



Saint Michael Albertville Community Education Early Childhood Family Education Parent Handbook 2025 - 2026 School Year



Community Education Center
60 Central Ave W
Saint Michael, MN 55376
(763) 497-6512
<https://ce.stma.k12.mn.us>



Welcome to STMA

Early Childhood Family Education

All children and families with children ages
Birth to kindergarten are welcome.

ECFE provides:

- A safe and welcoming space for you and your child to play and learn together.
- Opportunities for education, support and Friendships with other parents and caregivers.
- Weekly parent/child classes, evening classes and special events for parents and children led by licensed teachers and qualified teaching assistants.
- Parent coaching sessions and home visits
- Affordable sliding scale fee. No one is denied participation for inability to pay.

Saint Michael Albertville Community Education is excited to welcome you and your child to STMA Early Childhood Family Education. We are dedicated to offering quality learning experiences for you and your child. Our staff will strive to provide support and education for the healthy development of your child.

This handbook is intended to be a resource for you throughout the 2025-2026 school year. We have included important contact information as well as descriptions of services and policies that apply to families in our program.

If you have any further questions, I welcome you to contact our office.
Thank you for choosing STMA for your child's early learning

Shonna Hoeper
Early Childhood Coordinator

Saint Michael Albertville School Community Education

(763) 497-6500

60 Central Ave W Saint Michael, MN

Office Hours: 8:00 am - 4:00 pm

Early Childhood Office

(763) 497-6512

60 Central Ave W Saint Michael, MN

STMA ECFE Teachers:

Sarah Johnson - sarahjo@mystma.org

Sarah LaPointe - sarahla@mystma.org

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Early Childhood Coordinator

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Mission and Purpose of ECFE

STMA recognizes the importance of early education for children and families.

Our mission is to provide each family with a positive introduction to STMA schools by providing a nurturing environment where parents and children can learn and grow together. Through engaging classes, workshops, and activities, we aim to empower families with the knowledge and skills needed to foster healthy development and strong relationships. Each room is designed for all developmental learning levels and styles. Your children will play, explore and grow with us. We have a class for every family!

What is ECFE?

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) recognizes that parents are their child's first and most important teachers. ECFE offers parents hands-on learning experiences that will nourish a lifetime of teachable moments.

All ECFE classes are taught by licensed early childhood teachers and parent educators to provide the quality education parents are looking for. ECFE teachers use the Parent Education Core Curriculum Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards provided through the Minnesota Department of Education.

ECFE Parent Advisory Council:

The ECFE Parent Advisory Council invites parents to join us to make the STMA ECFE the most positive experience possible for our families. This is a group of parents, staff, and community members who meet monthly in the months of October through May to support, advise, and take action on behalf of the Saint Michael Albertville Early Childhood Family Education. Child care is provided with prior notification, for no fee.

Purpose:

- Provide input regarding STMA early childhood programs and services
- Raise funds for the ECFE program
- Promote program through outreach and community relations
- Inform parents, legislators, and community members about early childhood education, school district needs and community concerns that affect children and families.

If you are interested in joining this group please contact Shonna Hoeper, Early Childhood Coordinator, at shonnah@mystma.org or (763) 497-6512.

Components of ECFE Classes:

At ECFE, each class is thoughtfully designed to support the growth and development of both you and your child. You will spend meaningful time together in a welcoming classroom filled with age-appropriate learning experiences that encourage exploration, creativity, and connection.

Our classes include a variety of components—Parent-Child Interaction Time, Circle Time, Play-Based Classroom Learning, Parent-Child Separation Parent Education Time, and Sibling Care—all working together to foster positive relationships and support your child's early learning journey. Through guided activities, supportive discussions, and time to play and connect, ECFE classes create a strong foundation for family learning, bonding, and lifelong growth.

