

ELLA BAKER SCHOOL

FAMILY HANDBOOK

2025 - 2026

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Ella Baker Contact Information

School Number- (212) 717-8809

School Fax – (212) 717-8807

Website: ellabakerschool.org

WHO WE ARE

Our Mission

At the Ella Baker School we collaborate to create a dynamic and joyful learning community. Our curriculum provides students with a strong intellectual foundation across multiple disciplines, and daily opportunities to construct deep understanding through inquiry, self discovery and experiential learning. Continuing the legacy of the progressive education movement, the Ella Baker School prepares students to be informed, courageous, and compassionate people, who trust and respect one another and in turn, help to shape a more equitable and sustainable world.

Our Beliefs

Our work at Ella Baker is driven by a set of shared beliefs about children, learning, and community.

- Children are curious by nature. They thrive in environments that nurture and sustain their innate passion for learning.
- Each child is unique and learns at different times, in different ways, and expresses understanding in different ways. Instruction must be considerate of these differences and accommodate them.
- Children learn best when challenged by high expectations.
- Children learn best in environments that encourage autonomy and agency, allowing them to make choices about the topics they explore, the materials with which they work, and the processes they develop.
- Children learn from talking about their work and working collaboratively.
- Children learn best in physically and psychologically safe environments.
- Children’s learning is integrated and moves across curricular boundaries.

Who was Ella J. Baker?

Ella Josephine Baker (1903-1986) was often called “a leader behind the scenes” in the movement for civil rights. She was instrumental in actively organizing, creating and expanding the range of many organizations, among them the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), the Southern Christian Leadership Council (SCLC) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC). However, she did not seek the spotlight. Indeed, she felt it was important that organizations avoid struggles for personal leadership and that “strong people don’t need strong leaders.”

Ella Baker believed in three principles of what she described as Participatory Democracy:

- **Empowerment of people at the grassroots** – “People have to be made to understand that they cannot look for salvation anywhere but to themselves.” Ella Baker believed in the power of local organizing to bring about social change. She worked from the ground up in organizations to give people at all levels of society a voice.
- **Group-centered leadership** – Ella Baker spoke out against leadership derived from status or charisma, especially where authentic community involvement was lacking. “In government service and political life I have always felt it was a handicap for oppressed peoples to depend so largely upon a leader, because unfortunately in our culture, the charismatic leader usually becomes a leader because he has found a spot in the public limelight.”
- **Direct action** – Ella Baker saw non-violent collective action as a means to change, but more importantly as a way to combat apathy, hopelessness and fear. Her ultimate goal was always empowerment of people.

Ella Baker’s emphasis on involvement, participation, and critical analysis was invaluable to young organizers of the 1960’s – 70’s. It also legitimized a voice for the African American community in a wide range of government decisions.

Ella Baker never intended to be a teacher, but through her life’s example of listening to the needs of people, helping to foster their leadership, and promoting their decisions to act, she became the model of a great teacher.

Partnerships and Programs

- Imogen Foundation (See details under After School Programs below)
- Vanderbilt YMCA (See details under After School Programs below)
- Harmony Violin Program
- New York City Ballet
- Disney in Schools
- Christodora Foundation for Environment Studies

- Morningside Center
- Schomburg Center for Research in Black Culture
- Central Park Zoo
- Urban Advantage
- Vermont Farm

Ella Baker Practices

- **Project-based Learning**

At Ella Baker we value depth over breadth, student initiative over teacher control, the thinking process above getting the “right answer.” Therefore, we engage students in creating projects where they seek out and utilize knowledge, make meaning for themselves, and reflect on their learning, all within a framework designed and guided by the teacher. In early grades, these are often physical creations they share with classmates. As children move through the grades, writing, research, analysis, and formal presentation become important aspects of final projects. Parents are often invited to attend publishing parties, share days, and performances during which students present their projects and articulate their learning.

Projects serve as an entry point to engagement, a process for actual learning, as well as a means of assessment. Teachers set out learning goals and activities, leaving room for student choice. They assess students against goals for learning that are shared with students. In addition, teachers look for growth in how students revise their thinking, refine their processes, and solve problems. Students self assess, both during and at the conclusion of a project. In collaboration with teachers, they celebrate successes and set goals to carry forward the experience for new growth in the next endeavor.

- **Town Meeting**

Town Meeting is a time for the entire Ella Baker community to come together to share and celebrate the work we do each day in our classrooms. Monthly on a Friday morning, we all gather in the auditorium to sing together, share successes, and hear from selected students as they present projects, writings, dances, songs, etc. Town Meeting is a joyous Ella Baker tradition that allows us to continue to grow as a community, have fun, and learn from each other. Families are welcome to attend.

