 24 hours.
- Diarrhea: home until the student is free of symptoms for 24 hours.

- Pink eye (conjunctivitis): home until the student has been on antibiotic eye medication for 24 hours.
- Strep Throat: home until the student is fever free and has been on antibiotic for 24 hours.
- Chickenpox: home for one week after the first pox appears or all pox are dry and crusted.
- Unexplained rash, blisters, or draining sores: children should be seen by their health care provider for a diagnosis.

If you are ever in doubt, please call your health care provider for their recommendations. You can also call the school Health Office Staff with questions regarding school policy about illness.

Control of Illness and/or Communicable Diseases

Because a school has a high concentration of people, it is necessary to take specific measures when the health or safety of the school community is at risk. The school's professional staff has the authority to remove or isolate a student who has been ill or has been exposed to a communicable disease. Specific diseases include: diphtheria, scarlet fever, strep infections, whooping cough, mumps, measles, rubella, Varicella and other conditions indicated by the Local and State Health Departments. Any removal will be only for the contagious period as recommended by State and local health departments.

Head Lice

Head lice are a common problem with school-aged children. It has nothing to do with cleanliness nor does it reflect poorly on you as a parent.

If live head lice or nits within one inch of the scalp are found in a child's hair, parents will be called to come and pick up their child and be provided with educational material. After treatment, the child will be allowed to return to school if no live lice are present or nits that are within one inch of the scalp. Please contact the school office if your child contracts lice. Feel free to contact our Health Office Staff for assistance in understanding and handling the treatment process. **Once your child is treated, a parent or guardian must bring them to school to be checked in the Health Office before being sent to class.**

Dress Code

- **IMPORTANT:** We ask that you PLEASE take the time to label clothing items such as: coats, sweaters, raincoats, boots, hats, mittens, shoes as well as backpacks and other items. Children often are not able to identify what belongs to them. Please print your child's name clearly with a permanent marker.
- Please provide a Ziploc bag with a change of clothes, labeled with your child's name, to be left at preschool.
- Dress your child in comfortable, durable clothing. Students will often be engaged in activities that involve paint, glue, clay, etc. and large motor movement. They should wear clothes that allow them to turn, jump and play!
- Also remember to follow the P-H-M dress code (*no flip-flops, high heels, spaghetti strap tops, spandex, ripped clothing, clothing with inappropriate words or pictures, or any accessories that might be a distraction*). Undergarments may not be showing at any time (even when bending over). The dress code will be strictly enforced, beginning the first day of school. All of this information can be found in the P-H-M Handbook which is available on the P-H-M Website at

<http://www.phmschools.org/>.

- As the weather turns colder, please keep in mind that we will go outside for recess as long as the temperature and/or wind chill does not fall below 20 degrees. Dress your child for playing out in chilly weather and snow, including a hat, gloves or mittens, boots, and snow pants.

Curriculum Overview

This year in the Early Learning Academy, we will be learning many new skills including math, reading, science, social studies, writing, and social skills. The Early Learning Academy will be following the *Tools of the Mind* Curriculum, a program that builds strong foundations for school success. Content and lessons focus on social, emotional and cognitive learning with a daily emphasis on creativity and problem solving and make-believe play. We will be building routines in the classroom that will ensure kindergarten readiness. In addition to building foundational skills, our curriculum will challenge each student to achieve their highest potential. Ultimately your child will thrive in their Early Learning Academy classroom and for years to come!

Student Records

The teachers, counselors, Health Office, and administrative staff keep many student records. There are two (2) basic kinds of records -- directory information and confidential records.

Directory information can be given to any person or organization for nonprofit making purposes when requested, unless the parents of the student restrict the information, in writing, to the principal by October 1 of that school year.

The Board designates as student "directory information": a student's name; address; telephone number; date and place of birth; major field of study; participation in officially recognized activities and sports; height and weight, if a member of an athletic team; dates of attendance; date of graduation; awards received; listing on an honor roll; or scholarships; photographs; video tape; and other similar information and images.

