



Parent Handbook

2021-2022 School Year

Waconia Community Education
Early Childhood Family Education



Waconia Enrichment Center
Early Childhood Office
520 Industrial Blvd. Waconia, MN
(952) 442-0613
Community Education Office (952) 442-0610

www.waconiacommunityed.org

Welcome to Waconia Early Childhood Family Education

Early Childhood Family Education is a District 110 program of Waconia Public Schools Community Education. All families with children ages birth to kindergarten are welcome.

- A terrific place for you and your child to play and learn together
- Provide education, support and friendships with other parents
- Weekly parent/child classes, field trips, special events for parents and children led by licensed teachers and qualified teaching assistants
- Parent coaching sessions and home visits
- Affordable with a sliding fee scale - no one denied participation for inability to pay



Greetings,

Waconia Community Education is excited to welcome you and your family to Waconia Early Childhood Family Education. We are dedicated to providing a great learning experience for you and your child. Our staff will be working hard to provide support and education for healthy growth and development.

This handbook is intended to be a resource for you as we progress through the school year. We have included important contact numbers, descriptions of services and policies that apply to students and families. If you have further questions, we welcome you to contact our office.

Thank you for choosing District 110 Early Childhood for your child's early learning!

Amanda Vesta
Early Childhood Program Supervisor

Waconia School
Community Education
(952) 442-0610
www.waconiacommunityed.org
516 Industrial Blvd.
Office Hours: 7:30 am-4:00 pm

Early Childhood Office
(952) 442-0613
520 Industrial Blvd.
Office Hours: 8:00 am-4:00 pm

ECFE
Waconia Enrichment Center
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Additional Resources
Early Childhood Special Education
(952) 442-0600

About District 110 Early Childhood Family Education

Mission and Goals

To strengthen families through education and support of all parents to provide the best possible environment for the healthy growth, and development of their children.

- Parents demonstrate sensitive and responsive care and interaction with their children
- Parents and children experience a smooth transition from early childhood programs and services into kindergarten and the k-12 school system, setting the stage for school and life long learning.
- Parent child relationships support the child's development
- Parents are engaged in their child's learning and education in the school-age years
- Parents have the knowledge and realistic expectations to anticipate and meet the developmental needs of their children



**EARLY CHILDHOOD
FAMILY EDUCATION**

We are a Pyramid Model School

Pyramid model is a social and emotional framework incorporated into the classroom to ensure high quality classrooms for all students. Teachers are supported in implementing this framework through the Minnesota Centers of Excellence. Children will benefit from this program through learning life long skills such as: friendship, self regulation, problem solving and learning about emotions. We are so excited about rolling this program out this year!



About the Staff

District 110 ECFE teachers and classroom assistants are highly trained in best practices and assessment. Teaching staff are licensed by the MN Dept. of Education. Continuing education and staff in-services are available throughout the school year.

Classroom Information

Parent/Child Class Structure

You and your child will spend time together in the classroom, which is set up with age appropriate learning activities for families to enjoy together. Follow your child's lead and have fun!

Parent Communication through Technology

Classroom teachers will use SeeSaw to communicate with parents about class happenings, parent handouts, class lists and class photos/video can be shared in this format. Optional zoom sessions will be provided for parent coaching.

Parent-Child Time

Each class begins with parent and child interaction time. Please arrive promptly so you can participate in the activities for the day. During interaction time we suggest:

- Follow your child's lead. Let them choose the activities and the pace.
- Observe and focus on your child. Get down on his/her level, make eye contact and communicate with words, smiles and loving touch.
- Talk with your child while working and playing together. Offer positive encouragement and support for their efforts.
- Listen carefully to your child's words and to the feeling he/she expresses.
- Encourage creativity and imagination. Focus on the *process* of exploring rather than the *product*. The sensation of spreading paint is usually more valuable than the final picture. Let your child create and don't worry if it's not "perfect".
- Encourage your child to clean up what he/she was working on before moving to the next activity.
- Talk with other adults only when necessary. This is a special time with your child, and there will be time for adult conversations during parent discussion time.

Circle Time

The early childhood staff will let you know when circle time begins. During circle time, the whole group participates in songs, finger-plays, rhythms, and movement activities.

