

Early Childhood Family Education
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A Community Education Program of the
Moorhead School District

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If you do not read English and would like help in your own language, please call 284-3310.

Si usted no lee en inglés y le gustaría que le ayudaran en su propio idioma, por favor llame al 284-3310.

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ہاں اگر آپ انگریزی نہیں پڑھ سکتے ہیں، تو براہ کرم 284-3310 پر بلا کال کریں۔

ECFE Parent Handbook



Early
Childhood
Family
Education

OTHER PROGRAMS RELATED TO ECFE

School Readiness Preschools

Our preschool programs serve four- and five-year-old children who will enter school the following fall. We partner with Early Intervention Services to provide inclusive opportunities for Moorhead children. We also offer Preschool on Wheels, which is a school readiness program for children in home child-care settings.

Partners in Learning

Partners in Learning is a comprehensive Even Start Family Literacy program. We enroll parents who are learning the English language or studying for a GED, along with their young children. The children attend either the infant/toddler program or Head Start—all on site. Families are bused to the Probstfield Center for Education where the adults study Adult Basic Education or ESL and parenting. They also participate in D.E.A.R (Drop Everything and Read) time and Parent and Children Together (PACT) time. The families eat lunch together in the gym. Children participate in play and learning activities with their parents and with early childhood professionals. Each family also receives home visits.

Early Childhood Screening

Early Childhood Screening is a “check in” for Moorhead children from three to five years old. We screen for possible health or learning concerns so the child can get help before starting school. At this screening, professionals check children’s vision, hearing, height, weight, immunizations, and skills in thinking, language, motor coordination, and social/emotional development.

WHAT IS ECFE?

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program of Moorhead Public School District’s Community Education. Children from birth to kindergarten entry and their parents can choose from many classes, tours, and special events offered each week at Probstfield Center for Education and around the community.

ECFE’S MISSION

The purpose of Minnesota’s ECFE programs is to strengthen families and support parents in providing the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children.

ECFE’S GOALS

Our goals at Moorhead ECFE are as follows:

1. Support children’s optimal physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development during the important early years of life.
2. Encourage parents to be involved in their children’s learning, development, and education.
3. Help parents develop informed, realistic attitudes and expectations about raising children.
4. Promote effective communication between parents and children.
5. Help parents develop and strengthen support networks that enhance families.
6. Encourage families to develop and effectively use community resources.
7. Help prevent child abuse, family violence, and other negative family outcomes.
8. Encourage healthy relationships between parents and children.

STATE STANDARDS

ECFE programs meet the standards set forth by the Minnesota Department of Education. For more information about these standards, see the Minnesota Department of Education Web site at <http://education.state.mn.us/mde/index.html>

ECFE STAFF QUALIFICATIONS

All ECFE instructors are licensed early childhood or parent educators. They hold college degrees and have completed specific coursework in child development, parent education, and family dynamics. In addition, ECFE teachers stay current in their areas of expertise through relevant professional development opportunities.

ECFE CLASSES

Dates, times, and descriptions of current ECFE classes are provided in the ECFE newsletter, *Parenting Press*, and online at the Community Education Web site:
<https://communityed.moorhead.k12.mn.us>

4. Serve as an advocate for ECFE programs in the community and at the state legislature.
5. Provide information about community sources of funding and materials.

**Adapted from the Minnesota Department of Education*

The Advisory Council welcomes new members throughout the year. If you would like to join or have any questions about the Advisory Council, please call the ECFE office at 284-3800.



Children's Lending Library

ECFE also has children's books available to check out. The books are filed on a black book cart, which is generally kept in room 104. You may borrow books from this cart by filling out the check-out card with your name and phone number. Give the card to your teacher. Please limit your selections to three books per child per week. Return books the next week in order to check out new ones. Return all books to your teacher by the last day of the class session.

Community Engaged Parent Education*

Community Engaged Parent Education is comprehensive parent education that attends to both the personal and public dimensions of parenting. Public dimensions of parenting include neighborhood, community, cultural, historical, religious, economic, political, legal, institutional, and environmental factors. The mission of Community Engaged Parent Education is to develop the capacity of parents for citizen deliberation and civic action on public issues related to children's well being. ECFE can be a "public space" for civic conversations that help to revive our democracy. Some ECFE parent educators are trained in Community Engaged Parent Education. For more information about Community Engaged Parent Education, see

www.communityengagedparenteducation.org

**From University of Minnesota, Department of Family Social Science*

ECFE Parent Advisory Council

The ECFE Parent Advisory Council consists of ECFE parents and other members of the community who meet regularly to provide input and support for the ECFE program manager and staff. The Parent Advisory Council has the following functions.*

1. Contribute recommendations for program policies, goals, objectives, and ideas.
2. Develop a source of volunteers and train volunteers for ECFE programs.
3. Promote the program, conduct outreach, and foster positive community relations.

WELCOME TO ECFE!

Arrival

Our classrooms open five minutes before class. If you arrive earlier than five minutes before the scheduled class time, please wait with your child in the hall to allow the teachers time to prepare for class.

