Welcome to ECS!
Grades K-5

We grow citizens.

Environmental Charter School Overview
Primary and Intermediate Schools
What makes ECS different?
The mission of ECS is to educate each student to high academic learning standards using innovative curriculums that will foster knowledge, love of, and respect for the environment and the will to preserve it for future generations.

Simply stated, We grow citizens.

Our vision is that every ECS graduate will be an actively engaged citizens driving thoughtful change in the world around them. Students master core academic content, while learning how to think critically, collaborate, communicate effectively, problem solve and develop successful habits of mind.

How We Do It
With holistic teaching methods rooted in real world problems:

- **Multidisciplinary integration.** The problems classes grapple with are addressed across multiple disciplines to help students develop a holistic perspective and approach to problem solving

- **“Out-the-door” education.** A classroom is one learning environment but not the only one. Working through problems in environments outside the classroom such as nature and the community builds greater understanding and connection to the world. We focus on three systems: natural, social, and built environments

- **Ecoliteracy.** At its core, ecoliteracy means all systems in the world (natural, social, built) are interconnected, and the decisions we make as people in communities and the world ripple through these systems. This is systems thinking, and systems thinking is the basis of ecoliteracy.

- **Authentic learning.** We educate students by having them grapple with issues rooted in relevant, real-world problems.

- **Whole Child.** ECS serves the whole child - keeping them healthy, safe, engaged, supported and challenged.

With structures/systems to support connections to students:

- **Looping.** Looping is the practice of one grade level team educating the same group of students through more than one school year.

- **Inclusive Practices.** ECS values general and special education as a unified system with the inclusion of all students at the heart of what we do. Students with disabilities are included as a part of their grade level and school community, while still getting the individualized supports and instruction they need to be successful.

- **Teaching Teams.** Educators work as a grade level team to develop and engage students in a variety of learning experiences. There is a general education teacher in each room that is supported by paraeducators and assistant teachers. Educator to student ratios remain small (averaging 1:10), allowing students to get targeted support and enrichment.

- **Specialized Teaching.** Grade level teachers specialize in two content areas. These “expert” teachers integrate content across disciplines. Students or teachers move between grade level classrooms for instruction.
With mission-specific instructional practices that support all students:

- **Project-based learning (PBL).** Teachers use PBL to guide students through inquiry-based learning that often includes an end-of-unit exhibition to a public audience. Teachers develop units with a question, design activities and projects that support inquiry, and work with students to construct knowledge throughout the journey.

- **Workshop Model.** The Workshop Model has four basic parts: opening, mini-lesson, work time and debriefing. It is a framework that can be used in any content area.

- **Multi-tiered systems of support (MTSS).** Teachers use MTSS to create standards-aligned, culturally responsive, high-quality instruction; universal screening; data-based decision-making; tiered services and supports; and family engagement. ECS uses specific scheduled time each day to work on student-centered supports.

- **Differentiation.** Teachers tailor instruction to meet individual needs. Teachers differentiate content, processes, products, and/or the learning environment. The use of ongoing assessment and flexible grouping make differentiation a successful approach to instruction.

- **Technology integration.** Teachers integrate the use of technology within the classroom in authentic and meaningful ways. Technology supports curricular goals.

## Program Overview

### Building Content: Academic Blocks

#### Mathematics(K-2)

In mathematics, we focus on numbers, geometry, measurement, data and graphing, addition and subtraction, place value, time, and money so that students emerge with good foundational skills.

During center time, students work in differentiated groups to learn number sense, shapes, length and weight, addition and subtraction, and how numbers work in a context. This approach builds focus, coherence, and rigor at the early foundations of math skills. Additionally, we practice counting through singing and dancing, we play with numbers to build fun into our lessons, and we engage in many different kinds of games to become fluent mathematicians.