Confidential records contain educational and behavioral information that has restricted access based on the Family Education Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) and the Protection of Pupil Rights Act (PPRA). This information can only be released with the written consent of the parents, the adult student, or a surrogate. There are exceptions as provided in state and federal laws that may permit release without consent. For instance, confidential records may be disclosed to school officials with a legitimate educational interest in the records. A "school official" is a person employed by the Board as an administrator, supervisor, teacher/instructor (including substitutes), or support staff member (including health or medical staff and law enforcement unit personnel); a person serving on the Board; person or company with whom the Board has contracted to perform a special task (such as an attorney, auditor, or medical consultant); school psychology, a contractor, consultant, volunteer or other party to whom the Board has outsourced a service otherwise performed by Board employees (e.g. a therapist); or a parent or student serving on an official committee such as a disciplinary or grievance committee, or assisting another school official in performing their tasks (including volunteers).

Included in the confidential records may be test scores, psychological reports, behavioral data, disciplinary actions, and communications with the family and outside service providers. The school must have the parents' written consent to obtain records from an outside professional or agency. Confidential information that is in a student's record that originates from an outside professional or agency may be

released to the parent through the originator and parents should keep copies of such records for their home file. Parents may also provide the school with copies of records made by non-school professional agencies or individuals.

Students and parents have the right to review all educational records generated by the school corporation, request amendment to these records, insert addendum to records, and obtain copies of such records. Copying costs may be charged to the requestor. If a review of records is wanted, please contact the school in writing, stating the records desired. The records will be collected and an appointment will be made with the appropriate persons present to answer any questions. Parents and eligible students who wish to ask the school to amend a record should write the school principal, clearly identify the part of the record they want changed, and specify why it should be changed. If the school decides not to amend the record as requested, the school will notify the parent or eligible student of the decision and of their right to a hearing regarding the request for amendment. Additional information regarding the hearing procedures will be provided to the parent or eligible student when notified of the right to a hearing.

The Family Policy Compliance Office in the U.S. Department of Education administers both FERPA and PPRA. Parents and/or eligible students who believe their rights have been violated may file a complaint with:

Family Policy Compliance Office
U.S. Department of Education
400 Maryland Avenue, SW 20202-4605
Washington, D.C.
www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/index

Informal inquiries may be sent to the Family Policy Compliance Office via the following email addresses: FERPA@ED.Gov; and
PPRA@ED.Gov.

Tuition Payments & Late Fees

Tuition fees are set by the Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation. Tuition fees are \$35 per day/5 days a week. During any absence or extended absences, including sickness, holidays, vacation and eLearning days, fee payments continue for each child. Tuition payments are due the first day of each month for the predetermined monthly fee. If payment is not received by the fifth of the month, a \$25 late fee will be added to your account and will be automatically due with your next tuition payment. Do not send cash tuition payments with your child. Cash tuition payments must be given directly to the school office secretary by the parent/guardian. If withdrawing your child, we require a minimum of a two week notice. Failure to pay your child's tuition may result in suspension from the program.

Communication Folders

A blue communication folder will be used to send important papers home. The guardian is responsible to check their child's backpack and communication folder EVERY DAY. *This folder will go home and must come back to school EVERY DAY!* Please send any notes or papers to school in the communication folder as well.

Your child will also need a backpack labeled with their name to carry items to and from school. This needs to be a regular sized backpack so folders, books, and projects can easily be transported home. Please encourage your child to take responsibility for bringing their backpack to school each day. Many

projects, reading books, and handouts will come home on a regular basis, and some may be rather large, so please make sure your child's backpack is big enough to carry these items.

Lunch/Snack

Your child will have the opportunity to eat both lunch and snack at The Early Learning Academy. Your child can enjoy a lunch from our cafeteria or bring a nutritious lunch from home. Please do not pack candy or pop.

Lunch

- Early Learning Academy lunch is from 11:00 – 11:30 a.m. in the cafeteria.

