

## HISTORY OF ASCENSION EPISCOPAL SCHOOL

Ascension Episcopal School (AES) was founded in 1972 by The Church of the Ascension. Thus, the parish fulfilled a need in the community for a school that provides a Christ-centered environment where children grow intellectually, physically, socially and spiritually. Two guiding educational principles provide the foundation and continuation of AES. The first guiding principle is the belief that spiritual growth is achieved by individual responsibility coupled with Bible based moral values. The second guiding principle is the necessity of a strong academic curriculum. Together, these two principles form the foundation of every student's educational journey at AES. Thirty years later this educational philosophy remains strong.

Early classes were held in the original Parish Hall. Presently, this building houses Preschool, Pre-Kindergarten, Kindergarten, Music and Motor Skills . AES began in 1972 with only three Preschool classes. In 1974 AES grew to include Kindergarten and First grade. By 1980 AES expanded to include Fifth grade. From 1983, to the current time, AES proudly serves ten months through Fifth Grade. In 1981 and 1986 the 200 and 300 wings were added to the school building. These wings house the Elementary classrooms, the Science Lab, and the Art Lab. The new Sanctuary was built in 1982. From 1982-2000 the former Sanctuary accommodated a multiplicity of uses. In 2000 the former Sanctuary was remodeled and now serves as the Library and Computer Lab. The playgrounds were completely remodeled in 2001 with money raised by the Board and parents.

In 1978 Elijah's flaming chariot was chosen as the first school logo. The symbolism of Elijah's flaming chariot recalls the Old Testament figure Elijah who eluded death by ascending to Heaven riding a chariot engulfed in flames. *Christ* is represented by the *ascension* of the chariot which *saved Elijah from death* and took him to Heaven. The second version of the logo still contained Elijah's flaming chariot but now also included a cross. The current AES logo includes an Episcopal Shield with a soaring Eagle and the school motto, "Where Eagles Learn to Fly." The Episcopal Shield represents that AES is a Christian school that is part of a long standing Episcopal tradition. The Eagle symbolizes the Gospel of John whose beautiful theology of an Easter Christ soars to Heaven. Ultimately, the Eagle also symbolizes Christ who soars above death and the followers of Christ who soar with Him.

In 1972 Kay Wallin was the first Headmistress of AES. Mrs. Wallin was succeeded by Headmaster Mike Davis. From 1975-1993 Virginia Wagner presided as Headmistress. Cullen Hemenway served as Headmaster from 1993-1995. In 1995 Linda Pipkin was named Interim Head of School. Mrs. Pipkin was named Headmistress in 1996 and continues this mission of service at AES.

AES is a tuition-driven school, but has added an Annual Giving campaign and several fundraisers. Every year AES fundraising programs include: newspaper

recycling, cash-back promotions from community businesses like Kroger, Randalls, Target and Campbell's, Genevieve Gifts, poinsettia sale, Spirit Day pizza, uniform resale, ink cartridge recycling, cell phone recycling and the ever popular British Tea. AES appreciates these community gifts and likewise seeks to be an outstanding member of the greater community through community outreach. Community outreach teaches AES students the importance of showing Christ's love through actions to those less fortunate. Every year AES community outreach includes: food and toy offerings for WHAM (West Houston Assistance Ministries) and Hunger Heroes.

The extra-curricular programs offered at Ascension are varied and have changed over the years. Due to parental demand in the early 80's, AES began offering extended-day Programs for preschool through Fifth Grade. Shortly thereafter, AES added Camp Eagle's Nest which is a fun and educational summer program for preschool through Fifth Grade. The Early Childhood Program for children 10 months through 36 months has been in existence since 1983. The enhanced After-School Program includes options such as: Tae Kwon Do, Drama, Cooking, Softball, Gymnastics, Jumpbunch, Piano, Art, Music, T-Ball, Ballet, Dance, Soccer, Baseball, Scouting, Chess and Study Hall (1<sup>st</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade).

AES offers several academic enrichment opportunities. In 1996 AES organized a Student Council which provides leadership training for elementary age students. The Student Council representatives raise money for the school through bake sales and Spirit Day treats. Third and Fourth grade students go to Camp Allen for three days in the spring. Fifth grade students go to Mo Ranch for four days and nights in the fall. Other academic enrichment opportunities include: Science Fair, Spelling bee, Private School Interscholastic Academic Competition, Advanced Science Exploration, Spanish Curriculum, Choir (3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> grades), keyboarding (2<sup>nd</sup>), Merit Houses (House of Loyalty, House of Honor, House of Courage) and the use of the outdoor learning center. Annual Special Events at AES include: Grandparent's Day, Book Fair, Winter Carnival, Rodeo Day, Field Day, and an Easter Parade. Yearly traditions celebrated and experienced at AES include: All Saints Chapel, Saint Nicolas Day, Christmas Pageant, Epiphany Chapel, Ash Wednesday, Palm Sunday Chapel, Maundy Thursday, Ascension Day, Eagle's Day and Spring Music Programs. All of these activities provide AES students with environmental experiences and leadership training.

AES gained accreditation from The Southwestern Association of Episcopal Schools in 1993 and reaccreditation in 2003. In 1995 AES was incorporated by the State of Texas. AES is designated as a 501 (3) © non-profit school. AES adopted a new curriculum upon accreditation in 1993 and continues to reviews and adopts new curriculum as needed to remain current with technology and educational trends.

The history of Ascension Episcopal School has spanned over 30 years. A strong member of the community, AES is now educating the children of early AES graduates. The buildings, programs, technology, curriculum, students, staff and

**even logo of AES have changed and developed, yet the original mission of AES has remained the same. From the foundation, through daily action, to the future AES perpetually affirms the mission statement: “Ascension Episcopal School is a Christian community committed to guiding children on their journey toward spiritual, intellectual and psychical excellence using their God given talents.”**