#### Mathematics(3-5)

The ECS Math Program follows the focus and coherence of the PA Core Standards and uses Eureka Math as a curricular resource. Instructional methods drive student understanding beyond process, to deep mastery of mathematical concepts. The progression of math ideas are presented in “A Story of Units,” where modules are sequenced to follow the story of mathematics; the story’s main character is the basic building block of arithmetic, or the unit. The Standards for Mathematical Practice are woven into each lesson. Our program focuses on fluency, application, concept development, student debrief, assessment, and differentiation.
**Literacy**
Our literacy team works to build phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, and reading comprehension. During this block of time, students are engaged in Reading and Writing Workshop and Literacy Centers. During workshop time, we focus on different genres through our project-based units. The students collaborate with one another to answer the driving questions in each of our units. We have the opportunity to read and write fiction, non-fiction, poetry, and persuasive texts.

**Grades K-2**
During small group instruction, students work in differentiated groups to learn phonics skills through the Orton Gillingham approach. This multi-sensory approach benefits all students as they are learning how to become good readers. We practice sight words, letter sounds, vowel teams, and many other phonics skills so that we can become fluent readers.

**Grades 3-5**
Many of our units focus on building specific character traits that align with ECS’ core values. Throughout our instruction, we encourage honest conversation and active citizenship. Our curriculum design allows us to tailor our units to what is not only challenging, but relevant and interesting to our students. Through these practices, we create a community built on grit and trust where students feel confident growing as learners and human beings, while also sharing their work and ideas with one another.

**Environmental Literacy**
Environmental literacy is a place to explore the connections between social studies and science, and many authentic learning experiences emerge throughout our time together. Topics of inquiry include communities, the sun and moon, and the connections between humans and animals and their habitats.

**“ME Time” (Grades 1-5)**
My Excellence Time is a time each day dedicated to intensely practicing Math and Literacy skills students have been learning. The groups are differentiated based on our Multi-Tiered Support System (MTSS) data. Students split into spaces all across our building and the activities are geared to support or enrich students based on their individual needs.
Building the Whole Child: Different Opportunities to Learn

Specials- 5 day rotation
Specials are classes that all students visit over the course of a 5-day cycle. Students attend music, thinking lab, Edible Schoolyard/Discovery, Spanish, and physical education for 50 minutes. Teachers remind parents/guardians of the daily cycle in a weekly newsletter.

Discovery (Grades K-1)
During Discovery, students will participate in research-backed, play-based activities that promote physical, social, emotional, and cognitive development. Play-based learning is child-centered, engaging, and imaginative, fostering a love of discovery and exploration, encouraging curiosity, and developing a desire for lifelong learning. Opportunities to enhance literacy, math, science, and social and emotional skills are provided in a meaningful context, where students will learn to solve problems, try out new ideas and experiences, and explore the world around them.

Edible Schoolyard (Grades 2-5)
In Edible Schoolyard, students learn to grow, harvest, and prepare nutritious, whole foods during the school day. Students gain an understanding of how the natural world sustains us, how food can build and connect communities, and how to maintain a healthy lifestyle through their hands-on kitchen and garden experiences. In garden classes, students learn to plan, plant, harvest, and maintain the garden. In kitchen classes, students read recipes, prepare fresh produce, and chop, slice, and dice with real knives. In the community, events are held to celebrate the bounty of the garden and healthy eating.

Music
Because knowledge is constructed, the music program offers many hands-on activities such as the natural orchestra, where students perform musical compositions using things found in nature, the Quaver Curriculum, which offers studies in performance, theory and composition as well as activities the students can do at home on the Quaver interactive website, with complete assessments for each section, performances with instruments and singing, making movies complete with original scores, as well as a folk dancing unit combining P.E. with music.

Thinking Lab
The Thinking Lab builds a foundation for understanding the intersections and connections between art, science, and design. Students develop the capacity to think like scientists and artists, with a focus on foundational techniques and processes. Students learn to communicate through the language of visual arts, while simultaneously developing creativity, collaboration, and craftsmanship skills.

