

**WHITE BEAR LAKE AREA SCHOOLS  
EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION  
PARENT HANDBOOK  
2021-2022**



***WHERE BEARS BEGIN***

***Serving children ages birth to five and their families***

**District #624 MISSION STATEMENT**

Leading minds to learning  
Hearts to compassion  
Lives to community service

## EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

### *Normandy Park Education Center*

2482 County Road F East  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

#### **General Information**

	651-653-3100
Fax	651-653-3155
Early Childhood Education Supervisor: <b>Darcy Rodriguez</b>	651-653-3101
Early Childhood Education Program Specialist: <b>Angie Lundblad</b>	651-653-3118
Early Childhood Special Education Supervisor: <b>Angela Drange</b>	651-653-3102

Program Support/Billing: <b>Deana Gallagher</b>	651-653-3100
Administrative Assistant: <b>Amber Orluske</b>	651-653-3105
Child Study Secretary/Health Assistant: <b>Deb Tacheny</b>	651-653-3106
Nurse: <b>Cathy Foster</b>	651-653-3103
Psychologist: <b>Aleta Schulte</b>	651-653-3104
Psychologist: <b>Amy Galyon</b>	651-653-3136
School Readiness/Screening Information: <b>Darcy Rodriguez</b>	651-653-3102
Screening Appointments	651-653-3100

#### **Early Childhood Sites:**

##### **Normandy Park Education Center - NP**

2482 County Road F East  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

##### **Hugo Elementary - HU**

14895 Francesca Ave  
Hugo, MN 55038

##### **Tamarack Nature Center - TAM**

5287 Otter Lake Road  
White Bear Lake, MN 55110

##### **Normandy Park Education Center Office Hours:**

Mon. – Fri., 7:30am – 4:00pm

# WELCOME

## Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth to kindergarten entrance. The program is offered through Minnesota public school districts. ECFE is based on the idea that the family provides a child's first and most significant learning environment and parents are a child's first and most important teachers. ECFE works to strengthen families. ECFE's goal is to enhance the ability of all parents and other family members to provide the best possible environment for their child's learning and growth. Early Childhood Family Education is funded through state aid, local levy and participant fees.

### Early Childhood Family Education Class Components

A typical ECFE class meets once a week and includes:

- *Parent-Child Time*  
Parents and children spend time together participating in learning activities planned by a licensed early childhood teacher. Children learn best when they are free to discover and explore.
- *Parent Education Time*  
Parents meet with a licensed parent educator to enhance and expand their parenting skills. Parents learn ideas to guide their child's growth and development. Parent education also includes sharing of resources and support.
- *Children's Activity Time (separating classes)*  
While parents attend the parent education time, children spend time with their peers and trained paraprofessionals practicing and learning about their own capabilities and social skills.

### Circle Time

A small portion of the parent-child interaction time will be set-aside for a short group experience or "circle time". During this time you and your child will sing simple songs, learn finger plays, hear stories, learn circle games and be involved in movement activities.

Be patient if your child is hesitant and does not want to participate. You may feel disappointed when your child does not get involved in the group activities. Encourage but please do not force your child to participate. Eventually your child will warm up to people and situations and choose to participate once they are comfortable with their surroundings.

We encourage you to repeat circle time activities at home. Children enjoy repetition and might feel more comfortable doing fingerplays and songs at home.

Encourage your child to sit with the group during circle time. Generally, children under 2 ½ years may have difficulty sitting for an entire circle time and they are not required to sit. We ask that you keep an eye on your child if they leave the circle.

### **Parent-Child Time**

Follow your child's cue. Visit the activity areas he/she is interested in and share the activity. If your child is not ready to participate in the planned activities, relax and let him/her observe. Children are learning as they observe others. Expose your child to all activities, but do not force. Comment on what they are doing by using comments such as '*you rolled the play dough all by yourself*' or '*I like how you used the green paint in your picture*'. This helps to increase vocabulary and build self-esteem. Tell your child what to do positively: '*walk to the easel*', instead of '*don't run*'.

Be sure to reinforce putting toys away after use. This is an important self-help skill to learn, both at school and at home.

*Please keep adult interaction to a minimum during Parent-Child Time. There are two good clues to knowing that it is time to end a conversation with an adult;*

- Your child shows that he/she wants your attention
- You become aware that you have not noticed your child for the last few minutes

### **Parent Discussion Time**

Parent discussion time is for problem solving, support and information on how children grow and learn.