1. Parent-Child Interaction Time

Each ECFE class begins with a shared time for parents and children to explore and enjoy the classroom together. This time is thoughtfully planned by a licensed early childhood teacher to include a variety of developmentally appropriate activities. It offers an opportunity to:

- Follow your child's lead and let them choose activities and pace
- Observe and connect with your child through eye contact, words, smiles, and gentle touch
- Encourage creativity and focus on the process rather than the product
- Talk with your child while playing and offer positive encouragement
- Support clean-up habits and transitions between activities
- Limit adult conversation—this is a special time for focused connection with your child

2. Circle Time

A short portion of the interaction time is set aside for circle time, a group experience led by early childhood staff. During circle time, you and your child will participate in songs, stories, fingerplays, movement activities, and games. This time helps children:

- Develop attention span, listening, and direction-following skills
- Build vocabulary and speech through repetition
- Understand rhythm, music, and basic math concepts like size, shape, and sequence
- Improve social skills, finger dexterity, and spatial awareness
- Deepen their connection with their parent in a group setting

Parents are encouraged to stay engaged in the circle, even if children wander. Staff will gently guide children back as needed.

3. Play-Based Classroom Learning:



During ECCE classes, licensed teachers and assistants guide children's play to support learning and development in a fun, engaging environment. Play is how young children learn best—and our classrooms are designed to encourage exploration, creativity, and problem-solving through meaningful play experiences.

As children play, they are building important skills across all areas of development:

- **Social and Emotional Development** – Learning to share, take turns, express feelings, and build relationships with others
- **Cognitive Development** – Exploring ideas, solving problems, and developing memory, attention, and reasoning skills
- **Language and Literacy** – Building vocabulary, using conversation, listening to stories, and experimenting with sounds and letters
- **Physical Development**
 - *Small Muscle Skills* – Using fingers and hands through activities like puzzles, drawing, and building
 - *Large Muscle Skills* – Running, jumping, climbing, and moving through space with confidence
- **Creative Expression** – Engaging in art, music, dramatic play, and imaginative storytelling
- **Self-Help and Independence** – Practicing routines, making choices, and gaining confidence in their abilities

Teachers intentionally plan and support play that helps each child grow, learn, and feel successful. Through this kind of learning, children gain the skills they need to thrive in school and in life—all while having fun.

4. Parent-Child Separation Time

Separation is a normal and natural part of early childhood—and it can be emotional for both children and parents. Some children adjust easily, while others may experience separation anxiety. ECCE staff are here to support families through this process with understanding and care.

Following Parent-Child Interaction and Circle Time, parents attend a separate parent education session while children remain in the classroom with licensed staff. During this time, children engage in play-based learning activities that support social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. Teachers help children build confidence and independence in a safe, nurturing environment.

Tips for a Smooth Separation:

- Show your child where you'll be during parent time and reassure them you'll return after playtime.
- Offer a short, confident goodbye—avoid sneaking out.
- Let your child bring a comfort item, such as a favorite blanket or stuffed toy.
- Acknowledge their feelings: *"It's okay to be sad. I love you, and I'll be back."*
- If your child is struggling, ask a staff member for help. You may need to spend a few extra minutes in the classroom to help ease the transition.
- If crying lasts more than 10 minutes, a staff member will contact you.

With patience, consistency, and support, most children adapt quickly and begin to enjoy their time in the classroom.

5. Parent Education Time

While children remain in the classroom, parents gather in a separate space for guided discussion led by a licensed parent educator. Discussion topics are based on participant needs and cover five core areas from the Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework:

- Early Childhood Development
- Family Development
- Culture and Community
- Parent Development
- Parent-Child Relationships

Please note: Children over 6 months of age are not allowed in parent group sessions to help maintain a focused and comfortable environment for adult discussion. Non-crawling infants under 6 months are welcome to attend with a parent.

Parent education time is a confidential, respectful space where all voices are valued. You are encouraged to participate at your own comfort level while supporting and learning from others. The goal is to help parents feel informed, supported, and more confident in their parenting journey.

