



**EARLY CHILDHOOD
FAMILY EDUCATION**

Minnesota's Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

Why are the early years of parenting so important?

Brain research confirms that the first three years are an extremely critical period in a child's development.

The parent's interactions with their children are crucial in shaping the rapidly developing brain architecture which is 85% complete by age 3. Parental influence is foundational for social, emotional, and cognitive development related to school readiness and success.

What is Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)?

ECFE is a public school program available for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth and kindergarten. The mission of ECFE is to strengthen families through the education and support of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children.

What happens in ECFE?

Parents and children participate together and programs include:

- Parent Education, Early Childhood Education, & Parent-Child Interaction Time
- Home Visits
- Early Screening for Children's Health & Developmental Concerns
- Community Resource Information & Referrals

ECFE programs are locally designed to meet the needs of parents and families in each community.

Who participates in ECFE?

ECFE is committed to providing universal access for all families. Availability to all families avoids the potential segregation, stigma, and labeling associated with targeted programs. At the same time, ECFE tailors programming to the unique needs of families within their communities.

How is ECFE funded?

ECFE is a low-cost, low-intensity, two-generation program that also offers tailored and more intensive services based on family and community needs. The programs are financed with combined local and state funding and are supplemented with registration fees and funds from other sources including collaborative partnerships. Fees are based on a sliding scale, and no family is turned away due to an inability to pay.

What do we know about the effectiveness of ECFE?

Data from Minnesota ECFE research shows:

- Parents report positive changes in their child's development in social skills, language skills, and problem-solving based on attending ECFE programs. The greatest improvements have been seen in lower-income families and families of color.
- Parents report improved parenting skills in communication and limit settings as well as increased knowledge of development, community resources, and insights about parent engagement for children's success in school.
- Former ECFE participants arrive at school participating in their children's learning and in the school community and connected to other parents.



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What are the benefits of ECFE for children, parents, families, schools, and communities?

Benefits for Children:

- A home environment with parents who have positive parenting skills to promote healthy child development
- Positive changes in child development
- Focused time with parents to learn and explore in an early childhood environment
- Social skills with other young children gained in a rich early childhood environment
- Early identification of developmental and learning concerns
- Familiarity and comfort with a school setting

Benefits for Parents and Families:

- Support during the transition to parenthood
- Information on early development and what to expect from children
- Strategies for effective guidance and teaching
- Quality time with children in a supportive and stimulating learning environment
- Time with other parents to reflect on family values and parenting practices in a supportive group setting
- Enhanced family communication and co-parenting skills
- Strategies for balancing work and family and managing stress
- Familiarity with community resources for families with young children
- Comfort with schools and understanding of the parent's role in supporting kindergarten readiness and long-term school success

Benefits for Schools and Communities:

- Parents who have positive connections to schools and other community programs
- Parents who are engaged and ready for leadership in the schools
- Enhanced social connections and informal support between families in the community
- Community expectations and norms around positive parenting

All of society benefits from STRONG FAMILIES and HEALTHY, CAPABLE CHILDREN. Strong families are the foundation of a strong society NOW and far into the FUTURE.

SPONSORED BY:



MNAFEE's mission is to promote, advocate for, and strengthen parenting education, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and early childhood programming in public schools.



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