Lockers

When you arrive at your class, please find an empty locker to hang up your coats and belongings. Bring valuables into the room with you, but please use caution to store bags out of reach of children.

Name Tags

Please write a name tag for you and your child. Paper, tape, and markers are located on top of the cubbies in each classroom for this purpose. Name tags help everyone learn names more quickly. And they help your child learn that letters make up words, including his or her name!



LET'S PLAY—TOGETHER!

At ECFE, we encourage you to interact with your child during our classes. Here are some guidelines for playing together.*

1. Wear comfortable, washable clothes to ECFE. Our priority is learning through play, and for young children (and you!), play can be messy.
2. You are fully responsible for your child's safety and limit-setting during parent-child time. **Stay close!** Early childhood teachers are responsible for your child during parent education time, if you separate.
3. Focus on your child. Follow your child and play with him. Relax and enjoy the experience. Get down to your child's eye level and create a meaningful connection through words, smiles, and loving touches.
4. **Process** is more important than **product!** At ECFE, finishing an art project or puzzle is not the priority. Give your child the opportunity to choose the pace and activities, yet still have your full attention.
5. Encourage language, regardless of your child's age. Use simple words and talk about what the two of you are doing and what you notice: "I see you've picked up a red block." "Isn't it fun to splash the water?"
6. Stay positive. If your child misbehaves, take her to a quiet place to discuss the unwanted behavior. Tell your child *what to do* instead of *what not to do* (instead of saying "Don't stand on the chair," say "Feet stay on the floor, please").
7. Please watch your words. Families have different levels of tolerance for words describing body parts and bathroom habits, for example.
8. While you wait to play with a favorite toy, offer your child two other play choices. Ask the person who is playing with a favorite toy to let you know when they are finished.
9. If trouble is brewing, don't get mad. Get moving! Redirect your child to another activity.
10. Please refrain from calling your child's name from across the room.

1. If Moorhead Public School District announces that classes are starting one hour late, ECFE classes will start on time.
2. If Moorhead Public School District announces that classes are starting two hours late, ECFE will run classes that are scheduled from 11:30 A.M. on.
3. If Moorhead Public School District cancels school for the day, all ECFE classes will also be cancelled.
4. If Moorhead Public School District announces that schools are releasing early, all ECFE classes from the time of school closure through the evening will be cancelled.

If any of these situations arises, we will contact you at a later time to arrange for make-up classes.

RESOURCES FOR YOU AND YOUR CHILD

Sibling Care

Sibling care is available in many of our classes for siblings (from birth to age six) of the child who is enrolled. Sign up early so the teacher can plan activities especially designed for your child's age and stage of development. Look for "super sibling care" when you register for class.

Please note: Drop-in care is not available.

Scholarships and Sliding Fees

Scholarships and sliding fees are available for families living in Moorhead School District #152 who are unable to pay the registration fee.

Parents' Lending Library

The bookshelves in each of the parent education rooms (Rooms 104 and 118) contain books, DVDs, and videos that you are welcome to check out. Please write your name and phone number on the check-out card and give it to your teacher. Return all books to your teacher by the last day of the class session.

Cancellation Policy

Unless otherwise specified, if you have to cancel out of a class, we can give a full refund **only if** you notify the Community Education Office at least 24 hours prior to the first class meeting. Only in extreme circumstances will we refund the cost of a class (minus a \$5 processing fee) after the class has begun. In the unlikely event that we cancel your class, we will give you a full refund.

IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK

At ECFE, we want you and your child to enjoy a healthy environment. If your child has any of the following symptoms, please keep him or her home for the day.

1. A temperature above 100 degrees
2. An upset stomach or diarrhea
3. Signs of an oncoming cold
4. An unidentified rash
5. A sore throat
6. Red or mattery eyes
7. Lethargy (child cannot participate in class activities with reasonable comfort)

Please be sure that your child is free of fever and other symptoms for at least 24 hours before coming to an ECFE class. If your child comes down with a contagious illness (such as chicken pox or strep throat), please notify the ECFE office (284-3800) so we can inform other families of possible exposure. Otherwise, during one of the first class sessions ask your teacher whether she would like to be notified if you will be absent.

IF THE WEATHER IS BAD

Listen to the radio or television to receive the latest update on any storm-related cancellations or late-starting classes. Emergency announcements will be made on local television and radio stations. ECFE closures follow Moorhead Public School District closures, so if the weather is poor, keep these guidelines in mind.

11. Physical punishment of children is never acceptable at ECFE. Please talk to your child's teacher if you need suggestions about dealing with troublesome behavior.
12. At the end of class, the teacher will announce a designated clean-up time. Please help the teachers clean up the room and encourage your child to help as well.

**Some items adapted with permission from Wayzata Family Learning Center Parent Handbook, 2006-2007, Wayzata Public Schools*

TWO TYPES OF ECFE CLASSES

At ECFE, we offer classes where you stay with your child during the entire class time (non-separating classes) and other classes where parents and children separate for the second half of the class period (separating classes).