This is a safe and confidential space for parents to:

- Share experiences and ideas
- Learn from each other and professional educators
- Build a support network and find joy in parenting

Discussion Guidelines:



- Participate at your comfort level; it's okay to pass
- Keep discussions confidential
- Avoid side conversations to stay focused.
- Respect different parenting styles — We can disagree and still support each other. Disturbing or inappropriate behavior is not allowed. Please be mindful and respectful of cultural differences and individual beliefs about raising children.

Please return promptly to pick up your child(ren) after discussion time—they will be eager to see you!

6. Sibling Care

Sibling care is available during most classes for children ages 3 months through kindergarten. Non-crawling infants may attend class with parents. Advance registration is required as space is limited.

Sibling Care Guidelines:

- Drop off siblings 10 minutes before class begins
- Pick up promptly at class end
- Staff will notify you if diapering assistance is needed

Home Visits / One-to-One Parenting Session

Home visits are available for families who are unable to attend regular ECFE classes or who prefer support in a more personal setting. These visits offer a flexible way to connect with our licensed early childhood staff to discuss parenting questions, child development, behavior, and other topics important to your family.

We offer one-on-one support through visits in your home, at our office, or virtually via phone, email, or video. Whether you're looking for guidance on developmental milestones or need support with specific challenges, we are here to help.

Home visits are also available for licensed child care providers. Monthly visits include hands-on activities, developmental guidance, and practical strategies tailored to your setting and the children in your care. Our goal is to support you in creating a nurturing and enriching learning environment.

If you or someone you know would benefit from a home visit, please contact:

Shonna Hoeper, Early Childhood Coordinator

 shonnah@mystma.org

 763-497-6512

General Program Information:

Arrival Time / Departure Time

To ensure a smooth and safe experience for all families:

- Please arrive no earlier than 5 minutes before your scheduled class time, as staff will be preparing the classroom.
- Upon arrival, go directly to your designated classroom. Avoid lingering in hallways to help maintain a calm and safe environment.
- If you'd like to visit or chat with other families after class, we kindly ask that you do so outside the building.
- Coats and personal belongings should be placed in the designated areas.
- Wash hands with soap and water before beginning class activities to support a healthy environment for all.

Attendance Expectations

If you are unable to attend class, please notify the ECFE office at (763) 497-6512 or email your child's teacher. Be sure to include the names of any children registered for sibling care in your message. This helps us plan appropriately for class and ensure a smooth experience for all families.

Dressing for School

We ask that you dress your child comfortably and appropriately for active play. Our classrooms offer a variety of hands-on learning experiences—including art, sensory activities, science exploration, large motor play, and outdoor nature play—which can sometimes get messy!

To help your child participate fully and safely, please:

- Choose clothes that are easy to move in and okay to get dirty
- Dress in layers for changing temperatures, especially during outdoor play
- Make sure your child wears sturdy, closed-toe shoes (no flip-flops or dress shoes) for safe movement and outdoor activities

We want every child to feel comfortable and confident as they learn and explore!



Snack Time

Snack time is an important part of the classroom routine, offering children a chance to socialize and practice self-help skills.

Families may be asked to donate snacks throughout the year. When providing snacks for the class, please follow these guidelines:

- All snacks must be commercially prepared and/or fresh produce, per Minnesota Department of Health regulations.
- No home-prepared foods can be shared at school.
- We encourage healthy, nutritious snacks to support children's growth and learning.
- Celebration treats (e.g., for birthdays) are welcome but must meet the same food safety guidelines. Please inform staff in advance.
- If your child has food allergies, please work with staff to ensure snack safety. Check labels carefully before each class.

Your cooperation helps us create a safe, inclusive, and healthy environment for all children.

Allergies

We are committed to providing a safe environment for all children. Please notify staff of any allergies your child has. You will meet with the school nurse to discuss your child's needs and complete a form with instructions for managing allergic reactions. If a reaction occurs, you will be contacted and asked to return to the classroom. If needed, you may provide an EpiPen for your child, which will be securely stored in the nurse's office along with any other medications.