- We expect that some children will get up and wander; that is okay. We ask that the parent/guardian stay in the circle. We will encourage children back to circle as needed. Children learn by repetition, so we will repeat songs, finger-plays and activities. During this time children are learning:
 - to increase their attention span, to listen and follow directions
 - to develop an understanding of the rhythms of speech, music and life's activities
 - to build vocabulary and encourage speech development
 - concepts that appeal to a child's interest and self expression
 - beginning math concepts of size, shape, place, direction and sequence
 - to move and wiggle in their own space, increase finger dexterity
 - experience with social skills with other children and adults
 - a closeness between parent and child

Children's Classroom

Licensed teachers and assistants will guide play with children. Children learn the following through their play:

Social and Emotional Skills: playing with children their own age, learning from adults, and using adults as resources, help children develop their uniqueness, competence and social skills. It involves children's feelings about themselves as well as their interactions with others.

Dramatic Play: dress up clothes, play house, dolls, blocks, transportation toys, animals are used for role-playing activities. Dramatic activities allow children to role-play members of the family and community, which can help them better understand the world around them.

Expressive Activities: these encourage children to express their creativity through the use of play materials, art, puppets, creative dramatics, and body movements.

Small Muscle Activities: cutting, pasting, printing, painting, coloring, lacing, buttoning, zipping, playdough, and fitting puzzles provide practice in developing eye-hand coordination, spatial relationships, and small muscle development.

Large Muscle Activities: running, jumping, hopping, sliding, catching and throwing help in the development of large muscle coordination. This allows children to gain control over their bodies and become more confident in themselves.

Cognitive Activities: the focus is on children's curiosity in the people and world around them. Children learn to think, remember, imagine, gather and organize information. Using information to problem solve and develop judgment.

During separation time, keep in mind...

Sometimes separation may be difficult for you and your child. You may want to show your child the classroom where you will be during parent discussion. When it's time to separate, get your child settled in with snacks and/or activities, say a short good-bye, let them know you will be back after playtime and leave promptly. Be reassuring and relaxed. If your child senses you are unsure about separation, it may be harder to separate. Do not sneak out. Build a sense of trust by being honest with your child. You can leave a favorite toy, blanket, pacifier with your child to offer security and reassurance. If your child is crying, say "it's okay to be sad and cry. I know you will have a good time when you're done being sad. I love you, and I will come back. The teacher will call you if crying continues for more than 10 minutes.

Parent Education Time

Discussion time is planned to be relevant and tailored to participant needs and children's ages. ECFE provides a confidential environment where parents can make friends, share concerns, and gain knowledge about the five domains of parent education identified by the Minnesota Department of Education. The Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework is used as a topic guide and content is structured around five main areas:

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

A licensed parent educator guides and facilitates group discussion, providing information and resources. Sharing in learning and experiences decreases feelings of isolation and helps parents feel supported while they build and strengthen their relationships with their children. Increasing their joy and satisfaction in their role.

During discussion time, keep in mind:

- Everyone participates at their own comfort level yet understands that the richness of group conversation is enhanced when all participate.
- Personal information shared in the group is confidential.
- It's okay to pass.
- Avoid side conversations to give full attention to those speaking.
- We all have different ways of parenting. It's okay to disagree and still support each other.
- The discussion time allows parents to learn from the entire group and to find support for their critical role as parents.
- After parent discussion time, please be prompt to pick up your children. They are eagerly awaiting your return.

Returning to the room

- Parents/guardians return to the room together and greet the children.
- The entire group cleans up together.

Sibling Care

Care for siblings is available, if needed, during most classes. Siblings from three months through Kindergarten are eligible. Babies who are not yet crawling are welcome to come to class with parents. Registration is required as space is limited.

Sibling Care Expectations:

- Children may be dropped off 10 minutes before scheduled class time
- Please pick up your child promptly when class is done
- Snack donations welcome and appreciated

Cell Phones

Out of respect to all participants, avoid using your cell phone or texting during class. If you need to make an emergency call, please let staff know and step out into the hallway. If you need to have your phone on in case of an emergency, please put it on silent or vibrate and alert the teacher.

Attendance Expectations

Please notify the office (952) 442-0613 or email your teacher to let them know that you will not be attending class and include siblings registered for sibling care.

Arrival Time/Departure Time

- Staff are preparing the classroom, please arrive no earlier than five minutes before class time.
- To keep everyone safe families should go straight to their designated classroom.
- Please avoid loitering in the lobby. If you would like to chat after class, please do so outside the building.
- Hang coats and personal belongings in designated areas.
- Put a name tag on yourself and your child every week.
- Wash hands with soap and water before starting class.

Dressing for School

We ask that you dress your child comfortably for play. It is our desire that children participate fully in large muscle opportunities, art, sensory play, science experiences and nature play, which can be messy. Please make sure your child wears sturdy shoes to school for safety.

Snack Time

Our program includes child snack as an important part of the children's classroom routine. It provides a time when all the children can gather around and begin to socialize with other children and develop self-help skills.