Physical Education
The Physical Education department promotes lifelong activities for all students to engage in, with a focus on becoming knowledgeable about the resources within their urban environments. The attributes the physical education department has identified as essential for this work are: Engagement, Knowledge and Lifelong Activities.
Spanish
Our exploratory program aims to give students a foundation for foreign language study. We will introduce basic phrases and general vocabulary and grammar themes in order to sharpen listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills and familiarize students with the notion that thoughts can be expressed in another language. Our goal is to give our young students a small glimpse into the world of the Spanish language - through exciting, authentic experiences with culture - and encourage them to continue their study of the world and its languages, long after they move on from our ECS school community.

Schedule of a Primary and Intermediate Student

Kindergarten:
- **Literacy** - 120 minutes
- **Math** - 90 minutes
- **Environmental Literacy** - 60 minutes
- **Specials** - 50 minutes
- **Lunch and Recess** - 30 minutes each

Grades 1-5:
- **Literacy** - 90 minutes
- **Math** - 90 minutes
- **Environmental Literacy** - 60 minutes
- **Specials** - 50 minutes
- **Lunch and recess** - 30 minutes each
- **ME Time** - 30 minutes

Assessment/Report Cards
We send home quarterly report cards that show student progress in each content area. Progress reports are also sent home in the middle of each report period.

Standards Based Grading (Grades K-2)
The following grading scale will be used for students in the primary school. This developmentally appropriate grading system measures progress against a uniform standard for individual skills by providing specific information about how a student is performing on individual skills and concepts within a subject area.

The student performance levels of 1 to 3 indicate whether students have met the expectations set by the state and whether the student has the necessary skills to be successful in the next quarter or next grade.
Standards Based Grading Scale (Grade K-2)

- **3 Established**: Student demonstrates proficiency in targeted standard. Student consistently applies learned skill.
- **2 Developing**: Student requires some additional support to meet proficiency in targeted standard. Student inconsistently applies learned skill.
- **1 Emerging**: Student does not meet proficiency in targeted standard. Student does not apply learned skill.

Percentage Grading Scale (Grades 3-5)

The following grading scale will be implemented:

- A: 90%--100%
- B: 80%--89%
- C: 70%--79%
- D: 60%--69%
- I: 59% and below

Additional Notes About Your Child’s Day

Food Services
ECS believes that the future success for the next generation is a positive and healthy understanding of food. We strive to bring fresh, kid friendly, exciting and delicious meals to students.

ECS is dedicated to providing healthy options for breakfast and lunch and therefore at least 75% of our food is from scratch and never frozen!

Offer breakfast and lunch (Breakfast is $1.60, Lunch $2.45)
Free or Reduced Lunch Program (Breakfast is free or $.30, lunch is free or $.40)
Nut free classrooms, but nuts ARE permitted in cafe

Home Connection (K-2)
In weekly newsletters there are curricular connections that families can do at home and read with your child everyday!

Homework (3-5)
Students develop content knowledge and thinking skills through authentic routines, habits and practice as well as by engaging in larger group and individual projects. Therefore, we provide the following guidelines as you support your child at home: Encourage your child to read each day and complete homework as assigned by the teacher.
**Transportation**
Transportation is provided by the school district that you reside in. For example, if you are a resident of the City of Pittsburgh, Pittsburgh Public Schools provide transportation.

**Technology**
**Grades K-2**
At the Primary School, our students have access to ipads and Chromebooks. Our Primary students use ipads and Chromebooks during small group instruction as well as for research, projects and general class use as needed.

**Grades 3-5**
At the Intermediate School, our students have access to 1:1 Chromebooks. ECS’s mission is to grow citizens, and in this changing world, that also means building 21st century skills and becoming digital citizens. Having 1:1 at ECS empowers teachers and students to harness the power of technology to connect, collaborate, create, communicate, critically think, and access learning and understanding in the 21st century.