Birth Date Guidelines

For both ECFE and preschool classes, please select your child's class based on their age as of September 1, 2025. This age requirement aligns with the district's kindergarten enrollment guidelines.

Registration

All families are welcome at ECFE—no one will be turned away due to an inability to pay.

St. Michael-Albertville Schools believe in the value of early childhood education. To help make classes affordable for everyone, a sliding fee scale based on household income is available. You can find the fee scale on the ECFE website and in our brochure.

- Fees are collected at the time of registration.
- Choose your fee category based on household income, unless otherwise noted.
- Class fees may be reduced or waived if needed—please contact us for assistance.
- Special event fees are not eligible for sliding scale discounts.
- Refunds are not issued for missed classes due to illness, vacation, or other absences.

You may register online or in person at the Early Childhood Office during business hours. We're here to help—please reach out if you have any questions about payment or registration.

Withdrawals / Refunds

We understand that plans can change. Please review the following refund guidelines for ECFE classes:

- Full refunds (minus a processing fee) are available before the session begins.
- After the first week of class, refunds will be prorated based on attendance.
- No refunds will be issued mid-session or for missed days.
- Weather-related cancellations do not qualify for refunds in weekly ECFE classes.
- Special Event refunds will only be issued with at least 5 days' notice prior to the event.
- Refunds will be provided for any class cancelled due to low enrollment.

If you need to withdraw from a class or have questions about the policy, please contact the Early Childhood office.

Confidentiality

Confidentiality is essential in creating a safe and respectful environment for all families. During class, you may observe or hear information about children, families, or staff. Please do not share or discuss this information with others.

All details about a child's behavior, development, or home life are private and should only be discussed with the child's teacher or the ECFE Coordinator. We appreciate your cooperation in respecting the privacy of everyone in our program.

Cell Phones

To maintain a focused and respectful environment, please turn off or silence your cell phone during class. Cell phone use is not allowed in the classroom.

If you need to keep your phone on for an emergency, set it to silent or vibrate and inform the



teacher. For emergency calls or messages, please step into the hallway and notify a staff member.

Photos and Videos

Photos are taken in class for use in curriculum activities and classroom management. Other photos are used in promotional literature or on our program's social media platforms. If you prefer your child not be photographed for any reason, please inform a staff member to receive an opt-out form. An ECFE Photo Release Permission is also completed at time of registration.

Fundraising

ECFE is a tuition-based, state-funded program. To enhance our classrooms and support special events, we occasionally hold fundraising activities. These efforts are optional and coordinated by the ECFE Parent Advisory Council.

Participation is voluntary, and all funds raised directly benefit ECFE classrooms and programming. We appreciate any support families are able to provide.

Health / Wellness Information:

Safety Guidelines:

As part of our ongoing commitment to student safety, we conduct fire drills, tornado drills, and lockdown drills throughout the year.

All individuals in the building—including parents, guardians, visitors, and children—are expected to participate during these drills. If you are present during a drill, please follow the instructions of early childhood or building staff.

Parking Safety:

For your convenience, designated parking is available near Door A at the Community Education Center. Overflow parking is located in the lower lot near Door C.

Our parking lots can be very busy. To help keep everyone safe:

- Drive slowly and stay alert
- Hold your child's hand when walking to and from your vehicle
- Never leave your child unattended in the car—even briefly

- If you need help getting children in or out, ask your teacher—we're happy to assist!

Thank you for helping us keep our parking areas safe for all families.

Behavior Guidance:

Our licensed teachers understand the developmental needs of young children and set age-appropriate expectations for behavior.

They use a positive, supportive approach that includes:

- Being attentive and responsive to each child
- Giving verbal and visual cues to teach behavior expectations
- Positively reinforcing helpful behavior
- Acknowledging and validating children's feelings
- Teaching self-regulation strategies
- Guiding children through problem-solving steps

Our goal is to help children develop social and emotional skills in a safe, respectful environment.

Cleaning Procedures:

We disinfect tables, toys, and equipment after each class to maintain a clean and healthy environment. If your child mouths a toy, please place it in the designated bin so it can be properly sanitized before the next use.