Minnesota Department of Health regulations require that all food brought to school for children be commercially prepared or it can be fresh produce. We encourage you to bring nutritious options. Celebration foods like birthday treats, may be brought to be shared with the class. Please let staff know in advance. Individual teachers may have special guidelines due to allergies and you will be notified in that case.

Parents with children who have food allergies, please help us keep your child safe by checking snack labels before they are served at each class time.

Allergies

We work hard to make our school a safe environment for every student. Please inform the staff of any allergies so that we can take appropriate precautions to prevent exposure. You will be provided a form to fill out giving our staff instructions on how to proceed if your child comes into contact with those allergens. You will be called back to the classroom if an allergic reaction is detected. We are able to store an EpiPen you provide, if needed for your child.

Birth Date Guidelines

For both ECFE and preschool classes, please select your class based on your child's age by Sept. 1, 2021. This age requirement aligns with district kindergarten age requirements.

Registration

Register online at <https://isd110.org/community-education/programs/ecfe/ecfe-registration> or stop into the Early Childhood office during business hours.

Tuition will be collected the first week of class. Tuition reimbursements will not be given in the event of illness or vacation.

A sliding fee scale is offered based on income. The fee scale is listed on the ECFE website. Pick a category based on your household income, unless otherwise noted. All families are welcome at ECFE. No one is denied access to class due to inability to pay. Special Event Fees do not qualify for sliding fees.

Refund Policy

A full refund is issued for cancellations before the session begins, minus a \$10.00 processing fee. After the first week, refunds are prorated. There are no refunds midway through a session or for missed days. Weather related refunds will not be issued for weekly ECFE classes. Special Events refunds will only be given with a 5-day advance notice. Credit vouchers may be given for special events that are cancelled due to weather in the event that it can't be rescheduled.

Behavior Guidance

Our licensed teachers understand the developmental level and needs of children and have appropriate expectations for young children. They are attentive to children and give verbal and visual cues to teach children about behavior expectations. Teachers positively reinforce helpful behavior, acknowledge feelings, use tools and strategies to teach self-regulation and provide a framework for problem solving.

Safety Guidelines

As part of our ongoing commitment to student safety, we practice fire drills, tornado drills, and lock down drills throughout the year. When we conduct safety drills, visitors, parents/guardians and anyone else in the building are expected to participate. If you are in a building during a drill, follow the instructions of the early childhood or building staff.

Parking Safety

There is designated parking in the lot next to the playground at the District Education Center. Overflow parking is available next door in the Laketown Gymnastics lot or along the street on the school side curb. Our parking lots are very busy places.

- Drive slowly through the parking lot.
- Please hold your child's hand to and from the car.
- If you need assistance please ask your teacher. We will be glad to help.
- Remember to never leave your child unattended in the car while you come in to drop off/pick up another child.

Cleaning Procedures

We disinfect tables, toys and equipment after each class. If you notice your child mouthing a toy, please put it in a designated bin when they are done playing with it so it can be sanitized.

Child Injuries

Safety is a priority in our classrooms. Teachers do their best to prevent accidents and provide safe environments for exploration. If an accident occurs while a parent is out of the room:

- Appropriate first aid will be administered
- Parents will be called back to the classroom if injury interferes with child finishing the class
- Other injuries will be reported to the parent at the end of class
- In an emergency we will call 911 and parent
- Child will be transported to the nearest hospital if paramedics deem it necessary

Weather Emergencies

Any changes made to planned school hours will be posted on the school district's main page www.isd110.org and local news sources. A 2-hour delay cancels ECFE classes that start before 10am. In the event of school district early releases and/or after school activities are cancelled, ECFE evening classes are cancelled. ISD 110 weatherline (952) 442-0640 provides a recorded message.

Health Policy

Please keep your child home if he/she has had any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours:

- a fever
- vomiting or diarrhea
- any undiagnosed rash
- red, crusty, weepy eyes until antibiotics have been started
- yellow or greenish discharge from the nose
- harsh cough, sore throat, a contagious stage of any communicable disease
- when your child is not feeling well enough to function and learn at school
- head lice

In order to provide a healthy environment for everyone, teaching staff will consult with you if your child appears too ill to be at school. Notify the early childhood staff if your child has a communicable disease and has

exposed other children. Staff will notify the parents/guardians of the children who were exposed using confidentiality policies.

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. Immunizations can be faxed or emailed from your doctor's office. The fax number is (952) 442-0619 and email to bbuesgens@isd110.org. A notarized immunization form must be on file with our school for conscientious objectors. We have two certified notaries employed in the district who can help with this requirement. Free or reduced cost immunizations for children are available through Carver Co. Public Health at (952) 361-1329.