- **Reading Buddies**

Reading Buddies is a time honored Ella Baker tradition that builds community, leadership, friendship, and literacy engagement. Lower grade teachers partner with upper grade teachers and pair up individual students for regular reading experiences together. Most often the older child reads a favorite picture book to

the younger child. In addition, reading buddies sometimes meet up for Town Meeting, a picnic, or during an ice skating trip.

- **Student Voice Collective**

SVC gives students a forum for discussing concerns, initiating projects and having a say in school decision-making. Representatives from classrooms meet twice monthly (with an adult coordinator) to engage in a democratic process with the goal of taking action to improve life at Ella Baker for everyone.

- **Social/Emotional Supports**

- Restorative Circles
- Collaborative Problem Solving
- Peer Mediation
- 4Rs Morningside Curriculum for K - 5
- Advisory Program Morningside 6 - 8
- School Counselor and Social Worker

Communication

Please reach out to our Parent Coordinator, Valerie Kirk-Kamali (vkirkkamali@schools.nyc.gov) or 212-717-8809 Ext. 2321 with any general school related questions, and as a first point of contact who can direct you to the appropriate person to address your concerns.

Communication between home and school is extremely important and primarily electronic, so please be sure that Valerie has the correct email address for all parents/guardians/caregivers.

In the early grades, we ask that you check your child's backpack daily for forms and other communication from the classroom teacher(s). You can expect to receive family letters from your child's teacher on a regular basis. Additionally, you will find important information on our website (ellabakerschool.org), and in our weekly newsletter.

If you wish to speak to a teacher, please email the teacher or call the office (212-717-8809) and leave a message. The teacher will call/email you back to schedule a time to talk or meet. We ask that you refrain from texting teachers during instructional hours.

Contact AP Valerie Leak vleak@schools.nyc.gov with questions regarding school busses and IEPs.

Contact Susan Amaro samaro2@schools.nyc.gov regarding attendance, transcripts, school letters, and address changes.

Contact Kira Hammond khammond@schools.nyc.gov with any questions pertaining to High School Applications.

Contact Rachel Lavoie rlavoe@schools.nyc.gov with questions regarding 504s and Students in Temporary Housing.

Contact Valerie Kirk-Kamali vkirkkamali@schools.nyc.gov with any questions pertaining to NYSCA accounts, NYC Kids Rise Program, Translation Services, EB Admissions and Middle School applications.

Contact Mia Hernandez mhernandez13@schools.nyc.gov for OMNY cards

Family conferences are held twice a year, once in November and then again in March. These are opportunities for the child, parents/guardians/caregivers and the teacher to talk about the child's progress. We ask that children be present at these conferences. If you have questions or concerns at other times in the school year you may ask to schedule a conference with the teacher.

PTA

The Ella Baker community is lucky to have an active and robust [Parent Teacher Association](#). We encourage all families to get involved to support the school, gain information, and have fun. Our PTA consistently works to foster community and raise funds for important programs in the school, including the arts, sports, teacher professional development, and other enrichment programs. Anyone who has a child in the Ella Baker School is automatically a member. You will find dates for monthly general membership meetings, workshops, and special events posted on our website and on the Ella Baker Calendar (sent by backpack in September). Check it out and mark your calendars! Participation in the PTA is the single best way to support Ella Baker School. The PTA sends out a family survey in June in order to collect reflections and impressions about the current year, as it comes to a close, as well as to collect ideas and suggestions for the upcoming year.

The current Executive Board of the PTA is made up of two Co-Presidents, two Co-Vice Presidents, two Co-Secretaries, two Co-Treasurers, and a Class Parent Liaison. Board members work on a variety of PTA events, projects, and committees. Elections for board positions are held in May for positions beginning in the fall of the following school year.

2025/2026 President: Nailah Ricco-Brown

They can be reached at ellabakerpta@gmail.com.

SCHOOL PROCEDURES AND POLICIES

Forms

The Department of Education and our own internal systems require parents to complete a number of forms at the very start of the school year. You can help us greatly by turning in the following forms early, legibly and in full.

In 2025 – 2026 we are collecting all information in electronic form. All forms listed are in the link below.