Inclement Weather / Weather Emergencies:

ECFE follows all STMA Schools weather policies. If the district is closed, so is ECFE. If the district is 2 hours late, there will be no morning sessions. If there is an early dismissal, ECFE will cancel the afternoon sessions. ECFE families will be notified by the school district, text message, Facebook and email if classes are cancelled. ECFE does not refund for snow days until two or more classes have been missed.

Information regarding school closings and delays will also be announced on television channels 4, 5, 9, and 11. Parents are reminded to plan ahead for emergency school closings.

Immunizations:

State law mandates that an immunization record be kept on file for each child in our program. The immunization form is due before the start of class. A notarized immunization form must be filed with our school for conscientious objectors. All children are required to have up to date immunizations. Please contact the Early Childhood office with any questions. All children are required to have up to date immunizations.



Child Illness Policy:

To help maintain a healthy environment for all, please keep your child home if they have experienced any of the following symptoms **within the last 24 hours**:

- Fever
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Undiagnosed rash
- Red, crusty, or weepy eyes (pink eye)
- Yellow or green nasal discharge
- Harsh cough or sore throat
- Contagious stage of a communicable disease (e.g., strep throat, head lice)
- General fatigue or illness that prevents full participation in class

Children on medication should remain at home for the first 24 hours after starting antibiotics. Children who are sent home from school or daycare due to illness may not attend ECFE that same day. ECFE staff do not administer medications at school.

If a child becomes ill during class, parents will be contacted first, followed by emergency contacts if needed.

Please report any communicable diseases (e.g., head lice, strep throat, pink eye) to ECFE staff so that appropriate precautions can be taken. Families of exposed children will be notified, while maintaining confidentiality.

If your child has special health needs, update their profile online and speak with your child's teacher directly.

Child Injuries:

Your child's safety is a top priority. Staff work hard to create a safe environment and prevent accidents. However, if an injury occurs during class, the following procedures will be followed:

- **Minor injuries:** Staff will administer appropriate first aid, document the incident, and inform you at the end of class.
- **Moderate injuries:** If the injury interferes with your child's ability to participate, you will be called back to the classroom.
- **Serious injuries/emergencies:** Staff will call 911 immediately, then contact you or your emergency contacts.

All injuries are handled with care and professionalism. Please ensure your emergency contact information is kept up to date.

More health and wellness information can be found on the STMA district website.

<http://www.stma.k12.mn.us/district/departments/health-services>

Diapering and Bathroom Use

Parents and guardians are responsible for changing their child's diaper and taking them to the bathroom as needed. A good time to do this is before discussion time begins.

For children who are toilet training, staff will assist unless instructed otherwise by the parent or if the child is in a non-separating class. If your child wears diapers, you may be called to return to the classroom to change them. All diapering must take place on a changing table or pad, available in the restrooms.

Drop-Off Classes

Children enrolled in drop-off classes must be fully independent with toileting. This means they must be able to use the bathroom without assistance, and pull-ups are not permitted in these classes. Independent toileting skills are essential for participation and allow teachers to focus on the educational activities.

Mandated Reporting:

Staff members and volunteers are required by state law to report instances of observed or suspected child abuse or neglect in the home, school, or community setting. Staff will report directly to the program coordinator and together will report to the proper authorities.

Tobacco Free / Chemical Free

Smoking and use of tobacco products, alcohol, and chemicals are prohibited on school district property.

MN School Dangerous Weapon Law

Bringing a dangerous weapon on school property is a violation of Minnesota law. This is any device or instrument designed as a weapon or through its use is capable of producing great bodily harm or death. Parents please remember this when attending classes and/or entering



school property. Children are discouraged from bringing toy weapons to school; these toys will not be allowed in the classroom.