A licensed parent educator leads the discussion group, which focuses on topics suggested by parent participants. The parent educator will bring knowledge based on research and past experiences with children and parents. Parents are encouraged to share their parenting expertise.

Please note the following group guidelines:

- Be as open and honest in the group as possible; sharing your feelings as well as your thoughts
- What is said in the group remains in the group
- Confidentiality is a must
- One person talks at a time; avoid side conversations
- Every group member will get a chance to be heard
- All opinions are respected and honored
- It is okay to disagree when done respectfully and without criticism
- Different parenting techniques or practices work differently for families and children

Every group member shares the responsibility for what happens in the group. Much of what you get out of the group discussions will depend on your involvement and how well you as a group function. Let your needs be known. Use the parent discussion time to bring up specific parenting questions. The parent educator is a resource person and can suggest some resources for you.

You are responsible for your personal belongings. Please do not leave them, especially purses, in a room unattended.

### **Children's Activity Time**

The purpose of the children's activity time is to help children:

- Develop social skills through work, play, listening, and speaking with their peers and adults
- Exercise their curiosity and become problem solvers through activities, books, puzzles, game and toys
- Develop a feeling of competency
- Recognize their own feeling as well as the feelings and rights of others
- Widen their knowledge and learn about their work and themselves through play
- ECFE teachers will discuss with parents individual issues that need to be brought to the attention of the parent
- Diapering – parents may be called during the parent education time to assist with child diapering or toileting needs.

Separation anxiety, the feeling of anxiousness or worry when a parent leaves a child's sight is a sign of normal, healthy child development. It shows that children are dealing with issues of separateness, uniqueness, and independence. Learning how to cope with these issues leads the way towards development of healthy, trusting relationships in a child's later years.

Separation is a development stage that every child works through. Parents can do much to ease their child's anxiety and help them through this challenging time with patience and understanding. It is not uncommon for children to develop anxiety at different times during the year.

### **Developmental Stages of Separation**

0-6 months	Baby happily relates to any kind of caregiver.
Around 6 months	Baby displays a preference for parents and /or caregivers; may show uneasiness when they leave.
6-12 months	Baby shows a sign of increased anxiety when parent leaves room as baby realizes separateness from parent.
1-2 years	Separation anxiety intensifies during this time. Toddlers work through issues of independence and separation; realizes separateness but fears parents will not return.
2-3 years	Child may deal with the challenging issues of separation with nervousness and show some regression to infantile behaviors.

### **Some Suggestions When Leaving Your Child**

- Before you and your child enter the Early Childhood classroom, take your child to the parent's room (separating classes) so they know where you will be when they stay to play with their friends and the classroom support staff.
- Be sure your child has a fresh diaper on before leaving for parent discussion or coming to class. Parents are encouraged to use the diaper changing facilities. Diapers should NOT be changed on the floors. If your child has a soiled diaper, we will call you. Person diapering child should wash hands thoroughly with soap and water afterwards.

- When you leave, tell your child quickly and in a matter-of-fact manner that you are going to talk with the other grown-ups and that you will be in the parent room that you showed them before class (separating classes).
- It usually does not help to try to leave the child without them noticing. It is better to hear from you that you are leaving and where you are going. It does not help to try getting the child to quit crying or to prolong your leaving. Sometimes it is even reassuring to tell your child 'It's ok to cry; I know you are sad'.
- Leave quickly. It does not help to prolong your leaving. Crying usually stops within a matter of minutes. We will call you from the parenting group if your child cannot be comforted after some time.
- Bring a favorite security item (blanket, stuffed animal, etc.) or a personal item from you for your child to 'take care of' when you are gone. Tell them you will come back for your item and the child after your discussion group.
- Give your child adequate time to adjust to the routine of your leaving class each session. Hopefully you should see that it becomes easier from week to week for both you and your child. Some children take a long time to overcome separation anxiety. The paraprofessional staff will try to help your child work through their separation challenges.
- We will do everything we can to try and make your child feel comfortable. We have found that getting a child interested in a toy, game or activity will usually divert their attention from your absence.

### **Absences**

Please call or email your child's teacher directly when your child is going to be absent or late for class. The staff directory can be found on-line at [www.isd624.org](http://www.isd624.org). You may also call the main office (651-653-3100) and ask to be transferred to your child's classroom to leave a message.