<https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLScM1qvG1gMmfVOv35lXsy7F0UTUZ5Z2gR4igJRJ0aAssWGgQg/viewform?usp=sharing&ouid=114512020134375294187>

1. **Blue Card:** This card is very important as it provides us with your contact information in case of an emergency. We will only release your child to individuals who are listed on the blue card as authorized to pick up your child. It is also of utmost importance that any health issues/allergies are listed on the blue card.
2. **Lunch form:** All families must complete a DOE lunch form, even though lunch is free for all students. You may also complete the lunch form online through this link:<https://www.myschoolapps.com/Application>
3. **Walking permission form:** This form allows us to take your child on any trip during the year that is walking distance from the school. For any trips that require bus or subway transportation, teachers will send home an additional form.
4. **Media release:** With this form you either allow or prohibit the use of your child's image in any of Ella Baker's printed materials or online presence for this school year.
5. **Cell phone policy:** Please read carefully the policy outlined later in this handbook..
6. **Health forms:** New York City Department of Education policy requires that every student have a [health form](#), signed by a physician, on file in school. It is extremely important that immunizations are up-to-date.* Children must have proof of immunization before they can be registered for school. If children are not up to date with their immunizations, they may be excluded from school.

**Health forms must be legible with the series of vaccines complete, including TB test results that are clearly indicated with dates. Help us minimize the need to repeatedly ask you for corrected records. Please help us by bringing in a copy of your child's immunization record whenever your child receives a new immunization. Updated forms can also be faxed to the office. If information is missing, please call your doctor to notify them of this and ask them to fax us a correct copy of the form to 212-717-8807.

Changing Student Information

Please be sure to notify Susan Amaro samaro2@schools.nyc.gov immediately of any changes to your family information, including address, email, phone number, emergency contacts, and those authorized to pick up your child. If you are not receiving Valerie Kirk-Kamali's emails vkirkkamali@schools.nyc.gov, please be sure to check with her to have your email address added or corrected. Any orders of protection, custody changes, or other family issues should be shared with the school immediately through Kira Hammond khammond@schools.nyc.gov, our guidance counselor.

Cell Phone Policy

Teachers, administrators, counselors and parents at Ella Baker have invested many hours problem-solving around issues related to student use of cell phones and electronics--including cyber bullying, addictive behavior, distraction, social isolation, miscommunication, peer conflict, and fatigue. Some studies suggest that excessive use of electronics can even impair brain readiness for learning. For these reasons, and in order to ensure an optimum learning environment for all, we have established the following cell phone policy. Please read it carefully and support us in upholding it.

Cell Phone Policy – Students may bring cell phones, computing devices, and portable music and entertainment systems to school, but they may NOT be turned on or used at school in ANY location, which includes bathrooms, the cafeteria, the yard, stairwells, or classrooms at ANY time of the school day, including after-school activities. Phones will be collected in classrooms as soon as students enter. Prior to that, inside the building (including the lobby, elevator, cafeteria, hallway, gym, bathroom), if a student's phone is out, it will be confiscated at that time and turned over to the student's classroom teacher.

- Cell phones, computing devices and portable music and entertainment systems may NOT be turned on or used during fire drills or other emergency preparedness exercises.
- Cell phones, computing devices and portable music and entertainment systems may NOT be turned on or used on field trips and/or any off campus school-related activity.
- The school is not liable for lost, stolen, and/or damaged cell phones, computing devices, and portable music and entertainment systems.

The teacher will notify parents of the issue and work with families to make a plan for the student's compliance with school cell phone policy. Should the violations become chronic, the school will carry out guidance interventions and disciplinary responses set forth in the NYC DOE Discipline Code.

If you need to contact your child, please call 212-717-8809.

Arrival - All Students

Our school day begins at 8:30 a.m. Early Drop-Off begins at 8:00 am. Students on school premises before 8:00 am are not officially under our care nor the care of JREC School Safety Agents.

Morning arrival at Ella Baker takes place outside in the yard unless there is inclement weather, in which case it moves inside.

Please review our arrival procedures below to ensure our transition to the school day goes smoothly.

- Students may begin arriving at 8:00am in the yard for early drop off. We ask that families of 1st - 8th grade socialize outside on the sidewalk instead of inside the yard area.
- Prek and K students enter on 67th St side starting at 8:25 with teachers greeting them and bringing them upstairs. You may gather in the yard in the northwest corner if you arrive beforehand.
- Students in grade 6 to 8 are sent up to their classrooms at 8:28.
- We blow the whistle at 8:28 and the students in grade 1 to 5 line up in their line spots. School staff support these various transitions in the morning.

On rainy/extracold days, students say goodbye to you in the 67th street alley and then head to the 5th floor cafeteria. Students in pre-k and 1 are escorted to the 2nd floor if you arrive before 8:30. During inclement weather we do not open the large gate on 68th street.

We ask that families *do not* escort their children to classrooms. If you are running late, please bring your child to the main office to sign the late book, and we will take your child to their classroom.

Breakfast

Breakfast is provided from 8:00-8:30 am in the yard.