Addressing Concerns / Complaints

Complaints – Students, Employees, Parents and Other Persons

The school district takes seriously all concerns or complaints by students, employees, parents or other persons. While written reports are encouraged, a complaint may be made orally. A person may file a complaint at any level of the school district; i.e., principal, superintendent or school board. However, persons are encouraged to file a complaint at the building level when appropriate. It is best to discuss concerns or complaints with the person most familiar with the incident and, if the concern or complaints is not satisfactorily addressed, to the principal or supervisor, superintendent and school board.

Federal law requires that school districts designate specific individuals and procedures for disability discrimination, sex discrimination, equal education and employment opportunity, homeless and harassment. Contact information is as follows:

Student Disability Discrimination - ADA/504 Coordinator – Dr. Amy Larkin, Director of Special Services, 763-497-6507, amylar@mystma.org. St. Michael-Albertville District Office, 11343 50th St. NE, Albertville, Minnesota 55301

Homeless Compliance – District Homeless Coordinator - Dr. Amy Larkin, Director of Special Services, 763-497-6507, amylar@mystma.org. St. Michael-Albertville District Office, 11343 50th St. NE, Albertville, Minnesota 55301

Student Sex Discrimination – Human Rights Officer – Douglas Birk, Executive Director of Administrative Services, 763-497-6504, douglasbi@mystma.org. St. Michael-Albertville District Office, 11343 50th St. NE, Albertville, Minnesota 55301

Student Sex Nondiscrimination Program Compliance – Title IX Officer – Douglas Birk, Executive Director of Administrative Services, 763-497-6504, douglasbi@mystma.org. St. Michael-Albertville District Office, 11343 50th St. NE, Albertville, Minnesota 55301

Student or Staff Harassment – Human Rights Officer - Douglas Birk, Executive Director of Administrative Services, 763-497-6504, douglasbi@mystma.org. St. Michael-Albertville District Office, 11343 50th St. NE, Albertville, Minnesota 55301

Equal Education Opportunity/Equal Employment Opportunity – Human Rights Officer - Douglas Birk, Executive Director of Administrative Services, 763-497-6504, douglasbi@mystma.org.
St. Michael-Albertville District Office, 11343 50th St. NE, Albertville, Minnesota 55301

Family Resources:

Early Childhood Screening:

Early Childhood Screening is a free check of your child's development, required by the State of Minnesota before kindergarten. It's best completed when your child is 3 to 4 years old and takes about 60 minutes, with a parent or guardian present.

Screening is not a test—it involves playful, age-appropriate activities that make the experience enjoyable for your child while providing valuable insight into their development. It helps identify any areas where your child may benefit from extra support before starting school.

Your screener will go over the results with you right away and answer any questions you may have.

Why It Matters:

- Supports healthy development
- Helps parents understand their child's growth
- Connects families to helpful resources
- Builds a strong foundation for school success

What's Included:

- Vision and hearing check
- Height and weight
- Immunization and health review
- Motor skills (large and small)
- Cognitive, language, and communication skills
- Social and emotional development

Schedule a Screening:

Screenings are held at the STMA Community Education Center in St. Michael.

Contact Megan Chervanek at ecscreening@mystma.org or 763-497-6528. Or book online at <https://stma.ce.eleyo.com> and view available dates and times.



Give your child a strong start—schedule today!

Early Intervention Supports:

ECFE works in full partnership with the St. Michael–Albertville Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) program to support the needs of all children.

If you or your child’s teacher have concerns about your child’s development, the ECSE team can be consulted. When appropriate, a plan will be created to provide additional support and services—helping your child succeed both at school and at home.

Children who qualify may receive services or individualized classroom support. We are here to partner with you in supporting your child’s growth and development.

To learn more or request a consultation, please visit:

[STMA Early Childhood Special Education](#)

[Help Me Grow Minnesota](#)

[Minnesota’s Follow Along Program](#)

Book Orders:

Book order forms may be sent home frequently with your child. All book orders are voluntary but a great way to build your home library. ECFE does collect bonus points from each order which allows us to purchase classroom books and supplies.

School Board Policies:

A full list of district-wide policies is located online at www.stma.k12.mn.us under School Board and Policies.