

Welcome to



**Early Childhood
Family Education
ECFE**

2024-2025

Welcome

- Coming to class on a regular basis provides continuity for your child. When you are unable to attend, we ask that you call or email to report your absence.
- Sign in your child every week and make name tags for each family member attending. Please include instructions to help us work successfully with your child (allergies, bathroom reminders, no nap today, etc.).
- Always label diaper bags, bottles, pacifiers and security blankets with your child's name.
- ECFE is a family program for parents and children. Parents, grandparents or legal guardians must be present the entire time the child is here.
- Only those children registered in class may attend.
- Cell phones should be turned off or, in emergency situations, turned to the vibrate setting during class time.
- For everyone's safety, children require extra attention, support and connection when transitioning in and out of the building. Keep your phone in a pocket or bag at these times.

Diapering and Toileting

- Diapers are changed in the diaper changing areas located in the bathrooms. We ask that you follow any posted diaper changing guidelines.
- We do change diapers during class time, but we may need your assistance from time to time. Indicate on the sign-in sheet if you prefer to change your child's diaper or help them with their toileting needs.
- Bring a complete change of clothes when your child is practicing toileting habits.

Especially for Babies

- Lap babies who are 9 weeks and younger at the start of class will stay with the parent throughout the session. They are not counted in the staff-to-child ratio and are free.
- Babies will be brought to you in the parent room as needed for feeding or comfort.

Lobby

- Thank you for wearing your ECFE student badge at all times when in the building. The interior doors will be locked for most of the day. Show your badge in the window for admittance as a student. Should you forget your badge, stop at the window and you will be asked to complete our Lobby Guard process.
- Our lobby was designed to be a welcoming space for families accessing our Adult Basic Education, Early Childhood Family Services and Early Childhood Special Education programs. It is intended to be used as a space to wait for a staff member or program participant, to fill out program forms, and to transition out of the building. Keeping our lobby clean and safe for all is a shared responsibility among all participants. Please be aware that classes and administrative work are ongoing. Your courtesy and respect are appreciated.

Parent-Child Interaction Time

- For children, this is a time to choose activities and lead you.
- For parents, this is a time to relax and connect with your child.
- For all, this is a time for fun, exploring new things, meeting friends and learning.
- Beverages are permitted in the parent room only.
- We will have messy activities, so dress your child and yourself for play.
- Particularly if you have multiple children, let us know how we can support you and help make ECFE a beneficial experience for all family members.
- Note the separation guidelines available from your Parent Educator.

Photos

- Periodically, video and photos are taken of you and your child. We use these for educational purposes and for communication about the program with school staff and the general public (including our website, Facebook page and catalog). If you do not want your child's photo to be used for these purposes, please contact your child's teacher.

Health Information

Stay home if you or your child are sick. Consider these additional guidelines to help determine when children need to remain at home:

- Fever
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Any rash, of which you do not know the cause
- Strep throat (until on medication for 24 hours)

It is preferred that your child remain at home for 24 hours after the above symptoms have subsided. This helps prevent the spread of communicable diseases and allows the opportunity to rest and recovery fully from the illness.

If your child is sick and cannot attend, you may attend alone.

In an effort to reduce the spread of illness, we encourage all family members to wash their hands before and after class.

Toys are regularly sanitized with an approved Minnesota Department of Health bleach solution. Help us by putting “mouthed” toys in the sink to be cleaned.

Safety

- Purses might contain “dangerous” items for children, so we ask that you leave purses in the designated area during parent-child interaction.
- With the exception of infants, children must wear shoes in the classroom. Remember to bring shoes during “boot” weather. Tennis shoes are recommended for gym use.
- Children are curious and quick. Your guidance in common areas of the building is needed. This includes stairs and elevator. Please do not allow children to use the elevator or climb stairs alone. Always hold your child’s hand or carry them in the parking lot.
- Automatic doors are for handicapped use only. We discourage children from pushing the handicap buttons. This helps to prevent children from running out into the parking lot or being unattended in the building. It also extends the mechanical life of the door for those who need assistance entering and exiting the building. Thank you for your diligence in teaching this to children.
- District guidelines permit public use of playgrounds only when classes are not present.

Weather

- When weather permits, we may take children outside. Teachers will inform you when they will be going outside.
- ECFE follows District 196 guidelines regarding school closings. Please watch/listen to local television and radio stations and/or visit our district web page at www.district196.org during inclement weather. There will be no classes when school is canceled for the day. There will be no classes when there is a late start for school. There will be no evening classes when after school programs are canceled.

For You!