Dismissal Times and Locations

GRADE	DISMISSAL TIME	LOCATION
Pre-K	2:40	67th Street Hallway
Kindergarten	2:45	67th Street Hallway
Grades 1-8	2:50	67th Street
Students riding busses	2:50	Bus students are gathered in the auditorium in designated areas starting at 2:50. School personnel escort them to the buses as they arrive.

*Family members or sitters who pick up children are asked to be on time. Only in the case of an emergency are children brought back to the office to wait for a late pick up.

Building Policy

To maintain a safe, secure, and focused learning environment, our school does not permit parents or visitors to enter classrooms or move through the building during instructional hours. All visitors must enter through the main entrance, sign in with valid identification, and remain only in designated areas as directed by school staff.

We also do not interrupt students' school day for unscheduled visits, drop-ins, or non-urgent requests. If you need assistance or would like to meet with a staff member, please contact the main office to schedule an appointment outside of instructional time. In emergencies, the school will coordinate communication and student pickup consistent with NYC Public Schools procedures.

Changes in Pick-up Arrangements

- If your child has a special pick-up arrangement on any one day, please communicate your request to your child's teacher. *Any person picking up your child must be listed on the blue card.*
- FOR CHANGES IN BUS TRANSPORTATION:
To avoid confusion, please make every effort to keep to a regular bus schedule for your child. Communicate the schedule, as well as any changes to your child's teacher and AP Valerie Leak vleak@schools.nyc.gov.

Early Pick-up

If you or another authorized caretaker is planning on picking your child up early prior to dismissal, you must notify your child's classroom teacher and Valerie vkirkkamali@schools.nyc.gov in advance to facilitate the pick-up. Upon arrival, report to the main office (Rm. 232) and sign your child out in the Early Dismissal Book. Office staff will notify your child's teacher that you are waiting in the office.

Afterschool Programs

[**The Imogen Foundation**](#) (Pre-K through Grade 5) and the [**Vanderbilt YMCA**](#) (Grades 6 through 8) are housed within the Julia Richman Educational Complex. The programs provide a variety of enrichment courses. The middle school program is FREE.

Lateness

Students arriving to their classrooms **after 8:30** will be marked late by their teachers. All students coming late need to go to the main office (Room 232) and pick up and sign in to the late book. Without signing in, our staff will not know that your child is in attendance and may mark your child absent. The DOE sends out an automated phone call to families whose children have been marked absent at 11:00 am daily. If you receive a call and your child is in school, call the main office and we will correct it. **We ask that families do not escort their children to classrooms.** If you are running late, please bring your child to the main office to sign the late book, and we will take your child to their classroom.

Absence

Attendance is reviewed carefully by the Department of Education (DOE). A "reason-code" is required for the DOE system for all absences. A doctor's note must be provided if a child has been absent for three days or more.

If your child is going to be absent, and/or to make changes in going-home or afterschool arrangements, please email your child's teacher and cc Valerie. It is not necessary to notify Josh or Valerie.

Excessive Lateness/Absence

Chronic lateness and absenteeism hinder academic progress as well as admission to the city's best high schools. If we notice a pattern of tardiness or absence, we will do the following to support families in getting their children here, on time.

- Emails with updates on attendance data, resources and reminders
- Phone call from guidance or administration to discuss the situation and generate strategies.
- Meeting with students (grades 6 and up).

- Family meeting at school to review progress and generate strategies and supports.
- Home visit from our DOE Attendance Teacher/

Illness Policy

We ask that parents follow our illness policy in order to protect all of the families and children we serve. Fever, vomiting and diarrhea are signs of a virus and children must stay home. Children are required to be fever-free for 24 hours (without use of medication) before returning to school. If your child becomes ill at school, we will notify you and ask that you pick up your child within one hour. In case of accidental injury, the school will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent or guardian. If we cannot reach you, we will follow the instructions given on the blue emergency card.

Please keep your child home or bring them to the doctor when they are displaying one of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4 degrees and up
- Persistent cough
- Diarrhea
- Vomiting
- Undiagnosed rash or skin eruptions
- Eyes with colored discharge
- Persistent tugging of ears that could indicate ear infection
- Nose with excessive mucus that requires constant wiping
- Complaints of body aches and pains (or when pain is evident)
- Constant itching of head or body (which may indicate lice)
- Swollen glands

If your child has suffered from any of the following illnesses and is ready to return to school, we need to receive a written statement from a doctor saying that your child is displaying no symptoms and is not contagious:

- Ear infection
- Strep throat
- Bronchitis
- Chicken pox
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Pediculosis (head lice)
- Influenza
- Ringworm
- Mumps
- Measles
- Rubella
- Coxsackie virus (no blisters or open sores)
- Impetigo
- Croup
- Hepatitis A

Meals, Food and Nutrition

Every day, three meals are served at school, free of charge:

- Breakfast: 8:00–8:25 am, in the school yard.
- Lunch: in shifts between 10:45 am and 12:25 pm. Pre-K and K students eat lunch in their classrooms.
- Supper: 3:00–3:15 pm, for those students registered with the after school. In addition, we provide a snack for students participating in Ella Baker after school programs (such as Harmony Violin, talent show in the spring, etc.)