Snack

- Early Learning Academy snack time is at 9:45am in the classroom.

Rest and Relaxation

Each day students come into a calm room where they can take their blanket brought from home, then find a place to lie on the carpet and listen to music or sleep for about 30 minutes. This is a time to stay quiet and rest before finishing the afternoon. We ask that you send in a towel/blanket from home, labeled with your child's name or initials, in a reusable small bag. This will need to be one that can be kept at school and occasionally sent home to be washed.

Behavior Management

Early Learning Academy will be using a positive reinforcement behavior system in the classroom. Students will be encouraged to consciously make good choices, and will be reminded that they are in control of their behavior. This gives us great opportunities to talk about using words to problem solve with their peers.

The Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation maintains a safe and orderly environment. Students are expected to follow the Positive School-Wide Behavior Plan. The expectations and skills embedded in these plans are based upon the Life Long Guidelines and Life Skills. These expectations and skills are taught and reviewed at various times throughout the school experience. Expectations, guidelines and skills are posted in every building and teachers expect students to follow them on a daily basis. The Life Long Guidelines are: Truth, Trust, Active Listening, No put-downs, and Personal best. The Life Skills are: Integrity, Initiative, Flexibility, Perseverance, Organization, Sense of Humor, Effort, Common Sense, Problem-solving, Responsibility, Patience, Friendship, Curiosity, Cooperation and Caring.

Non-Discrimination/Anti-Harassment

It is the Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation's policy to provide an equal educational opportunity for children regardless of race, color, creed, age, disability, religion, gender, ancestry, national origin, place of residence within P-H-M's boundaries, or social or economic background. In addition, it is our policy to maintain an environment that is conducive to learning and free from all forms of unlawful harassment.

The following person has been designated to handle inquiries regarding P-H-M's equal educational opportunity and anti-harassment policies: Dr. Heather Short, Assistant Superintendent, 574-259-7941. Additional information regarding P-H-M's Equal Educational Opportunity and Anti-Harassment Policies

may be found in Board Policies 2260, 2260.01, and 5517.

Parent Volunteers/Visitors

(Please see sign-up sheets)

Parent volunteers do much to enhance our program.

All volunteers will need to complete a required background check BEFORE volunteering. This required background check can be done in the school office or online at <https://www.phmschools.org/volunteer-information->

Visitors may not enter the classroom until they have signed in at the front office and have received a visitor's badge. You will need to bring a **valid driver's license** to get a visitor's badge through our RAPTOR visitor monitoring system. This is a required component of our school safety plan. We also ask that all visitors wait at least one month (until October) before visiting our classroom so the children can adjust and become more comfortable in their new learning environment. Volunteers/Visitors may not photograph or record students or staff while on school property during the instructional day without permission from school administration. When permission is granted, visitors may only photograph or record their own child.

Child Custody

At the time of enrollment, parents are expected to provide the school with court papers, including custody orders, pertaining to the allocation of parental rights and responsibilities. The school will honor all current court orders pertaining to the allocation of these rights. To the extent that these rights are modified by the court at any point during the time a child is enrolled as a student with Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation, it is the responsibility of the parents to submit to the school a copy of the most recent court order.

In general, parents who share joint legal custody are to share the responsibility for the major decisions concerning the child's upbringing, including the child's education.

Unless restricted by a court order, a non-custodial parent will be given access to all student records, progress reports, and disciplinary actions. The non-custodial parent is responsible for informing the principal or the school office in writing of their wish to receive copies of records related to the student's school activities or academic progress. Should a custodial parent wish to prohibit the distribution of information and records to the non-custodial parent, they must provide a certified copy of the court order restricting the non-custodial parent's access.

Absent a court order to the contrary, the non-custodial parent may attend any school activities that are open to the public, such as concerts, fairs, and athletic events. In addition, the non-custodial parent may participate in parent-teacher conferences, classroom visitations, and all other school activities, unless the custodial parent has communicated in writing their desire that the non-custodial parent not participate in these activities and has provided the school a copy of the current custody order.