All students will have access to Google Apps for Education (G Suite) accounts. With Google Apps, students will have access to Google Classroom, Drive, Docs, Sheets, Sites, and Slides that will support and enhance learning. They will NOT have access to Gmail.

All of our learning management systems adhere to the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) and our student network has an additional smart filtering. Our classrooms also use GoGuardian, which allows for safe, digital experiences.
School Dress Code/Uniform
The ECS uniform policy and dress code guide support the work that we engage in each day at school. Your support of this guide helps to ensure that our students are comfortable and safe. Thank you for your support of our school uniform policy and dress code guidelines.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pants, Shorts, Skorts or Jumpers</th>
<th>Khaki or navy(including cargo style, excluding sweatpants and yoga pants) Proper length of skirts, dresses, and shorts is determined by the fingertips being able to touch materials, not skin, when a student's arms are extended at his or her side.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tights, Leggings or Knee Socks</td>
<td>May be worn under uniform skirts or dresses and should be white, khaki, light blue, navy blue or gray. Leggings can not be worn as pants.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts (warmer weather)</td>
<td>White, light blue or navy blue polo or oxford style, long or short sleeved (No sleeveless tops or t-shirts).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shirts (colder weather)</td>
<td>White, light blue, navy blue or gray sweaters, sweatshirts or turtlenecks. Hooded sweatshirts may be worn but hood must be kept down when in the school building. ECS sweatshirts are acceptable.</td>
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Come to School Prepared to Engage in Outdoor Learning
ECS students engaged in 2,100 outdoor learning experiences last year. Due to the nature of our curriculum and the amount of time spent outdoors, we suggest that each student keep one extra uniform outfit and one pair of old shoes/rain boots at school at all times. This ensures that students are prepared, even when an impromptu lesson develops. Families may also choose to send students to school in footwear that is appropriate for daily outdoor experiences.

Additional Resources and Information
Positive School Wide Behavior Plan
ECS has three clearly defined behavioral expectations, defined in positive, simple rules that are used in all school-wide functions. The 3 B’s for the ECS Primary School:

- Be Safe
- Be Kind
- Be Responsible

If a student is observed demonstrating one or more of the 3 B’s a staff member can give students a soaring card. When this happens, a student immediately delivers it to the office.
At the office, the student gets to sign the community soaring board, gets a sticker, and drops their card off in a weekly raffle box. Every Friday, two students are picked at random (from the raffle box) and get to pick a prize. Students names who are drawn are announced over the PA system and they are called to the office to pick a prize. There are numerous prizes and one example is taking a book home to keep from our office library.

Another aspect of PBIS is our nest. These are located in the classroom and students work together (as a class) to get eggs to fill their nest. Eggs are awarded from teachers when the entire class is demonstrating one or more of the 3 B’s. When a class fills their nest, they get to pick a prize. Examples of prizes could be art time with a school principal or an end of day pack up dance party.

Relaxation Station
Each room has a space designed to teach and promote everyday self-regulation skills with a calmer and more private space. All students are welcome to use tools and strategies at the Relaxation Station to help their mind, body, and heart get ready to learn. Students have multiple lessons on feelings identification, self-awareness, and strategies to help manage big feelings.

Support Around Your School
Student Services Personnel
1 School Counselor in each building
1 School Nurse in each building
1 School Psychologist
1 School Social Worker
1 Director of Special Education

PCO
ECS is proud of its robust Parent Community Organization (PCO). The mission of the PCO is: to represent the voice of parents alongside the school administration and staff; to serve the greater Pittsburgh community and to maintain a positive presence therein by being a model and advocate of sound environmental practice; to engage in innovative and effective fundraising and development activities; and to enhance the educational experience and personal growth of students, teachers, and families. PCO Website: http://ecspco.org/
PCO-related questions can be emailed to: parents@ecspco.org