

History of Eastside Academic Studies

Around the year 2000, several families who were members of Lilburn Alliance Church were getting together for activities and classes for their children. There were also some church members who were starting to teach more formal classes. Parents had been driving to different parts of town for their classes, so it started making sense that these teachers might teach in the same location if possible.

A cooperative was started so that parents could share their activity ideas and resources at the LAC campus, and as this cooperation grew, elementary activities such as Little House on the Prairie groups and photography classes also led to an interest in academic classes. This brought in some teachers who had been working in Christian schools or teaching independently in church spaces in Norcross and Stone Mountain. During activities for elementary children, older siblings could have classes so that parents did not have to drive from place to place. LAC became a hub for homeschool activities during the week, with the blessing of the pastor and elders. Teachers were all Christian, and many families joined from outside LAC. We were no longer a cooperative as much as a program with an umbrella over hybrid classes and activities.

Around 2005, we had enough classes going on that we needed a website to coordinate schedules, and eventually a director who could oversee as well as teach, if she wanted. Susan Payton provided excellent direction for several years. Discounts were given to LAC's church families, and the program expanded to include students and teachers from over 50 Christian churches. To assist with the facility needs, "LAC" (which also stood for Lilburn Academic Classes) contributed funds and supplies.

When Susan Payton needed to step down as administrator, Michelle Shaw was chosen to lead what was now called "Eastside Academic Studies." The website was expanded to include registration and grading features, and the credentials of the teachers continued to be in line with GA accrediting standards. Importantly, all teachers were checked out carefully before being allowed to teach classes at Eastside. They provided their Christian testimony, reference from a pastor, and resume of their experience. They were observed teaching in a classroom environment, and their course descriptions were deemed appropriate. They also attended a best policies workshop to see that they fit the spirit of the organization. Directors and teachers have worked to exemplify Christian principles and provide models of respect for church staff and the facility.

A Georgia Accrediting Commission approved entity called Northeast Independent Preparatory Academy is also aligned with Eastside Academic Studies if parents want their oversight for guidance/academic counseling and accredited transcripts. Aligning with NIPA is optional, but convenient for those who want these traditional services. Dekalb Christian Home Educators also links strongly with Eastside, providing a parent support group as well as social activities for DCHE students. Eastside itself provides a variety of extra-curricular activities for all of its students, such as service projects in the community, social events such as adventure and reading clubs, outdoor and board game times, formals, and graduations. Eastside parents have monthly offerings of panel discussions, academic information sessions, and mothers support gatherings. We continue to have a good relationship with our host church, Lilburn Alliance.

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