P-H-M will observe all Court Orders in releasing children to the parent who has parenting time on the day in question, absent written notification from the primary physical custodial parent.

P-H-M Staff will follow Court Orders related to child custody matters. P-H-M Staff does not seek to

become involved in litigation related to child custody matters.

Emergency Cards

Each child in our school is required to have complete and up-to-date emergency contact information on file in the office. It is essential that we are able to contact you (or a designated adult) if necessary during the school day. If there are any changes in your housing, employment, emergency phone number, email address, etc., please contact the office ASAP so we can update the information on your child's emergency card. THANK YOU!

Recess

Your child will have at least one recess period every day and will need clothing that is appropriate for the weather. Please make sure your child comes dressed to go outside each day. During the winter months, this would include the BIG 5: snow pants, winter coat, mittens/gloves, boots, and a hat. Please send these in a reusable bag. We will go outside for recess unless the wind-chill is below zero. **Please label ALL belongings with your child's name.**

Supplies

We are fortunate to have most of our supplies provided for us through our school budget. These items include paper, pencils, crayons, markers, scissors, glue, paint, etc. We do ask that you purchase a roomy, zipper-style backpack and 2 large boxes of Kleenex for personal use by your student in the classroom. Thank you!

Toys

Please do not allow your child to bring toys, cell phones, gaming devices, etc., to school. They could possibly be lost, stolen or broken, which causes an unhappy experience at school. In addition, these items are distracting to students, and we'd like to avoid distractions whenever possible.

Birthdays

Birthdays are a fun time to celebrate each special student! At The Early Learning Academy we will do this during snack time on the day, or during the week, of the student's birthday. We do not encourage food for celebrating; however, you could send in a pencil, eraser, or something small for each classmate.

**IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS ABOUT THE EARLY LEARNING ACADEMY, PLEASE
CONTACT US! YOUR PARTNERSHIP IS IMPORTANT AND VALUED!**

Acknowledgement of Receipt of Handbook

**Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation
Early Learning Academy**

This is to certify that I have received and read the Penn-Harris-Madison Early Learning Academy Parent Handbook and agreed to abide by it while my child is enrolled in the Early Learning academy.

Parent Signature

Parent Name Printed

Date

(Please complete the Consent to Publish Form found on the reverse side of this page)

Consent to Publish Student Work and Photographs

At Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation we value the strong communications we have with our families and community partners. Our students, teachers and staff are actively involved in many activities often winning school, local, state, national or international recognitions. We are proud of the amazing work accomplished by all our students. As part of our ongoing communication efforts, the District and/or Schools would like to spread the good news about these accomplishments. But in order to publicize the name, photo or works of your student(s), we need consent from the parent and/or guardian. This is the purpose of this form.

Photographs, video and/or audio may be taken of students and/or Student Work (as hereinafter defined) as a part of a curricular project, to promote a school event or to showcase student achievement. The Penn-Harris-Madison School Corporation (the "School Corporation") may use images and names of students and/or Student Work on any form of printed or digital communication, including P-H-M District or school websites, social media and newsletters. As part of P-H-M's public relations efforts, your student's achievement and/or involvement can also be shared with third party news media outlets. "Student Work" includes, but is not limited to: drawings; materials; writings; photographs; and images.

I understand that by signing this form I hereby give permission to post and/or publish photographs, the name, and/or Student Work of _____ (student's name) on the aforementioned websites, social media and any form of digital or written publication. I understand and agree that my child is not entitled to any compensation for Student Work or images appearing in said printed and/or digital communications.

Please note that this consent form cannot apply to public events. If your child attends or participates in an event that is open to the general public, such as a P-H-M athletic, theater, band, orchestra, choir, academic competition or another type of school or district sponsored activity, pictures might be taken and used in the before names district communications.

____ **YES**, I give my consent. I recognize I may withdraw this consent by notifying, in writing, the principal at my child's school.

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____

____ **NO**, I do not grant consent

Signature of Parent/Guardian: _____ Date: _____