Non-Separating Classes

Non-separating classes are designed to help you and your child get comfortable with our building and our teachers without leaving each other's side. These classes also enable families to spend more time together in play activities. Parents who work away from home love this option. You will have the opportunity to learn finger plays and songs, create art, do activities, run during gym time, and do anything else our creative teachers plan for you!

Separating Classes

The general format is the same for all separating classes. You and your child spend the first half of the class period together, working at all the activities the teacher and room provide. A special learning time called "circle time" may consist of music, finger plays, movement activities, a book, flannel board stories, puppets, and anything else our teachers can dream up!

During the second half of the class period, you may choose to attend a parent education discussion while your child enjoys a snack and continues to play with the teacher and other children in the classroom and in the gym. You are not required to separate from your child during this time and may choose to spend the second half of the class with your child.



We welcome you to bring a stroller to transport everyone safely from your car. You may park your stroller in the hallway near your classroom.

Visitors to ECFE Classes

If you have an adult visiting and would like to bring them to class with you, please introduce that person to the teacher when you arrive. There is no fee for adult guests.

If you have a child (birth to kindergarten entry) visiting who would like to attend a class with you, please gain permission from the teacher before you bring the child to class. We charge the following fees for child guests: \$7 for a two-hour class, \$5 for a ninety-minute class, and \$3 for a one-hour class. Fees are payable to the teacher on the day of class day.





Toys from Home

At ECFE, we discourage you from bringing toys from home to class. However, we understand that some children have an easier time separating from their parents during separating parent-child classes if they can hold on to a "lovey" or favorite toy. If your child plans to bring a toy to class, please let the teacher know.

Parking

You may park in our parking lot located on the east side of the building. You can also find limited off-street parking on the west side of the building. However, please note that on Thursdays there is no parking on the marked side of the street. Also, the city will issue tickets for parking over the yellow lines by residential driveways.

Please **do not** park in the bus parking spots between 7:30 A.M. and 4:00 P.M., because school buses run every 30 minutes from our location.

TIPS FOR SEPARATING*

Learning to separate is a necessary part of growth and development for you and your child, and can be difficult for both of you. By working together, you and the staff can help your child move more smoothly through this transition. These tips are especially helpful:*

1. Don't sneak out! Always tell your child that you are leaving and will come back. Your child needs to trust you and the teachers.
2. Tell your child where you are going. Explain how long you will be gone in terms of events, not time (For example, "I'll see you later in the gym" instead of "I'll see you in an hour").
3. Leave something special with your child. A "lovey," blanket, special toy, or pacifier works well. A family picture or something your child identifies with you, such as your sweater, can also be helpful. Be sure to label this item with your child's name!
4. Talk with your child about feelings. "I know you're upset (worried, angry, etc.), but you'll be all right. You can do this."
5. Get your child involved in an activity or with a staff member.
6. Finally, with a confident smile, say, "I am going now," or "I'll be back soon." Then LEAVE QUICKLY! If necessary, you can physically hand over your child to a teacher or caregiver.
7. Should we call you back? We want you and your child to enjoy your time with us. Our policy is not to let children cry continuously.
8. When you return, greet your child with a smile and a tone of confidence that there was some success, even if your child starts to cry upon seeing you. They're just relieved and need your calming, positive reassurance. "See? I always come back!"

**Adapted with permission from Wayzata Family Learning Center Parent Handbook, 2006-2007, Wayzata Public Schools*

GUIDELINES FOR PARENT DISCUSSIONS

If you participate in parent education during separating parent-child classes, please follow these discussion guidelines.*

1. We can disagree and still like and respect each other.
2. Nobody has to talk.
3. Everyone who wants to talk gets to talk once before anyone gets to talk twice.
4. Nobody has to defend his or her right to an opinion.
5. We can share what was said with friends outside our group, but we agree not to identify who said what.
6. I won't be afraid to disagree or say that I don't know if you won't be afraid to do the same.

*From *Working with Parents*, by Dolores Currans.



POLICIES AND HOUSEKEEPING

Forms and Immunization

ECFE's state funding depends on our keeping accurate records of the children and families who participate in our program.

Therefore, when you enroll in ECCE classes, we need to collect the following forms, which the teacher will hand out to you:

1. ECCE enrollment form
2. ECCE participant questionnaire
3. Child's immunization record (If your child is not immunized, you must still complete the immunization record and have it signed and notarized.)
4. Photo release form

Thank you in advance for completing and returning the forms. We want to keep our programs running and our prices affordable for you and your family.

Note: You will need to turn in a new set of forms after July 1 of every year that you enroll in ECCE classes.

Food Allergies

A snack is served in many of our classes. If your child has food or other allergies or has a medical condition that may require attention, please inform your child's teacher.

Toileting and Diapering

ECCE policy states that we cannot diaper children or assist them with toileting. You are responsible for these tasks while your child is at ECCE. If you separate from your child for parent discussion, please check your child's diaper or encourage your child to use the bathroom before you leave.

Toy Washing Policy

If your child puts a toy in her mouth, please put it in the basket for dirty toys that is located by the sink in each classroom. Dirty toys will be washed and sanitized before they are put back out in the classroom.