Welcome, friends.
We’ve been waiting for you!
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A. Who We Are

Welcome!
We are honored that you have chosen our programs for your family. Our experienced, highly skilled staff are ready to support you and your child. We want to provide you with a positive, rewarding experience of growth and learning. Our program involves multi-generational learning for parents and children together. Parent education and family activities are an important component in Early Childhood classes. We are grateful to partner with you to support your child’s readiness for kindergarten and life success. Our hope is that this handbook will answer some of your questions as your child begins their school experience. Thank you for joining us at Robbinsdale Area Schools Early Childhood programs.

Core Beliefs
• Parents are their children’s first and most important teachers.
• Kindergarten readiness begins at birth.
• Children learn best through play, hands-on experiences with parent involvement and caring staff.

Program Goals
• Eliminate barriers to participation.
• Teach to the whole child: social emotional, approaches to learning, language and literacy development, creativity and the arts, cognitive development (which includes mathematical and scientific thinking) and physical and gross motor development.
• Provide the education, support, and resources which expand parents’ understanding of child development, increase involvement in their children’s education, and build confidence in their parenting abilities.
• Support the best outcomes for families and community.
• Follow the Unified District Vision.

Our Commitments - We Will:
• Use research-based curriculum and early childhood best teaching practices.
• Follow the Minnesota Early Learning Standards.
• Build relationships and community partnerships.
• Honor family’s cultural history, beliefs, and practices.
• Support children’s possible need for early intervention.
• Differentiate learning to meet each student’s needs.
B. Programs and Resources

Our Preschool Programs offer warm, welcoming, learning-through-play environments. Our licensed teachers focus on individual strengths and needs, social/emotional growth and kindergarten readiness. Each of our preschool programs has received the highest possible rating by Minnesota’s quality rating system for early education settings. Classes are located at several sites. Tuition varies by program. Please call for information on fee assistance, scholarships and sliding fee scales. Creative Play/Great Start 763-504-5330. ECFE 763-504-4170.

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) parent/child classes strengthen families and support children’s growth and development. Licensed children’s teachers help young children develop their cognitive, physical, language, and social skills. Licensed parent educators provide support regarding children’s healthy development, understanding and guiding children’s behavior, and strengthening the parent-child relationship. Every class includes activities where parents and children learn together, time for children to learn and interact with one another and parent education time with a licensed parent educator. Tuition for most classes is based on a sliding fee scale. Most classes offer child care for siblings three months through five years of age. Call 763-504-4170.

Family Literacy is a 20 hour per week school program for parents and their children, ages 3 months - 5 years. Parents work on GED, basic skills, ELL or their high school diploma, and also attend parenting classes. Children 2 ½ - 5 years attend preschool. Children 3 months – 2 ½ years attend child care. This program is offered at no cost to qualifying families. Call 763-504-8300.

Helping Us Grow (HUG) is a home visit program for parents of infants, birth-2 years. Families meet with a Licensed Parent Educator at no cost. Parents receive information on community resources, parenting with attention to brain-based learning, and much more. Call 763-504-4170.

Ask a Parent Educator serves parents of children 2–5 years. Licensed Parent Educators provide information by phone, in your home, or at New Hope Learning Center at no cost to your family. Call 763-504-4170 if you need some additional support or a more private setting to discuss your concerns.

Learn more about Robbinsdale Area Schools Early Childhood Programs at ced.dale.org
Early Childhood Screening is a quick and simple check to see how your child is growing and developing. The State requires all children to be screened once before starting kindergarten, but don’t wait! We recommend that children be screened when they are 3 years old. This helps ensure that all young children are well equipped for learning, and that families are aware of resources in the school and community. The results are based on your child’s age at the time of the screening. Appointments take about an hour and are at no cost to your family. Call 763-504-4180 to schedule an appointment. Early Childhood Screening is a requirement for most of our early childhood programs.

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) provides support and information for families on child development—speech, language, behavior, cognition, and motor skills. If you have a concern about your child’s growth or development, please call the district’s ECSE office at 763-504-4160.

C. Safety Comes First

Medical Emergencies—If your child is injured or has a medical emergency, we will immediately administer appropriate first aid. We will call you if an injury interferes with your child finishing the day. Other injuries will be reported to you at the end of class. If emergency treatment is needed, we will call 911 and notify you immediately. If the paramedics deem it necessary, your child will be taken to the nearest hospital by ambulance.

