Our mission is to **Educate**, **Inspire** & **Empower** our diverse learners, to shape their futures, to accomplish their dreams and to contribute positively to our local and global communities.
WHAT IS EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION?
Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) is a program for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth and kindergarten enrollment. It recognizes that families provide children’s first and most important learning environments and parents are children’s first and most significant teachers. The purpose of the early childhood family education program is to provide parenting education to support children’s learning and development.

MISSION OF DISTRICT 728 EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION
The mission of District 728 Early Childhood Family Education is to strengthen families and support all parents in providing the best possible environment for the healthy growth and development of their children.

OVER ALL GOALS OF DISTRICT 728 EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION
The goals of Early Childhood Family Education are:

- To support children's optimal physical, intellectual, social, and emotional development during the important early years of life.
- To encourage parent involvement in children’s learning, development and education.
- To help parents develop informed, realistic attitudes and expectations about raising children.
- To promote effective communication between parents and children.
- To encourage healthy relationships between parents and children.
- To help parents develop and strengthen support networks which enhance effective parenting.
- To encourage development and effective use of community resources for families.
- To help prevent child abuse, family violence, and other negative family outcomes.
- To reach the diversity of families residing within the school district.
- To offer a variety of program opportunities and options so that barriers to participation and learning are eliminated.
WHY INVOLVE PARENTS?
Research shows that early childhood programs involving both parents and children are more effective than programs centering exclusively on the child. Educators and psychologists contend that it is vital for early childhood programs to assist parents in their role as primary educators of their children. Involving families prior to kindergarten enrollment encourages parents to play an active role in their children’s learning in the elementary years and beyond.

CLASS FORMATS FOR AGE GROUPS
Infants: Class consists of parent/child circle time and parent discussion. Parents are with their infants throughout the class.
Birth-Three: Class consists of parent/child activity time, circle time, and parent discussion. Parent discussion takes place in a corner of the room while the children continue to play.
Toddlers: Class consists of parent/child activity time, circle time, and parent discussion. Parent discussion takes place in a corner of the room while the children continue to play.
Two’s and up, including Multi-Age classes: Class begins with parent/child activity and circle time in the classroom. Children have a snack and continue to explore the classroom with the early childhood staff while parents participate in parent discussion in another room.

ABOUT ECFE CLASSES
AS YOU ARRIVE FOR CLASS
In ECFE, we are preparing the learning environment for your child. Please come to class ready to learn. Leave your personal and work business at home. This includes calls and texts. We ask that you refrain from cell phone use in the presence of your child whether in the classroom or the hallway.
• Hooks or cubbies are provided for coats. They are located in the hallway near your classroom.
• Please do not bring toys and/or valuable items from home to ECFE classes. (You may bring a “security” item to help ease separation anxiety if needed.) If a toy from home is inadvertently brought to class, you will be asked to set it aside until after class. In accordance with school district policy, objects or toys resembling weapons of any kind are not permitted on school property; such items will not be allowed at ECFE/SR.
• Some activities may be messy, please dress your child accordingly.
• We’ll ask you to take your child to the bathroom to change his/her diaper. A changing table is located in the bathroom. Please bring diapers from home.
• There will be other district staff, including the ECFE/SR Manager, who may attend or observe classes. We utilize multiple coaching experiences in our classrooms. We also provide opportunities for student teachers to work in the classes.

“...It is a wonderful time that we have together as well as all of the support from other teachers and parents.
— ECFE parent participant”
PARENT-CHILD TOGETHER TIME
We know your family time is precious and we respect that! Please use these guidelines to ensure everyone’s safety and satisfaction.

- Parents are responsible for their children during parent-child time.
- Follow your child and play with him/her.
- Try gentle touch, eye contact and talking to your child to encourage constructive play.
- Offer the child two other choices while you wait to play with a favorite toy. Ask the person who is playing with it to let you know when they finish.
- Please refrain from using your cell phone during parent-child time.