### **Acceptance of Gifts**

The White Bear Lake Area School District recognizes that students, parents/guardians, and others want to show appreciation to school district employees or to a particular school or classroom. The policy of the school district, however, is to discourage gift-giving to employees, schools/classrooms and school board members, and to encourage donors instead to write letters and notes of appreciation or to give small tokens of gratitude. Any gifts accepted more than nominal value (\$5.00) shall become property of the District.

### **Arrival and Departure**

Teachers are busy preparing for your student; therefore, doors will be opened no earlier than 5 minutes prior to class. Families are welcome to play on the playground while they wait. The gym at Normandy Park Education Center is not open for play before or after school. Please sign in at the front desk with your name, pre-screening and class. You do not need to sign out. If someone other than the registered caregiver is attending they will need to fill out all the information for proper contract tracing.

### **Billing and Payments**

The White Bear Lake Area Early Childhood Family Education programs are supported by user fees; therefore, it is imperative that all fees are paid on time. Families with delinquent accounts are subject to removal from the program. For billing questions, call 651-653-3100.

If a distance learning model is implemented teaching and learning will be done online. Because our teachers will continue to teach, ***programs will not be refunded***. Community Education programs are fee-for-service programs, and we are not receiving the emergency money that is bound for k-12. ECFE families always have the option to drop their contract. If you choose to drop your spot, that spot will not be retained. When programming moves back to in person learning you would need to reapply to the program and there will be no guarantee that they will be assigned to the same teacher or the same time of day.

### **Cell Phone Usage**

ECFE classes are an opportunity to spend quality time with your child and focus on your parenting skills. Please silence your cell phones during class time and refrain from using cell phones for non-emergency calls and texts.

### **Cleaning Procedures**

Staff will sanitize hard surfaces twice per day. This will happen at the end of the morning session, and at the end of the PM section. We will work to limit sharing of items within the classroom and will clean and disinfect toys and classroom materials throughout the day.

### **Face Coverings/Masks**

All Early Childhood Programs will follow the White Bear Lake Area Schools guidance regarding face coverings. The current district policy states: (updated 8/18/2021)

- Face coverings required for all age 2+, regardless of vaccination status , while in district buildings
- Face coverings required for all age 2+, regardless of vaccination status, on student transportation, per federal requirement
- Face coverings will not be required outdoors

For more information about White Bear Lake Area Schools policies go to the district website.

### **Fire**

We are in full compliance with fire codes and safety procedures. Five fire drills are scheduled at all Early Childhood buildings during the year. The fire drill procedure is as follows:

- Parents in a classroom: each parent will get their children and exit through the closest door.
- Parents not in a classroom: staff will gather children and lead them outside to the designated safe meeting spot. Parents will exit parent education classrooms and meet their children at the designated safe meeting spot.
- Children in Sibling Care: Children will be brought outside by Sibling Care providers and meet parents at the designated meeting spot.

### **Hand Washing**

Clean hands keep germs from spreading. Please help your child wash their hands when you enter the classroom.

### **Home Visits**

Home visits are offered to families with children birth to age five (not yet in kindergarten). A licensed Family Educator will share information about community resources and talk about how children grow and develop, and how your child learns. Please call Tami at 651-653-3159 to schedule your home visit.

### **Illness**

Please call your child's teacher if your child will not be attending class for any reason. When a child becomes sick during class time, the parent will be asked to leave with the child immediately. If the parent must wait for transportation. The child who becomes sick will be brought to the health office and evaluated to determine if they need to go to the covid care room to wait for pick up. Families must pick up their child within 30 minutes of being contacted.

Refer to the "[\*Is My Child Well Enough to Go to School?\*](#)", (which will be available during parenting) for specific information to help make a decision about when a student should stay home or attend school. Please notify your child's teacher if your child has a positive case of COVID-19 and you will be guided through the exclusionary process by our building response teams.

### **Immunization Record and Emergency Contact Information**

An immunization record form and emergency contact information and media release information must be on file prior to the start of class. These forms were part of your online registration. Please make sure these forms have your most current contact information for our staff. Parents have the ability to make changes to their emergency contact information up to the start of school by logging into your Fee Pay account at [www.whitebear.ce.feepay.com](http://www.whitebear.ce.feepay.com). If changes need to be made after the start of school, please call the main office at 651-653-3100 with any updates or changes. Parents/Guardians are responsible for keeping the information on the emergency card and immunization record up-to-date.