You can view menus by school here: (We follow the High School Lunch Menu)

<http://www.schoolfoodnyc.org/schoolfood/MenuDailyDisplay.aspx>

Ella Baker is a TREE NUT FREE SCHOOL. A few of our students have severe allergies to peanuts and other nuts. Therefore, any tree nuts are strictly prohibited from the building. Please adhere to this guideline for the health and safety of all students. We suggest sunflower seed butter as an alternative to peanut butter.

A Word about Sugar

We ask that families help us in carefully monitoring and limiting children's intake of refined sugar. Studies have found that high sugar consumption can interfere with children's concentration, energy regulation, mood stability, and even produce addictive behaviors. **We do not permit candy at school.** Please do not send your child to school with sugary snacks, but instead provide them with protein, fruits, vegetables and other nutritious foods. Please discourage your middle schooler from buying and drinking soda as part of their breakfast.

Bus Transportation

Age, distance, and in some cases IEPs, determine whether you can receive school bus services. Children cannot ride an NYCDOE school bus until they are five years old. The school bus picks up and drops off the children at various times depending on the route. Currently, the DOE buses coming to Ella Baker are known as the "West Side bus" and the "East Side bus." The "Queens bus" is a private bus, financed and coordinated by parents and guardians of some of our students residing in Queens. All buses have seatbelts and all children are required to wear them. There are no chaperones on the buses, with the exception of a matron on the Queens bus (again, privately funded by parents).

We do not hire the bus drivers and have no control over their performance and reliability. We are unable to help you with complaints about the bus but will be happy to give you the phone number of the Bureau of Transportation or the bus company that has the contract for the route.

OMNY

OMNY cards are available for those students who live more than a half mile from the school. The age of the student is also a factor and determines whether you receive a full or half fare card. The Bureau of Transportation of the Department of Education decides whether the child receives full or half fare OMNY cards. The school has no control over these decisions. Questions about OMNY cards can be directed to Mia Hernandez at mhernandez13@schools.nyc.gov.

Field Trips

Trips emerge from curricular connections, as well as the interests and questions that arise in our classrooms. This is real class time – we expect all children to attend trips. We plan many follow-up curriculum activities and it is important that children have all the information that they need to do their assignments.

Each class will take several trips throughout the course of the year, ranging from walks around the block, to visits within the community, to performances and excursions both in and outside of the city. Classes may travel on foot, by school bus, or by subway depending on the destination. Teachers will notify you in advance about upcoming trips and request permission slips and parent volunteers to accompany the class and assist in supervision (See Guidelines for Class Trip Chaperones below). To ensure the safety of everyone involved in class trips, the procedures below must be followed. Permission slips must be received for every child on each trip using school bus or public transportation, so please return them in a timely manner.

Any student who cannot attend a school trip will be accommodated in another classroom for the duration of the trip time.

Guidelines for Class Trip Chaperones

We are very grateful to parents and guardians who are able to help out by serving as trip chaperones. Below are some guidelines to ensure that each student is safe and that the trip goes smoothly.

- Learn the names of the children who will be in your group. Keep your group together at all times.
- Help the children follow the teacher's instructions.
- Help children keep up with the line.
- Help the children cross streets quickly, silently and efficiently. Let the teacher decide when and where to cross.
- Please assist children with their coats, shoes, lunches, etc. if necessary.
- If on a school bus, assist teachers in monitoring usage of seatbelts, designated seating, noise level, and safety entering and exiting the bus. All children under the age of four are required to have a car seat on a school bus.

- Children that wish to use the bathroom or visit the water fountain must be accompanied by an adult..
- Do not leave the group of children without notifying the teacher.
- It is our policy to prohibit individual children buying anything in gift shops, vending machines or cafeterias on trips— even if they are accompanied by a parent.
- Children must not be allowed to converse with strangers.
- Children may not eat or drink on any public transportation without the teacher's permission.

