

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS:

### What is a charter school?

A charter school is a public school, funded by tax dollars. The Environmental Charter School is authorized by the Pittsburgh Public School District and is mandated by Charter Law to be "innovative" in its approach to teaching and learning. We are held accountable to the Pittsburgh Public School District, the state of Pennsylvania and the federal government to ensure that all students are being taught a standards-based curriculum by qualified teachers.

### When was ECS founded?

We opened our doors in the fall of 2008 as a K-3 school and are currently K-5. Adding a new grade each year, by 2013 we will be a K-8 school.

### How is ECS's curriculum different than other schools?

ECS applies a multi-level approach to delivering innovative and inspiring science education. Using the Environment as an Integrating Context curriculum (EIC) provides a framework for interdisciplinary student-centered, hands-on learning. The foundation of our EIC curriculum is the PA Academic Standards for Environment and Ecology. Students engage in an environmental science lab each week to build content knowledge and inquiry-based experiences in science. In the classroom, teachers integrate science and environmental content into traditional academic subjects including reading, math and social studies. ECS also utilizes partnering organizations from around the region to support content, experiences, and expertise in science and environmental education. The combination of those elements provides students with a robust and thought-provoking approach to science education.

### What is the cost to attend ECS?

ECS is a tuition-free school.

### How many students attend ECS?

As of 2010-11, there are 380 students.

### How do I apply?

For the 2011/2012 school year, applications are accepted November 1 through February 14. The order in which applications are received is irrelevant. A public lottery will be held on February 25, 2011 with priority given to City of Pittsburgh residents. Forms can be found on our website, [www.EnvironmentalCharterSchool.org](http://www.EnvironmentalCharterSchool.org).

### What are the school hours?

Classes begin at 8am and dismissal is at 3:30pm, Monday through Friday.

### Do students wear a uniform?

Yes, ECS students adhere to a uniform policy which includes wearing navy blue, light blue, white and/or khaki colors.

### Is transportation available to and from school?

Yes, transportation is available, free of cost, to all students who reside in a home school district that provides it.

The Environmental Charter School is the place for students to explore, connect, and succeed.



For more information:  
412-247-7970  
[www.EnvironmentalCharterSchool.org](http://www.EnvironmentalCharterSchool.org)  
829 Milton Street, Pittsburgh, PA 15218



Our students dig school.

Children who love the outdoors as much as we do belong at ECS.



## When was the last time your child took a walk in the woods for math class or hiked down to the creek for a social studies lesson?

At the Environmental Charter School, our students actively learn in the great outdoors everyday, right in our backyard, Frick Park.

ECS is a **tuition-free** school where high academic standards incorporate an **environmental-focused curriculum that fosters knowledge, love of and respect for our earth** and the will to preserve it for future generations.

But it's not just about environmental science. Language arts, mathematics, social studies, art, music, health, and physical education are all part of our daily course of study. Unlike most schools, **our students have the opportunity to apply their learning while exploring the great outdoors.** For example, when studying the forest as an introduction to ecosystems, students don't just read about it in a book, they explore the biological and physical health of the stream ecosystem right outside, in Frick Park.

Beyond the breakthrough curriculum, our teachers and staff make ECS an academic institution like no other. Beginning in Kindergarten and continuing through each grade level,

**our teachers are enthusiastic, innovative, and eager to teach.** Their passion for learning is contagious too. Our teachers participate in numerous continuing education programs through partnerships with several Pittsburgh universities, ensuring that faculty continually builds environmental content knowledge while supporting best practices in science education. The curriculum also cultivates a deep sense of community amongst our students through daily character development activities. From daily morning meetings to a school-wide anti-bullying program, students build character and learn to make positive choices each and everyday at school.

We know that students need more than great teachers and an outstanding curriculum to succeed in school. Healthy habits and good nutrition feed the body and mind. At ECS, **we understand the importance of a nutritious meal** and our food service team takes that to heart. **We practice a "Farm to Table" philosophy with our menus**, which means we strive to purchase our produce, meats and dairy products from local farmers and businesses, providing our students with fresh, wholesome, tasty meals and snacks that keep their tummies full and their bodies healthy.

From the teachers to the administrators and everyone in between, our staff is dedicated to not only teaching our students, but **inspiring them to learn how to problem solve** in the real world as they grow.



### Will my child be eligible for the Pittsburgh Promise if they attend ECS?

The Pittsburgh Promise is available to all graduates of the Pittsburgh public and charter schools, regardless of financial need or income.

### After 8th grade, what schools will my child be eligible to attend for high school?

ECS graduates will be able to attend their neighborhood feeder pattern school, apply to the PPS magnet program, or apply for admission to any of the private, faith-based, cyber or charter schools.

### Does ECS provide special education services?

Yes, we offer a full continuum of special education programs and services to all eligible students who attend the school. ECS is committed to meeting all state and federal special education regulations. In accordance with the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, all of our students receive a Free and Appropriate Public Education (FAPE) in the Least Restrictive Environment (LRE). Please visit [www.EnvironmentalCharterSchool.org](http://www.EnvironmentalCharterSchool.org) for our Annual Notice of Special Education Services for more information.

### Does ECS have a character development program?

Yes, ECS has a school-wide positive behavior support system which encourages students to be safe, kind and respectful. We also incorporate the Olweus Bullying Prevention Program. Class meetings are held each week to reinforce both initiatives. Daily school-wide morning meetings provide an opportunity to address monthly character education traits and reinforce positive behaviors.

### Does ECS provide breakfast and lunch?

Yes, all students may purchase both breakfast and lunch for a small fee. Free or reduced priced meals are available through federal funding, for those that qualify. Our food service team is dedicated to providing tasty, nutritious hot meals typically made with locally grown and purchased foods. We are exceptionally proud of the menus that our food service team has developed and the students and teachers love to eat here!

### Does ECS offer before school and/or after school programs?

Students can be dropped off as early as 7:30am. We offer a tuition-based after school program where students can stay as late as 6pm, Monday through Friday.

### How much time do the students really spend outdoors?

Students engage in outdoor educational experiences nearly every day; no matter rain or shine, sleet or snow.

### What kind of student would enjoy learning at ECS?

If your child enjoys fresh air, exploring in the natural world, and learning while doing, the Environmental Charter School is just what you've been looking for.



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