



Early Childhood Family Services Advisory Council Minutes
November 11, 2025

Minutes

Members present: Miranda Birchard, Laura Bjork, Adriana de la Cadena, **Jamie Duffey**, Melissa Dunlay, Meredith Eilertson Azeem, Sasha Hiatt-Blenkush, **Dave Kerber**, Brianna Riofski, and Adrienne Rysavy

ISD 196 Staff present: Zachary Gonsioroski and Kristi Hanson

Call to Order

Chairperson Jamie Duffey called the meeting to order at 6:15 p.m. Introductions were made.

Approval of October 14, 2025 minutes

Chairperson called for a motion to approve the minutes from the October 14, 2025 meeting and full council approved.

ECFS Program Overview

ECFE - Kristi Hanson

- New ECFE Winter catalog available and registration is open.
- Considering semesters vs. trimesters.
- ECFS Advisory Council: Survey, piloting survey, logistics, alignment with community ed.
- Printing is \$24,000 + Postage \$9,000 per year = \$33,000
- Exploring 15-18, Sept to Mid Jan which would be fewer registration points

ECFS - Zachary Gonsioroski

- Reviewing existing program offerings to determine if they are meeting family and community needs.
- Noted concerns include staffing capacity, preparation time, special education (SPED) availability, and the increasing need for SPED vs. general education settings.
- Red Pine: Families are expressing strong interest in full-day preschool options.
- Pinewood: Registration numbers are very low.
 - Significant differences in classroom sizes are impacting teacher morale
- A district-wide marketing email was sent to all 4-year-olds not currently enrolled in the program.
- ECFS recommended emphasizing that transportation is available within the attendance area and including this information in marketing for Connections Preschool.
- Members noted that program materials can feel overwhelming and may not clearly communicate how the program works.
- Ideas discussed include offering town hall-style sessions for families to ask questions and learn more about the preschool program.
- Enrollment is higher than ever before.
- Some discussion around whether program fees may be a barrier; another fee increase is anticipated and will require approval.
- Planning for nature pre-K restructuring and possible nature-based inclusion programming.
- Full-day preschool models require additional considerations such as breakfast, recess, and other logistics.
- SPED needs require deeper planning and resource allocation compared to general education.
- Anna Dutke is reopening an outside daycare and will be leaving District 196 in June 2026.

Committee Updates

Fundraising – Lead: Adrienne

- Punch Pizza, Nov. 6 (11:30 AM – 8 PM) raised \$256.00.
- Next fundraiser: Chipotle - Apple Valley, December 3rd from 4:00-8:00 p.m. (25% of sales donated) and Freddy's schedule in April 2026

Hospitality – Lead: Melissa

- Fall Conferences: Oct. 29–30 at DVLC.meal feedback
 - There was a lot of food with plenty leftover this year.
 - A 2:30 p.m. set up time would work better. Consider next year.
 - Upcoming Winter conferences first week in February

Education & Planning – Lead: Sasha

- Spanish immersion discussed, expanding and building relationships.
 - Example: Four in a row for a series instead of drop in.
 - Book collection: Spanish ones for story time/circle time.
- Potential classes discussed:
 - Navigation with kids with special needs & technology topics are all some of the topics discussed.
 - Mentioned ECFE 1:1 is available for families
- What to do when kids age out such as community events.

Legislative, Advocacy, and Policy – Lead: Sabrina and Mark

- No additional updates.

Outdoor Spaces – Lead: Brianna

- No additional updates.

Family School – Lead: Abby

- Book Drive: Planning underway.

Liaison Updates

Foundation for Early Childhood Family Services (October 9, 2025) - Meredith

Treasury Report

- Current balance: \$29,430. The goal is typically to maintain a balance around \$25,000.
- ECFS members discussed whether maintaining such a high balance is necessary.
- Jamie will bring this concern to the next Foundation meeting for further discussion.

Grant Process

- Reviewed the grant approval process and ongoing plans for the backyard space.
- A teacher who built a mud kitchen will receive reimbursement.
- The next grant cycle begins in March, with funding availability dependent on the cost of the Winter Carnival.
- Examples of items previously purchased through grants:
 - Sensory bins, books, STEM materials, scooters.
- Photos will be taken during the Winter Family Fun Event and showcased on a poster.

Backyard Project Updates

- Discussion on the need for woodchips:
 - Lowes - Gloria had discussed a potential donation, but the effort stalled.
 - Jamie asked Zachary to share the Lowe's contact information with Brianna to re-establish communication.
- Additional need identified:
 - A fence for the backyard space to allow younger children to safely and freely play
 - Zachary plans to submit a request for Foundation funding.

Foundation Website & Outreach

- The group hopes to create a Foundation website to:
 - Include a QR code for donations.
 - Allow community members to apply to join the Foundation.
 - The website model discussed was the Echo Park PTO site, which includes a QR code feature.
- Next Foundation meeting: December 17th.

Additional ECFS Considerations

- Ongoing concern about the large fund balance and how best to allocate resources.
- Zachary G. is exploring the creation of an “Angel Fund” to support families in need using Foundation resources.

Upcoming Events

Tuesday, November 18, 2025	Community Education Advisory Council – Melissa and Megan	DVLC	6:00-7:30 pm
Tuesday, November 18, 2025	Superintendent Parent Leader Meeting - Megan AM and Angie PM	Zoom	Group 1: 9:30 – 10:30 a.m. Group 2: 5:00 – 6:00 p.m.
Wednesday, November 19, 2025	196 Legislative Advisory Council – Mark and Sabrina	District Office 3455 153 rd Street West., Rosemount	6:00-7:30 pm
Wednesday, December 17	ECFS Foundation Meeting – Meredith and Jamie	DVLC	6:00-7:30 pm

Other Business

- Social Gathering in lieu of December 9, 2025 meeting - no childcare.
 - Jamie will host at her home
- Auction – Jamie
 - Think gym memberships, golf courses, hair stylists (product), anything that has a membership.
 - Logo letters are in the folder, use them. Change the date, save as PDF so that it is locked.
 - Working on updated letterhead and thank-you letters.
 - Request for basket fillers and baskets of all sizes.
- Fundraising – Adrienne
 - Winter Family Fun Event: Feb. 28, 9:30–11:30 AM.
 - Looking for large cardboard for the fishing game.
 - Paint & Cookie cutters
 - ECFS: Marbled shaving cream, sheep/snowman and glue cotton ball ideas, Discussed: t-shirts & quotes, logos & permissions - goes through Khia’s office T-shirts - no logo move forward to order only for the group.

Adjournment

There being no further business Jamie Duffey made a motion to adjourn, Laura Bjork seconded and full council approved. The meeting adjourned at 8:15 p.m.

Future Meeting Dates

2nd Tuesday, every month - December 9, 2025, January 13, 2026, February 10, 2026, March 10, 2026, April 14, 2026, and May 12, 2026

Respectfully submitted, Dacia Liszka