- Feel free to ask your questions, share your challenges and successes.
- Information shared during group time or individually is confidential. We ask that all group members respect this confidentiality. ECFE staff members are mandated by state law to report any belief of physical, emotional or sexual abuse.
- The ECFS Advisory Council accepts new members each spring. Please consider joining this committed group of parents who are working to strengthen our ECFE programs.
- Your feedback is important. Please contact the **ECFS Manager, Zachary Gonsioroski**, with your questions, concerns or ideas. 952-388-1960 or zachary.gonsioroski@district196.org

We’re glad your family is here!

NAVIGATING SEPARATION ANXIETY

1. Separation anxiety is a normal reaction for children who have formed strong relationships with parents and others. Separation anxiety can occur and reoccur at any age. However, on the average, separation anxiety peaks around six to nine months, 18 months and two years. Different children will handle separation from parents in different ways. Be confident that it will pass.
2. Recognize that every child is different and separation anxiety may last a very short time (1-2 weeks) or a long time (10-12 weeks or more). Regardless of the time it takes, we are here to support your family by sharing our experience in negotiating this normal part of development.
3. With separation anxiety, a parent's fears may intensify the child's fears. *Your* fears of what may happen when you are away can increase and prolong your child's fear of being away from you. ECFE is a great, safe place to express your fears. We have trained staff and a facility that includes an engaging children's environment and a one-way window for observation purposes. This is the perfect place to practice separation.
4. Our goal as staff is that all family members have a positive experience. We will work with you to develop a plan that will support both you and your child.
5. Always express warmth and trust in substitute caregivers so your child picks up that it is okay to be with this person. Practice leaving your child matter-of-factly with people you trust.
6. Tell your child what is going to happen. Use the same words so your child can understand the ritual of leaving. Prepare your child for the separation by talking about where you will be, when you will return and who will be with your child.
7. Avoid giving your child mixed messages by saying goodbye and then remaining with your child. Say goodbye, make sure a staff member is there to work with your child, and then leave promptly. This will help your child build trust in you and the environment. *If your child has a "security item" (pacifier, blanket or toy), please bring it to class.*
8. Always say goodbye to your child when you leave. This is respectful and allows for your child to develop a sense of trust and security in you and in the environment. Sneaking out can heighten anxiety. The child's brain becomes hyper vigilant, interfering with trust and the ability to engage with others.
9. Once you have left the classroom, we ask that you do not return until it is time to reunite or we have asked you to come back. Leaving and returning can be confusing to a child and cause additional anxiety.
10. It's okay for your child to be upset. Take fears seriously; they are real. Stay calm but reflect your child's feelings: "You would like me to stay. You are sad to see me go. I will tell you before I go, and I will be back."
11. Separating is a learned process that takes time – it also takes practice. Regular attendance builds trust and works toward successful separation.
12. If your child cannot be consoled through physical comforting or redirection within a few minutes of separation, you will be reunited with your child. You may return to the children's room or your infant may be brought to you in the parent room. We will not try separating again that day, but will work with you to develop a plan for future weeks.
13. The techniques we use to support your child through separation include:
 - a. encouraging the use of security items like blankets and pacifiers
 - b. engaging your child with a toy that interests them
 - c. having one staff member connect with your child during interaction, so that they are familiar with this same person when separation takes place
 - d. asking you to become a "parent pillar" in the classroom, which means that you are sitting in the classroom, available to your child. This allows your child to explore from a secure base: You. It provides your child with the comfort of your presence, but allows them to gradually engage with staff, children and/or toys in the classroom. Once your child has built trust in the classroom, we will attempt to separate.
14. Even a short separation should be viewed as a success. Each separation is a valuable learning experience and you are both gaining skills to cope with this normal anxiety. It is important to remember that separation is sometimes harder on the parent than the child.

BE YOUR CHILD'S PILLAR

Sometimes a child may not be ready to separate from her/his parent and the parent may be asked to remain in the children's room.

What can I do?

- Relax and breathe
- Remain in one spot on the floor or in a chair.
- Build trust by giving comfort as needed, and gradually your child will venture away from you to play when ready.
- Staying in one spot will help your child feel secure. He or she won't have to keep looking for you.
- You can sit and observe your child and the others as they play.
- Notice your own feelings and thoughts. Notice your child's reactions and behaviors.

How long will I have to stay in the children's room?

- Plan on staying the rest of the class that day if you are called back into the children's room.
- If your child continues to have difficulty each week, you can gradually build your child's practice with separation by leaving for a short period of time the first week and adding more time each week. The early childhood teacher will work with you to set that schedule.