CIRCLE TIME
If your child is ready to participate in circle time, that’s great! Some children will be so excited that they will shout out the words to the songs. (Even when you may not want them to do so.) Gradually the children learn to take turns and wait until one child has finished talking before beginning. If your child “clams up” and doesn’t want to participate, be patient. Most parents are disappointed when their child doesn’t get involved in the group. Encourage, but please don’t force your child to participate. Often children warm up to the people/situation and eventually participate, (but not always). Your child might feel more comfortable doing finger plays and songs in class if you practice some at home.

- Start circle time with your child in your lap or next to you.
- Expect that your child will stay and participate. If you suspect he/she won’t, be sure to choose a spot near the back of the circle so you aren’t disruptive when you follow the child.
- Encourage your child to join the circle and engage in the activities. Some children will get up and wander and that is okay. Staff will encourage children who wander from the circle to rejoin the circle and keep them safe in the classroom.

SEPARATION AND PARENT DISCUSSION TIME
Parent/child separations at discussion time can be difficult. We recommend that you prepare your child that you will be going to another room to talk and that you will be back. If you think your child would feel more comfortable by bringing a security item, please do. Working together, the teacher and parent will decide such things as when the parent should leave, how long the parent should stay away and how to make the separation easier. If a plan is made, it will be implemented in the child’s classroom. The parent discussion room is maintained as a safe environment for parents to learn and share. It is not an appropriate environment for children. Babies are allowed into the parent discussion room until they reach the age of three months. At three months of age, children must attend sibling care.

- We can disagree and still like and respect one another.
- Nobody has to talk.
- All conversations are confidential-what happens in the parent room stays in the parent room.
PROGRAM INFORMATION

IF YOU NEED TO USE CHILD CARE FOR SIBLINGS (PROGRAM PARTICIPANT CARE)
EdVenture Club offers on-site childcare for the children of program participants. This program is supervised by EdVenture Club staff specifically trained in Early Childhood best practices. Please note the following important registration changes this year: Program Participant Care is pre-pay only; you must pay when scheduling care. The registration deadline is 5pm the Monday prior to the week care is needed. Program Participant Care will be offered in blocks of time. These times will closely match all ECFE and Preschool class times. Sign up for the time block that covers your class time even if there is additional time included before/after your class time. Fees are based on block times: Blocks of time that are 2 hours or less = $3 per block Block of time more than 2 hours = $5 per block

Registration is easy! Complete a registration calendar, calendars can be completed up to 2 months in advance. Deadline for registering is 5pm the Monday before the week care is needed. Registration is not available online, however you can find Participant Care registration calendars at the following locations: ECFE office at Handke Center. Hallway entry areas at each of the ECFE/Discovery Learning sites (Rogers Elem, Otsego Elem, Zimmerman Elem and the Handke Center) Online at www.isd728.org/EdvPPC. Mail, drop-off, fax or email your completed calendar and payment to the EdVenture Club office at the Handke Center.

IF YOU ARE UNABLE TO ATTEND CLASS
If you must miss a class, please call the ECFE office at 241-3524 or email your child’s teacher before your session. If your class meets in the evening, please try to call during the day.

IF YOUR CHILD IS SICK
It’s hard to miss a session but out of respect for others, please stay home with sick children, especially those with fever, diarrhea, chicken pox or the flu. If your child becomes ill during a session, we will ask you to take your child home. (Please refer to the district health guidelines in this handbook)

IS MY CHILD WELL ENOUGH TO GO TO CLASS?
Many parents are frequently concerned about when their child should stay home or attend class. Remember that a child ill with an infectious disease can spread the disease when in contact with others in the family and the community.