Safety

Drills

To ensure the safety of all, and as required by the NYC DOE's Emergency Readiness General Response Protocol, the school is required to carry out the following types of drills a few times a year:

- **Evacuation Drill** (commonly known as a “fire drill”): Everyone in the JREC building exits in an orderly fashion, leaving behind belongings, except for coats in cold weather. Teachers are trained to facilitate this smoothly, take roll, and observe school safety protocols. Ella Baker students line up on 68th Street extending to First Avenue.
- **Shelter-in** - All students and staff are kept inside the building and conduct business as usual. Exits are secured by school safety agents, Building Response Team members and floor wardens.
- **Soft/Hard Lock Down** - Students are trained to move out of sight and keep silent. Teachers are trained to check the hallway outside of their classrooms for students, lock classroom doors, turn off the lights, move out of sight and keep silent.

Safety Communication

If it becomes necessary to evacuate the building for an extended period of time, parents will receive a text with pertinent information about evacuation location. We will also email all families as soon as possible to share information. Please note that the school is not permitted to release communication with families until it is approved by the DOE. This can take time and is beyond our control. We appreciate your understanding and patience.

Our School Safety Agent Team

At JREC we are fortunate to have an experienced and committed team of school safety agents who know our school and our students well. We are grateful to each one of them

for the care they provide daily to our community. Please do not hesitate to call on them for assistance.

School Culture

We envision our school as a learning community where children and adults treat one another with respect and kindness. We see our graduates taking their places in the world as empowered adults who can make good choices in their lives, make positive changes in the world, and work well with others in their occupational and social communities.

Thus, we define discipline as helping children to develop self-regulation, empathy, and a desire to contribute positively to a physically and emotionally safe community for all. We work to maintain an environment where youngsters and adults can ask questions, take in information, reflect, take responsibility, learn, change, adapt, and improve their choices.

- Ella Baker Values – As issues and challenges come up, our consistent message is that problems are inevitable, yet they must be solved through restorative means. Although each person brings family and individual values to school as part of their identity, we have shared school values, consistent from class to class, which we uphold and reinforce.
 - Treat people kindly.
 - Act peacefully.
 - Speak truthfully.
 - Take responsibility.
 - Seek solutions.
- Children are also reminded that:
 - Their actions affect others.
 - They can solve problems through discussion.
 - Setting and respecting personal boundaries are important.
 - Certain behaviors are not tolerated, including:
 - Teasing
 - Aggressive verbal behavior—cursing and/or other threatening or abusive language to children, adults, or the larger community (including racial, sexual, or other negative comments about one's identity).
 - Hitting or other physically aggressive acts, including shoving.
 - Behavior that severely disrupts the education of others.
 - Dangerous behavior (hiding in the yard or classroom, running away from adults, climbing bathroom stalls, etc.)

- Misuse of materials or other people's property.
 - Stealing or defacing school or personal property.
- Response to Unacceptable Behavior - In keeping with our values and mission, and depending upon the child's age, frequency and severity of the behavior, Ella Baker School employs one or more of the following DOE sanctioned practices:
 - Collaborative Problem Solving
 - Restorative Justice
 - [NYC DOE's Citywide Behavioral Expectations and Discipline Code](#)
- Bullying

Ella Baker School does not tolerate bullying. We take immediate and appropriate measures as outlined above in the NYC DOE Discipline Code. We also define bullying accurately, according to the DOE's following guidelines:

Bullying IS:

 - Behavior that is negative, unwanted, deliberate and unprovoked
 - Intended to cause harm to the target of the behavior
 - Causes harm to the target of the behavior
 - Involves an imbalance of power (physical or social)

Bullying IS NOT:

- A rude comment
- A conflict
- A one-time physical altercation

Special Events

A number of events for families and staff will take place throughout the year. A calendar is sent home at the beginning of the school year. Events are also listed on our website: www.ellabakerschool.org. We also send home notices by email and backpack in advance of events.

Special Events Sampling:

- Fall Festival
- Fall PTA Potluck

- Ella Baker Day
- Classroom Celebrations
- Theater and Musical Performances
- Field Day
- Scholastic Book Fair
- Picture Day
- Overnight Trips to Manice Educational Center
- Ronald McDonald House Kids charity Fun Run

Birthdays

Please check with your child's teacher about their classroom birthday celebration traditions. Overall, we ask that decorations, party favors, goodie bags, and gifts be reserved for home parties. In addition, please do not use the class mailboxes to distribute invitations for home parties, even if the whole class is invited.

Supervision of Children at Special Events

We enjoy arranging periodic opportunities for families and the school to come together for celebration and performance. These may be in the classroom or a more public space such as the yard or auditorium. For the safety of all, we ask that parents observe the following guidelines:

- Any child attending an event outside of school hours must be accompanied by an adult and be under the supervision of that adult at all times.
- Children may not enter parts of the building that are not in use for the event.
- Children may not run around in the auditorium or play on stage before, during or after a school performance.
- If school property is destroyed, the parent is responsible for compensation.