Enjoy your time of being a pillar for your child. You're helping your child build trust and security.

CIRCLE TIME GUIDELINES

Circle time is a structured group experience which gives children the opportunity to develop and practice self-regulation, listening and language skills and following directions while having fun. It also gives parents the opportunity to learn songs and finger plays to use at home.

Circle time will be offered:

- at the end of the class time as the ending activity with parents and children together.
- during drop-in playtimes.

Circle time will be led by the early childhood teacher or parent educator. Circle time is a *planned* curriculum activity that is developmentally appropriate for the children and families in the group. Circle time should include a mix of familiar and new songs, movement, read-alouds or other stories and activities. The planning of circle time activities and songs should take into account the integrated class curriculum and the sequence of learning for the class (past songs and activities).

The teacher leading circle time will monitor the group and make adjustments to the planned circle time agenda as needed. Circle time can be extended or shortened based on the needs of the group.

All family members are asked to participate in circle time. On occasion, accommodations may be necessary for adults who are unable to sit on the floor. Classroom staff should be prepared to help parents with more than one child or an infant, especially when lap rides are scheduled.

Depending on age and their experience in group settings, some children may not want to sit during circle time. In these situations, parents will be encouraged to remain in the circle while staff monitor children who have left the circle. Staff will encourage children of all ages to rejoin the circle, but will recognize that some children may not be developmentally ready to do so.

Circle Time Goals

- ❖ To enhance the parent-child relationships by providing a fun, group activity to do together.
- ❖ To build and model social, emotional, cognitive, physical, verbal and non-verbal communication skills with young children and parents/adults.

- ❖ To build trust and rapport by:
 - respecting individual differences and responding to the needs of the group and its members
 - using repetition and consistency
 - allowing choices for children and parents
 - showing each child is unique and special through songs and activities
 - reading the cues of children and parents/adults
 - providing a connecting activity
 - ❖ To offer circle time activities that are:
 - respectful and sensitive to individual needs
 - fun, stimulating and child initiated
 - developmentally and culturally appropriate for the children in the group
 - interactive
 - ❖ To help parents and children feel successful at circle time by:
 - stating goals clearly to families
 - communicating that the way these goals are carried out may differ from teacher to teacher
 - connecting with families that are having difficulties and coaching for success.
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DIAPERING & TOILETING GUIDELINES

Diapering:

Many parents prefer to change their child's diaper and will indicate this on the sign-in form. Some children prefer that their parent change their diaper. In both of these situations, parents should be called into the bathroom to change the diaper.

Substitute staff or volunteers are not allowed to change diapers or assist with toileting.

Changing diapers using sanitary procedures will prevent the spread of infectious organisms present in the stool. Remember, if the organisms that cause infectious diarrhea, Hepatitis A, giardiasis and other diseases are accidentally ingested, the diseases will spread. You can help prevent illness by following these guidelines and encouraging parents to also follow the guidelines.

Remember your diapering objectives are to:

- prevent the spread of communicable disease among staff, children and their families
- give adequate care and comfort to each child
- properly store clean diapers and dispose of soiled diapers
- keep the child safe during diapering

Equipment:

Changing area – Diaper changing must be done on the changing table located in a bathroom.

Changing surface – A plastic, easy to clean changing pad should be used on the changing surface. This pad must be free of any cracks or tears in the plastic. For the protection of the child, disposable paper should be placed on the pad and under the child. This paper will be disposed of when the changing is complete.

Diapers – A supply of extra disposable diapers should be kept in each classroom. Cloth diapers cannot be changed by staff. In these situations, parents should be called to do the diaper changing.

Skin-care items – Staff is not allowed to apply or administer ointments, creams or medications to children. Staff can use disposable wipes when changing children.

Waste container – Each changing area must have a container for the sanitary disposal of diapers. This should include a container with a lid that is lined with a plastic bag. This container should be emptied each evening.

Cleaning supplies – Each changing area should be equipped with a bottle of bleach solution and disposable paper towels to be used for cleaning the diaper changing surface. These materials must be **KEPT OUT OF REACH OF CHILDREN**. All parts of the changing area should be disinfected daily.