The following information is intended to help with this decision:
• If your child is absent due to illness, please call or email your child’s teacher.
• If your child has had a fever of 100 degrees or more, your child should stay home for 24 hours after the temperature returns to normal, without fever reducing medication.
• If your child has vomited or had diarrhea, your child should stay home for 24 hours after the last episode.
• If your child has any rash, check with your health care provider before sending your child to class.
IN CASE OF BAD WEATHER
Consult WCCO 830 radio, local television stations, the ISD 728 website, Facebook or Twitter feed for the latest information if inclement weather arises. Please do not put you or your child at risk if you feel that weather is an issue. If inclement weather forces the District 728 schools to close, or dismiss early, one of the following announcements will be made:

- **Two Hour Late Start** means morning Community Education and ECFE/SR classes will be cancelled. Afternoon and evening classes will meet as scheduled.
- **No School** means morning, afternoon and evening Community Education and ECFE/SR classes will be cancelled.
- **Emergency Early Dismissal** means all Community Education and ECFE/SR classes for the balance of the day (afternoon and evening) are cancelled.

*We will not refund your child's tuition due to weather cancellations. If you would like to request a credit, please contact the ECFE/SR office.*

LACTATION ROOM
Lactation rooms are available at Handke for mothers who would prefer privacy for nursing and pumping. If you are comfortable nursing in the classroom, you are welcome to do so. Please ask staff if you need assistance.

SAFETY
The safety of your child outside of the classroom is your responsibility. Supervise them at all times. Due to the volume of traffic on the streets and in the parking lots, supervising your child is imperative. Hold their hand when crossing streets/parking lots. If you need assistance at arrival or departure time, please ask a staff member.

SECURITY
**ZIMMERMAN** - you will need to enter the school through the main doors to the Early Childhood Center. You will need to use your school member badge to enter the secured area of the building. If you have any issues, forget your card, or come in when class is not in session, you will need to buzz for entrance at the door panel.

**ROGERS** - you will need to enter the school through the main door to the Early Childhood Center (Door 8). You will need to use your school member badge to enter the secured area of the building. If you have any issues, forget your card, or come in when class is not in session, you will need to buzz for entrance at the door panel.

**ELK RIVER** - you will need to enter the school through the main doors (Door 5) to the building. You will need to use your school card to enter the secured area of the building. If you have any issues, forget your card, or come in when class is not in session, you will need to check in at the office and receive a temporary badge. Other entrance doors to the school will be locked to provide additional security.

**PRAIRIE VIEW ELEM/MS** - you will need to enter the school through the main doors to the Early Childhood Center. You will need to use your school member badge to enter the secured area of the building. If you have any issues, forget your card, or come in when class is not in session, you will need to buzz for entrance at the door panel.
PARKING-HANDBE LOCATION
Parking is not allowed in front of the buildings/sites or anywhere there is a yellow curb. They are fire lanes and you can be ticketed. Also, please be respectful of nearby residents’ driveways and businesses within the area. For safety’s sake, please do not leave babies or children in unattended, parked vehicles.

ABOUT IMMUNIZATIONS
Per Minnesota law, up-to-date immunizations or medical exemption or a notarized objection letter is required. You will be notified if we have questions about your child’s record.

CELEBRATIONS
BIRTHDAYS
Children’s birthdays may be acknowledged in class (song, notes) unless parents request that they not be. Birthday treats (food) will not be permitted due to our healthy snack policy. Any birthday invitations should be given discreetly outside of the classroom/school out of respect for all children.

HOLIDAY CELEBRATIONS
Holidays are not celebrated during ECFE classes. Wearing Halloween costumes is not permitted.

TECHNOLOGY/SOCIAL MEDIA
The district policy guideline (refer to the district site under policy 7049) states any guests using the district’s hardware, software, and network (Internet use) need to abide by the policy. Please use these items responsibly. These resources should be used for educational purposes only. Any user should not have any expectation of privacy. The district is able to track usage and will maintain an educational and safe environment for all students, staff, and guests.

In order to maintain professional learning environments and relationships, our ECFE/SR staff members will not “friend” any participant of our programs, for the duration of the programs, on any social media platform. Please refrain from trying to “friend” staff. Also, please be respectful of our program and participants when using social media. We have a Facebook page, where you are able to interact and connect with our programs.