Diapering

Parents/guardians are responsible for changing their own child's diaper or for taking them to the bathroom. A good time to do this is before leaving for discussion time. When children are in the process of toilet training we will assist unless advised differently by the parents or in any non-separating class. Parents will be called to change diapers for children using them. All diapering needs to take place on a changing table or pad, which is provided in the restrooms.

Mandated reporting

Staff are mandated by state law to report any instance of observed or suspected neglect and physical or sexual abuse of children in the home, school, or community setting.

Wildcat Discovery Park

We believe children need to connect with nature to support healthy development. Wildcat Discovery Park is designed to be a place where children can connect with trees, shrubs, perennials, vines and edible gardens. This outdoor classroom space will be used often in all seasons. The park is open to the community.

Park Rules

- Parents must supervise children when enjoying the park.
- Sticks need to stay in the fort area and are used for construction purposes.
- Children must stay in the fenced area unless they are with an adult.
- Adults should take care to open and shut the gate.
- Please leave all "messy materials" and "loose parts" here for all to enjoy.
- No Pets Allowed

Parent Communication

Parents are encouraged to share feedback with the teachers and the program supervisor at any time. An electronic newsletter will be emailed during the fall, winter and spring sessions. Classroom teachers can be contacted through email or call (952) 442-0613 to leave a message.

Evaluations

At least once a year, parents will be asked to fill out an evaluation form to provide feedback on your experience. Please know that we welcome your feedback and comments throughout the year. You do not need to wait for a formal evaluation to let us know how we can better meet the needs of your family. Speak to your classroom teacher, parent educator or Amanda Vesta, Early Childhood Supervisor, avesta@isd199.org or (952) 442-0664.

Home Visits/One to One Parenting Session

We have access to many resources and information to support families with a wide variety of needs and would be happy to connect you. ISD 110 employs parent educators who can lend support to parents. Home and center based visits, email, Q&A and phone conversations are available to families. To schedule an appointment please fill out this form and a staff person will be in contact with you.

[Parent Coach Request Form](#)

Parenting Resources

[Resource Link](#)

Early Childhood Advisory Council

This is a group of parents and staff that meet five times during the school year to support, advise, and take action on behalf of Waconia Early Childhood Programs. This may include such things as planning events, fundraising or teacher appreciation. If you are interested in joining this group please contact Amanda Vesta at avesta@isd110.org or (952) 442-0664.

[Advisory Council Information](#)

Holidays

We find that secular remembrance of certain holidays throughout the year can be a fun way to enhance our daily curriculum. Please be open with concerns you have about what might be included in these days and potential conflict to your personal beliefs. With open communication we have found solutions to make activities work for all of our students. If you have information about celebrations that you would like to share with the class, please let your child's teacher know to see how we might share those ideas.

Special Education Services

ECFE works in full partnership with the district's Early Childhood Special Education program. Qualifying children will receive extra support and services to help them succeed at school and home. If your child's teacher or yourself have any concerns about your child, the ECSE team can be consulted and a plan to support your child will be created.

[Help Me Grow](#)

[Infant Follow Along Program](#)

Donations

A giving tree is posted in the lobby of the Early Childhood office. Teachers add donation requests to the tree throughout the year. Donations are greatly appreciated and help keep our budget healthy. Donations such as Kleenex, disinfecting wipes, wet wipes, Ziploc bags and hand sanitizer are always appreciated.

Early Childhood Screening

Early Childhood Screening is a free, developmental check required by the State of Minnesota for kindergarten entrance.

Screening appointments:

- Last approximately 60 minutes with parent observation during the entire appointment
- Are best when complete at the age of 3-4 years
- Check your child's height, weight, hearing, vision, immunization record, coordination, large muscle and small motor skills, speech, learning development, and social/emotional skills

- Involves playful activities that make it an enjoyable experience for your child, while providing valuable information to ensure development is on track
- Are not tests. Screening simply helps identify any needs that may require additional support before your child enters kindergarten.
- Your screener will discuss the results of the screening with you immediately and answer any questions you may have

To schedule an appointment, go to: www.isd110.org/community-ed/programs/early-childhood-screening or call (952) 442-0613.

[Early Childhood Screening Link](#)

Photos and Video

We take many photos in class. A portion of these photos are used as part of our curriculum and classroom management. Other photos are used in promotional literature or on our programs Facebook page. If for any reason you are not comfortable having your child's photo taken in class for these purposes, please let a staff member know so that we can offer you an opt out form. In addition, professional photos will be taken of every child in the fall. Purchase of these photos is optional.