Safe Behaviors—We all share responsibility for protecting children from physical or emotional harm. Please watch for teachable moments that help your children learn how to be safe.

- **Hallways**—We practice with children using walking feet in the hallways. Children need to walk in the building. Hold hands if your child will not stay next to you. The handicap door button is for adult use only. Please adhere to this for the safety of all children in the building.
- **Parking lot**—Hold hands with your child in the parking lot. Your child could impulsively run away from your side. Thanks for always driving slowly through the parking lot and keeping your child in a car seat.
- **Hot beverages**—Please keep hot beverages out of the children’s classrooms.
- **Car Supervision**—Minnesota statute requires supervision appropriate to the child’s age. Please do not leave your child in the car. Please let us know if you need assistance getting into the building.
**Safety Drills**—Every year each school conducts lock-down, fire, and tornado drills. Staff have emergency training and safety plans for emergencies. ECFE parents should stay with their enrolled children and not go to sibling care for their other children. Sibling care staff are prepared to quickly and safely move children to the predetermined emergency location.

**Building Security**—Each building site has its own security plan and set of expectations for adults. Please follow all the security routines in your child’s building, wear identification tags, and sign in/out as requested. Be aware that all staff wear district photo IDs that should be visible at all times.

Our programs cannot be responsible for lost or stolen items. Although lockers or cubbies are provided for adults’ and children’s coats, please keep purses and any valuables with you at all times. Every site has a Lost and Found. Please do not send valuable or very special items to school with your child.

**D. Healthy Families & Staff**

**Allergies**—If your child has allergies of any kind, please inform the teacher on or before the first day of school. Information about your child’s allergy and emergency instructions will be kept in the classroom. If your child has food allergies, you are welcome to send a non-allergenic snack to school with your child.

**Nut Aware**—Our classrooms are in a Nut Aware Zone. Allergies to foods containing peanuts or other nuts can be life-threatening for some children, even without actually eating anything. Please do not bring or send any foods that list any nuts on the content label.

**Hand, Toy, Surface Washing**—All children should wash their hands with soap and water before entering the classroom. Hands are also washed before snack and after using the restrooms. Surfaces, especially for snack preparation and eating, are cleaned before and after use. If a child has mouthed a toy, set it aside for staff to wash and sanitize after class.

**Medications**—The school nurse should be contacted in any situation involving student medication. All medications (except EpiPens) should be kept in the nurse’s office. EpiPens must be registered with the school nurse.

**Fragrances**—Personal hygiene products should be fragrance free or non-offensive to other occupants.
**Sick Child Policy**—(District-wide) Children may not attend class if they are ill or exhibit symptoms of an oncoming illness. This includes:

- A fever of 100 degrees or more (child can return after 24 hours of no fever without the use of medication and well enough to participate in school)
- Diarrhea or vomiting (child can return 24 hours after the last episode and when child can keep food down)
- Rash (child can return when there is no question of contagious illness)
- Infection requiring antibiotics (child can return 24 hours after first antibiotic dose or as directed by a physician)

If a child becomes ill at school, he/she must be taken home immediately. The child will be made comfortable until the parent comes into the classroom or the office for pick-up.

Parents should notify the teacher or the program office if their child has exposed other children to a communicable disease. The school nurse will advise teachers if parents of classmates should be notified.

**Absent Students**

If your child will be absent from school, please call your child’s classroom, the ECFE office or the preschool office to notify the staff. Attendance **requirements** vary by program. If you have questions, call the office for assistance.

**Restrooms, Diapering, Toilet Learning**

- Children must be fully toilet trained (daytime only) in order to attend child-only preschool classes.
- Parents attending class with their child should take him/her to the restroom or change diapers as needed. Changing tables and child-sized toilets are located in each boys’ and girls’ restroom at New Hope Learning Center and the Family Literacy site. Wrap soiled diapers in a plastic bag, located next to changing table, before disposing into the diaper pail. Please wash your hands and your child’s hands after using the restroom. Do not, under any circumstance, diaper your child anywhere other than on a changing table.
E. Parent/Teacher Partnerships

If You Have A Concern—Parents are encouraged to approach teachers or staff with concerns or questions, of any kind. Such communication remains confidential, unless sharing limited information with another staff member would allow us to better meet the needs of a student. If you are uncomfortable going to your child’s teacher, please contact the office or program director.