Clothing

Lower Grades

Children will be using paint, clay, sand and water. Washable clothing is best. And please send a spare set of clothing for your child in Pre-K/K. Sturdy, comfortable shoes allow children to run and play during recess and gym. At Ella Baker, students go outside in all but extreme weather. Please send hats, scarves, mittens as appropriate.

We encourage children to be as independent as possible when dressing themselves. Clothing that is free of complicated fastenings is most appropriate. Please ensure your child knows how to tie their own shoes; until this skill is mastered, velcro shoes are best.

Middle School

We do not have a dress code. If we have concerns about a student's apparel, we address the situation individually.

Lost and Found

Please label all of your child's clothing and other belongings (like lunch boxes, bags, etc.). In the event that your child loses an article, we have a Lost & Found on the ground floor by the side entrance. Please check it in a timely fashion, as its contents are sent out to Goodwill monthly.

Sibling Admissions

- **Pre-K**

Siblings of students enrolled in Ella Baker during the applicable school year receive admissions priority. Families must submit an application through the Department of Education's centralized Universal Pre-k admissions process. For more information go to:

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/pre-k>

- **Kindergarten**

Siblings of students enrolled in Ella Baker during the applicable school year receive admissions priority. Families must submit an application through the Department of Education's centralized Kindergarten admissions process. For more information go to:

<https://www.schools.nyc.gov/enrollment/enroll-grade-by-grade/kindergarten>

- **Grades 1 - 8**

We are occasionally able to offer spots to older siblings of newly admitted PreK and Kindergarten students. If interested, speak to the Parent Coordinator, Valerie Kirk-Kamali 212-717-8809 Ext 2321.

Academics at Ella Baker

Curriculum

The curriculum at Ella Baker continues is rooted in the belief that all students can achieve excellence in work. We believe that students learn best by doing and creating work that matters.

Curriculum at Ella Baker considers the student needs and interests, state standards, cultural relevance and responsiveness, school philosophy and multiple means of

engagement, expression of learning, and representation of material. In addition, we draw from a number of research-based, professionally prepared resources that we feel align with our pedagogical philosophy, including: Wit and Wisdom, Illustrative Mathematics, Fundations, Hegarty, and the DOE's Passport to Social Studies. We use these resources to help shape our curriculum and determine how to supplement the work to ensure aspects of student identity, skills, and intellectual rigor. For an overview of Ella Baker's academic curriculum, please visit our website. Also be sure to attend our fall Curriculum Night when teachers inform parents about the coming year's curriculum and distribute scope and sequence maps.

Curriculum Night

Curriculum night occurs every fall. This evening serves to: introduce you to your child's teacher, the curriculum for the year, and provide an opportunity to meet other families from your child's class. Here you will learn about and discuss the class curriculum in detail. If you have specific concerns about your child's progress or issues in class, please discuss with the teacher separately during Family Conferences or at a privately arranged meeting.

What is project-based learning?

At Ella Baker we value depth over breadth, student initiative over teacher control, the thinking process above getting the "right answer." Therefore, we engage students in creating projects where they seek out and utilize knowledge, make meaning for themselves, and reflect on their learning, all within a framework designed and guided by the teacher. In early grades, these are often physical creations they share with classmates. As children move through the grades, writing, research, analysis, and formal presentation become important aspects of final projects. Parents are often invited to attend publishing parties, share days, and performances during which students present their projects and articulate their learning.

Projects serve as an entry point to engagement, a process for actual learning, as well as a means of assessment. Teachers set out learning goals and activities, leaving room for student choice. They assess students against goals for learning that are shared with students. In addition, teachers look for growth in how students revise their thinking, refine their processes, and solve problems. Students self assess, both during and at the conclusion of a project. In collaboration with teachers, they celebrate successes and set goals to carry forward the experience for new growth in the next endeavor.

Work Time

Work Time is a special project time--sometimes standing apart from the set curriculum, sometimes integrated--when children may freely choose an activity they would like to work on. Numerous studies--some extending over decades--show the effectiveness of play-based education that combines hands-on learning with child-initiated play. Work Time is our school's way of incorporating play into each student's experience. Choices vary from class to class, teacher to teacher and grade to grade—but every grade from Pre K to 8th engages in Work Time at some point during their week.