A WORD ABOUT INJURIES
As much as we try to prevent them, minor accidents sometimes happen. Staff may ask that you assist your child if he/she receives a cut or abrasion in class or Program Participant Care. You will be provided with first aid supplies and a plastic bag for disposal of used materials.

CONFIDENTIALITY
Personal information discussed within the parenting groups is confidential. However in cases of suspected child abuse, staff members are mandated by law to report it to the proper authorities.
ALLERGIES AND HEALTH CONCERNS
At the time of registration parents will be asked to indicate any allergy, health, or special needs of their child or children participating in class. Information collected is confidential and will only be shared with staff directly involved in your child’s class.

DONATIONS AND HEALTHY SNACKS
We will be asking parents for donations of nutritious snacks to be used for classes. A snack list of items will be available when you come to class. We follow nutrition standards and water will be provided to drink. PLEASE refrain from bringing in any items not on the snack list provided as need to protect the safety of our students with health concerns and/or food allergies.

LOCKDOWN/TORNADO/FIRE DRILLS
Each school in the district is required, by law, to conduct five lockdown drills each year to determine how a crisis situation might be handled if one should occur at our school. Fire and tornado drills occur multiple times a year too. Drills are a necessary part of preparing for possible emergencies. We do this to ensure that all students and staff are safe and we take appropriate steps to deal with each situation. In the event of a drill, please be patient if you are on school grounds. Please refer to isd728.org for more information.

*Please note: if you are in the school during a drill, we ask that you do not take your child away from the class as we need to make sure all children are safe and accounted for.

TOY DONATIONS
We appreciate that families think of ECFE when looking for a home for gently used toys. Unfortunately, we are unable to accept these donations as we can’t verify that they are lead free.

ADVISORY COUNCIL- PARENT
Our ECFE/SR Advisory Council consists of a group of parents who want to be involved in our ECFE/SR programs. Their purpose is to represent parent participant concerns and to assist staff with program planning. They sponsor annual activities and fundraisers. Parent Advisory Council meetings are held monthly during the evenings with free childcare available. Please inquire through the office 763-241-3524 for more information.
HIGH FIVE (PYRAMID MODEL/CLASSROOM ENGAGEMENT MODEL)

High Five is a social emotional framework adopted by our ECFE/SR and ECSE programs in ISD 728. Originally named TACSEI (Technical Assistance Center on Social and Emotional Intervention), Minnesota was chosen as a federal demonstration program state for TACSEI. The Elk River ECFE/SR/ECSE program was chosen to be one of the first three sites in the state to implement the TACSEI program in 2010. This is a program of staff development, through the use of coaching, that supports social and emotional development of children birth through kindergarten and equips them for success in school. Outside staff members including: behavior specialists, internal coaches, etc. may be working with classroom staff and observing classrooms. Data will be collected on children in the classroom if any behavior incidents occur, and if further intervention is needed. Data will be shared with a specialist team and families. Staff will work with families if any concerns are present to help every child succeed. Your child will be a part of and benefit from this program when they attend ECFE/SR classes.

In 2014, our program was again selected for another opportunity - to work with the Early Childhood Technical Assistance Center to help promote child engagement! We have combined these frameworks to help children feel more confident and secure by increasing opportunities for interaction. We provide Classroom Engagement Model coaching as a part of our High Five program and will collect data on child engagement.

*Our program rules follow these five guiding rules. Be Safe, Be Kind, Be Helpful, Have Fun, and Respect Everyone!

BIG (BEHAVIOR INTERVENTION GROUP)

BIG is an intervention and prevention program for children ages: three to five, who are at risk of losing their childcare or preschool placement (outside of Discovery Learning) because of negative behaviors. BIG is a team made up of parent educators and behavior specialists. BIG works with parents, teachers, and childcare providers as a team to build positive behavior skills. Children in the BIG program may be participating in your child’s class. If you are interested in BIG, please contact the ECFE/SR office for more information. Your support and understanding of the process will contribute to the child’s success.