Diapering Procedure

1. Assemble supplies.
2. Reassure the child and have them be part of the process.
3. Place child on clean changing surface. Remove soiled diaper and fold soiled surface inward.
4. Cleanse skin with disposable cloth, moving front to back.
5. Fasten fresh diaper in place.
6. Place soiled disposable diaper and disposable gloves in waste container.
7. Clean changing surface and soiled supplies with the sanitizing solution and a disposable cloth. Let the areas dry to prevent irritation.
8. **EVERYONE:** STAFF AND CHILDREN MUST WASH HANDS THOROUGHLY WITH SOAP AND RUNNING WATER FOR 30 SECONDS.
9. Report abnormal skin or stool conditions (rash, unusual fecal consistency, color, odor or frequency) to the parent to the parent immediately so parents can make an informed decision about whether or not they stay in class.
10. Remember: Anything you touch before you wash your hands should be considered contaminated until cleansed. Staff and children should WASH HANDS after toileting and diapering and before preparing food or eating.

Toileting:

- Toileting has personal and cultural nuances.
 - Speak with each parent regarding their family and preferences.
 - It is up to the child to choose when they use the toilet.
 - Respect their cues and only provide gentle reminders.
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SNACK GUIDELINES

Snack time offers an opportunity for children to recharge their energy, socialize and learn new skills. It can also be a time to strengthen a child's self-esteem by practicing self-help skills. Snack is served in all classes except infant classes and drop-in playtime.

Early Childhood Family Services (ECFS) follows the District 196 wellness policy that promotes healthy food choices. Parents are encouraged to donate snacks from our list of choices. District policy prohibits birthday treats at school.

1. Snack will include nutritious snack choices:
 - Based on current nutritional guidelines, water will be served with snack.
 - Families are asked to provide donations of snacks from the list provided.
 - Teachers work with parents to ensure snacks are age-appropriate choices and mindful of allergy concerns.
2. For the safety of all children:
 - Parents will be asked to list allergies and food concerns on the sign-in sheet.
 - Staff will work with parents and the school nurse regarding food allergies.
 - In case of a food allergy, parents are asked to provide a safe snack for their child.
 - Children will eat their snack at the table.
 - To avoid choking concerns, snack will not be offered as a distraction.
 - Parents may bring labeled cups from home.
3. To encourage sanitary snack practices:
 - Staff will use appropriate sanitary measures when serving food.
 - Staff will wash snack tables with disinfectant before and after snack.
 - Staff and children will wash hands prior to snack.
 - Staff will sanitize pitchers after every class.
 - Food will be stored in original box.

4. Snack time will be flexible to allow for the success of all temperament styles and developmental levels. It is suggested that teachers use consistent snack routines. The process for snack includes:
 - Asking children if they want to have a snack and children practice decision making skills by accepting or rejecting snack.
 - The teacher deciding whether to serve to the entire class or in a staggered style involving a small group of children at a time.
 - Serving snack with parents present, as in toddler classes.
 5. We recognize that snack provides young children with much needed energy, but it also has an educational purpose. Children are encouraged to participate in the preparation, serving, eating and cleaning up of snack, as is age appropriate. Snack provides the opportunity for children to learn:
 - Self-help skills (wash hands, set the table, pour water, throw away cups and napkins).
 - Decision making skills (to voice their needs, choose a type of cracker, ask for more).
 - Limit setting (waiting turns, using good manners).
 - Counting skills (counting the food, the number of children at the table, etc.).
 - To practice healthy hygiene and cleanliness.
 - To engage in social skills with other children and adults.
 6. Parents may bring snacks for the parent group.
 - In this case, homemade snacks may be shared. (Rationale for this difference is that parents can make educated choices about eating homemade food.)
 - Food shared in the parent room should be kept out of the reach of children reuniting with their parents. This will help to minimize power struggles.
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TRANSITIONS

Transition times are important because they can make the day seem smooth and well-organized or rushed and unpleasant.

- ❖ A posted picture schedule that children can easily see each day helps them learn the routine.
- ❖ Picture cards and other visual aids can help children see “What comes next?” or “How much more time is left?”
- ❖ Giving some kind of verbal cue or using a chime/bell can also help children recognize a shift is going to occur.
- ❖ Props such as a puppet, mystery bag, greeting apron or poster can help keep children engaged in the routine of the day.
- ❖ Gradually closing down areas of the room (with the help of the children) as children move on helps to build our school family.
- ❖ Songs or chants to go along with clean-up time can help gain cooperative interactions.
- ❖ A song to gather children/families for group times helps to signal the start of a special time together.
- ❖ A starting song that welcomes all by name can help to form connections.
- ❖ A song at the end of a group can help to transition children/families for dismissal and then have closure until the next meeting time.
- ❖ Skills children learn through transitions:
 - Self-regulation
 - Regulated brain state
 - Focus
 - Independence
 - Initiative
 - Responsibility
 - Belonging
 - Teamwork
- ❖ Intentional transitions can help to keep children safe.