In the early childhood years, Work Time usually occurs daily and may include: blocks, painting, cooking, dramatic play, sand table, water table, mini house, construction, book making, marble ramps, animal and plant care, legos, storytelling, paper airplanes, play dough or dance. Not all of these are offered in one day, of course, but enough activities so two to four children may be working in each area. Teachers are facilitators during Work Time, helping to provision an activity, assist when students get stuck, resolve social disputes or to guide them to the next step. A journal component is added to help older students reflect on their work. Students may respond to questions such as, *Where did you go today? What materials did you use? If you got stuck, how did you get unstuck? How will you begin tomorrow?* The Work Time journal can be especially helpful with students that struggle with writing, and gives teachers one more assessment source.

Assessment and Reporting of Progress

Students do not receive traditional report cards or grades (except in grades 6 - 8) at Ella Baker School. Instead, teachers write narrative reports and complete checklists about individual student progress. We find that a checklist is useful for indicating progress in terms of skills and curricular expectations, but that narratives are necessary in addition to telling the full story of a child as a learner. We use narrative descriptions to communicate with families about the children's academic learning, as well as social/emotional development, new interests, unique endeavors, and next steps. Class participation, assignments, projects, and schoolwide assessments are used to determine mastery of individual skills. In cases where students are missing important assignments, we work with students to assure that they complete the work and acquire the skills intended by the curriculum.

Whether writing narratives or completing checklists, teachers review their classroom assessments, school-wide assessments, conference notes, observations, student goals, projects, written work, and self-evaluations in order to reflect on the child and how to best provide for her/his continued growth and development. Teachers also provide suggestions on how families can help their children's learning and development. Depending on the grade level and time of year, either a narrative, a checklist or both may be provided to parents. At the end of the school year, grades of Pass or Fail will be entered into the NYC DOE STARS system for the four major subject areas: ELA, Math, Social Studies and Science.

In middle school, the teacher will also provide a numerical grade, based on scores for projects, classwork and quizzes. While work habits are also rated in each subject area, content standards are predominantly used to determine the final numerical grade.

KEY

Beginning (B): Requires adult support

In Progress (IP): Can work independently with prompting

Consistent (C): Demonstrates proficiency independently

Writing Skills	B	IP	C
Engages in writing to express ideas and learning			x
Word choice, sentence structure & voice strengthen style			x
Organizes ideas into well-ordered paragraphs		x	
Uses evidence to support ideas, elaborates sufficiently on evidence		x	
Revises and edits writing as needed		x	
Applies conventions of grammar, punctuation, agreement, etc.		x	
Writes continuously for extended periods of time		x	
*Final Grade:			

* Only students in Middle School students will receive a numerical “Final Grade.”

Student Self Evaluation and Goal Setting

At Ella Baker School we value and give voice to children’s assessments of themselves as well as goal setting. Twice a year, reflection and communication of goals is formalized across the school, when families participate in student-led conferences. In preparation for family conferences, children reflect on their progress. They consider what curriculum has been important to them and why, what skills they have worked on during this portion of the year, and what areas might be areas for improvement.

Teachers and students then arrive at a short list of goals that are shared with parents and guardians during the conference.

Homework

At Ella Baker we expect all students to read at home for 30 or more minutes each evening. With other assignments, teachers determine their own requirements and guidelines. Overall, we do not assign large amounts of homework because we believe

that children need a balanced life. In addition to school, children need time for family, play dates, after-school enrichment activities and (screen free) leisure time. Thus, we strive to keep children's enthusiasm and excitement alive with homework assignments that are meaningful and connected to the curriculum. In the early grades, parents play a bigger role in guiding and participating in homework. For example, reading aloud to children and playing math games. Our wish is for students to grow more independent as they move through our elementary grades and on up to middle school. Also, in keeping with our educational philosophy, the object is not to get it right, but to engage with the work in a thoughtful and meaningful way.

All parents can support good homework habits by:

- Providing a regular time and place for children to work
- Promoting independence by asking open ended questions such as ("Ok, so what's your first step? What could you try?)
- Listening to help children clarify their thinking

Promotional Policy

Occasionally a child may be struggling and not making adequate progress. When we are concerned about a child's academic progress, we take the following steps:

- Initiate a conversation between teachers, administration and the family about our concerns.
- The school history of the child is reviewed (the portfolio, previous progress reports, etc.)
- Together we formulate a plan to help the child and provide the scaffolding that the child needs to progress.
- A Pupil Personnel Team (consisting of the principal, teacher, guidance counselor, social worker, resource room teachers) meeting may be convened to look at the need for counseling, small group tutoring or other special services such as resource room or speech. We confer with the previous classroom teacher(s) and other teachers who have worked with the child.

In rare cases, a child's performance and progress is so different from the range of the class that the child is not able to participate fully in the curriculum of the class. In this case, promotion may be a disservice to the child. Parents are notified of our concern in writing no later than the time of the mid-year progress reports.