DATA PRIVACY AND RELEASE INFORMATION

At the time of registration you are asked to provide ECFE/SR with information about your child. Data collected by ECFE/SR is used for the following: To enroll participants in our programs, to assist with program planning and goal setting, to report to parents regarding child’s progress, and to track payment. The data will be provided to the instructor(s), and staff whose jobs require the data, and to staff who may need to contact parents. Data may also be shared with the school district census office. Information will be released to outside agencies/persons when a Consent to Release Information form is completed by the parent. Additional information about data privacy and release of information will be available at the time of enrollment.

MANDATED REPORTING

It’s a state law that all ECFE/SR staff must report any suspected child abuse or neglect to County Social Services or Law Enforcement.
OTHER ISD 728 PROGRAMS FOR
FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN BIRTH TO BEFORE KINDERGARTEN

EARLY CHILDHOOD SCREENING
Because of the importance of a child’s early years to their later development, Early Childhood Screening is required before children attend Discovery Learning Classes and kindergarten. Through the screening process parents can discuss their concerns and find out about resources in the school and community and problems can be identified early. Children are eligible to be screened at age 3. Families will be contacted by mail and email about scheduling appointments for Early Childhood Screening. Call the office at (763) 241-3525 with questions.

SCHOOL READINESS - DISCOVERY LEARNING PRESCHOOL...WHAT IS IT?
Discovery Learning Preschool focuses on three and four year old children. The purpose of a school readiness program is to prepare children to enter kindergarten. The program enhances children’s learning, development and future success in school. The ultimate goal of Discovery Learning Preschool is to build a “caring community” for children and families by maximizing the use of community resources.

A School Readiness plan was developed through input from area agency staff, school staff and parents. Funding for the program is a result of the State Legislature’s action in 1991. Classes for 3 and 4 year old children and home visits are available. If you have questions about the program, please call the ECFE/SR office at (763) 241-3524.

EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION
Children in ISD 728 can receive educational services from the Early Childhood Special Education program in the district. Home-based instruction, classroom instruction and parent education are offered. For more information on how to arrange a developmental evaluation for your child or for any other questions you may have, call (763) 241-3400 ext. 5546.

COMMUNITY PROGRAMS
Call 241-3524 for more information. ECFE/SR also has information or phone numbers for Community resources such as Head Start, WIC, Social Services and Health Services.
INCLUSION IN SCHOOL DISTRICT 728 EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS

WHAT IS INCLUSION?
Inclusion describes children of all abilities learning, playing and working together in a positive early childhood environment. Children with special needs may be included in any or all of our programs.

WHO IS INVOLVED?
Families and children who participate in Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Discovery Learning Preschool, and Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) may be involved in inclusive classrooms. Staff may be from ECFE, ECSE, and Discovery Learning.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS OF INCLUSION?
Children benefit when they...
- Make friends
- Learn to accept others as they are
- Develop patience and compassion
- Learn to help others
- Learn to accept their own strengths and needs
- Accept others as individuals, not “labels”
- Build interdependence and ability to develop skills to deal with conflict
- Develop better language and communication skills
- Learn self-respect by being part of a positive, natural environment
- Notice similarities between themselves and others.

Families and community benefit...
By involvement in an inclusive setting all families can have the opportunity to develop a greater understanding and sensitivity towards all people. Families have opportunities to learn about and discuss differences in human growth and development. Families can learn to accept a variety of people and discover individual differences and strengths in learning styles and abilities.

HOW MIGHT AN INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM LOOK?
- All children will be involved in classroom activities.
- Staff members may provide individualized activities for specific children as well as incorporate adapted activities in small and large group activities.
- Caring and knowledgeable staff will assist children who are learning to manage their behaviors and emotions. This process generally takes many small steps. Patience and acceptance by staff, parents and children will help to support this.
- Staff with expertise in a variety of areas will contribute to the operation and quality of the class. These staff members may participate in the classroom on a daily or weekly basis.
For more information or to register, visit the ECFE/SR website at www.isd728.org/ECFE or Call 763.241.3524.