### **Injuries**

The rooms are checked for safety and shall follow safety guidelines and precautions but occasional accidents happen and injuries occur. Any injury will be written up on an accident report form. For serious injuries, ECCE staff will immediately notify parents who will then take charge of the situation. If a parent is out of the building, 911 will be called.

### **Parking Lot Safety- Park on the Early Childhood Side of the lot**

Pay Attention:

Make sure your child remains with you at all times. This sounds simple, but as parents, we all know how easy it is to become distracted, and within seconds, our child is out of reach. Therefore, whenever you enter a parking lot, it is imperative to put away your cell phone, shopping list, or whatever it is that may take your eyes off of your child, even for a minute

Use a Stroller:

According to [preventinjury.org](http://preventinjury.org), toddlers sustain the highest number of pedestrian injuries. This is due to their small size and limited experience. It is unrealistic to assume



that your toddler will perfectly comply with your rules all of the time. Even the most well behaved youngster may forget himself and suddenly sprint off. If you cannot keep a firm grip on your child's hand while in a parking lot, play it safe and buckle him/her into a stroller.

Teach your children:

Do not assume your child understands the dangers lurking in a parking lot. Because it seems so clear to you, it is easy to overestimate your child's knowledge. KidsandCars.org suggests teaching your child that even though they can see a vehicle; the driver may not see them. Thousands of children are seriously injured or die yearly because a driver simply didn't see them while backing up. You also need to teach your child the dangers of running off, due to the unlikely event that they will be abducted or, more likely, get lost. While we do not want to frighten our kids unnecessarily, we also do not want them to be unaware. Talk to your child in an age-appropriate way about the importance of sticking close to you.

Watch for Other People's Children:

Although you may always keep a close eye on your youngster in parking lots, don't assume everyone else does the same. Before getting into your vehicle, KidsandCars.org recommends walking around and behind the vehicle, prior to moving. Also, keep a careful eye out for children as you back out and maneuver through the parking lot.

### **School Closing**

For school closings, early dismissals and late starts, call the School Closing Hotline at (651) 407-7540 or watch/listen for information on these media outlets:

- [KARE-TV 11](#)
- [KMSP-TV 9](#)
- [KSTP-TV 5](#)
- [WCCO-TV 4](#)
- WCCO-AM 830

If winter weather is so severe that schools need to close, parents will also be alerted in three ways as a decision is made:

- A School Messenger phone message and email will be sent to all parents.
- A message will be posted on the homepage of [www.isd624.org](http://www.isd624.org)
- Messages will be posted on the District's Facebook and Twitter pages.

We know that closing schools can be disruptive. Student and staff safety are our primary concern. Ultimately, the decision to attend class remains with families. The District supports those decisions that are made for the safety and health of students.

### **Smoke Free Environment**

White Bear Lake Area Schools is smoke free. Smoking is not permitted in the building or on school grounds. This includes the playground and the parking lot.

### **Snacks**

All White Bear Lake Area Schools in the district are introducing school meal and snack standards meant to reduce calories and increase the consumption of fruits and vegetables.

Due to health regulations, we ask that snacks be store bought. We also ask that snacks be nut free as we are a nut free school. **(If your child has a food allergy, please let us know)**. As a result of increased allergies and health issues, please do not bring frosted cupcakes, cakes, cookies, donuts or candy. Thank you in advance for providing healthy snacks! Water, instead of juice will be served at snack, in keeping with the district's philosophy of healthier eating.

Below are ideas for healthy snacks:

- Baby carrots-plain or with dip
- Bananas
- Washed fruit (apples, grapes, berries)
- Oranges
- Applesauce or other fruit cups
- Rice cakes
- String cheese
- Jell-O/pudding cups
- Yogurt
- Mini bagels and cream cheese
- Granola bars
- Dried fruit/raisins
- Pretzels
- Whole grain crackers
- Packaged popcorn
- Animal crackers
- 100 Calorie snack packs

### **Volunteer Opportunities**

Early Childhood Parent Teacher Association (PTA)

PTA is a registered 501(c) (3) nonprofit association that prides itself on being a powerful voice for all children, a relevant resource for families and communities, and a strong advocate for public education. Membership in PTA is open to anyone who wants to be involved and make a difference for the education, health, and welfare of children and youth.

The White Bear Lake Area Schools Early Childhood PTA meets once a month at Normandy Park Education Center. Complimentary child care is available. Call the Early Childhood office at 651-653-3100 for more information about how you may get involved and join the PTA.