If you are wondering about your child’s development, seek the observations of your child’s teachers, have your child screened (if at least 3 years of age) or call Early Childhood Special Education for guidance, observations or possible assessment.

- Early Childhood Screening, 763-504-4180
- Early Childhood Special Education, 763-504-4160

Communication—Each program provides announcements and updates for parents on hallway bulletin boards, class newsletters emailed or sent home with students and early childhood updates are emailed every Friday. Parents may also register for district’s Discover e-newsletter at www.rdale.org to receive e-mail updates about Early Childhood, Community Education and other school district programs.

Parent Feedback—Your feedback is always welcomed and valued. You will also be asked to participate in informal assessments of your family’s experience with us.

Parent Involvement
- Parent Advisory Council (PAC)—PAC provides opportunities for all parents to become involved in supporting decisions for the program. PAC meets monthly while classes are in session. PAC sponsors occasional fundraisers during the school year to support scholarships and purchase materials for the classrooms. Sub-committees of PAC include volunteer/outreach, legislative, library, fundraising, community liaison, and newsletter/social media. You are invited to join PAC or one of its sub-committees! For more information, or to explore other volunteer opportunities, call 763-504-4170, or email at rdale.ecfe.pac@gmail.com.
- Parents are welcome to volunteer in the classroom. Please let your teacher know if you would like to volunteer. Teachers will also inform you of when there are other opportunities throughout the year to participate in your child’s education.
F. Respect For All

**Human rights**—Every family and staff member has a right to be respected and protected under district policies on affirmative action, non-discrimination, bullying, offensive behaviors and sexual harassment. These policies can be viewed at [www.rdale.org](http://www.rdale.org).

**Anti-Bullying Policy**—Robbinsdale Area Schools is committed to the elimination of all forms of bullying. Staff members have a unique opportunity and an ethical obligation to teach, model and respond to bullying in the presence of young children. Join us and be a part of the solution to this emotionally and physically destructive behavior. If you witness or suspect such behavior, please tell us of your concerns. You can view the district’s Anti-Bullying Policy at [www.rdale.org](http://www.rdale.org).

**Data Privacy**—All programs comply with state and federal data privacy laws. Information may be shared with district employees whenever this exchange would allow staff to better meet the needs of your child. Student records are forwarded to District 281 elementary schools and, if requested, to schools in other districts.

**Photos & Videos**—Families will be asked to sign a “student/parent agreement” form. Families may choose not to disclose photograph/video images by completing the “Request to Withhold Information” form available from the early childhood office.

**Attendance Rules**
- In rare instances, one of our programs may not be the right fit for the needs of a child or family. We will work with you to determine the best fit for your child.
- Parents need to provide legally required data, keep current with fees, and follow the policies outlined in this handbook.
- Children must be picked up and dropped off on time.
- All children in child-only classes must be fully toilet trained for daytime dryness. Please contact us if you have concerns.
- Current phone numbers need to be shared with the teacher and office.
G. Preschool

What We Do!

Learning Centers—Our preschool classrooms are equipped with play-oriented learning centers which follow Creative Curriculum’s active participatory learning. They offer an abundance of diverse activities, supplies, and age-appropriate materials so children can explore and discover through direct “hands-on” and “minds-on” contact. Activities are based on age appropriate standards from the Minnesota Early Learning standards.

Typical 2 ½ Hour Class
  Greeting, sharing
  Story, early reading skill development
  Free choice, work and play at learning centers
  Calendar, math skill development
  Snack, language, conversation
  Physical, large muscle activities
  Small group, math and literacy instruction
  Dismissal

Student Assessments—Every child’s progress is assessed throughout the year. Fall assessments help the teacher determine what your child knows and can do to assist them in planning classroom learning experiences. During the months that follow, the teacher will monitor your child’s progress and modify the instruction as needed. At the spring conference, your teacher will provide you with a summary of your child’s development and accomplishments. You are welcome to contact your child’s teachers if you have questions or concerns.

Conferences—Parent/teacher preschool conferences are held twice a year. Parents are required to attend these conferences. Parents are also required to participate in parenting workshops and family events associated with their child’s class. Involvement in these events help parents become stronger teachers for their preschoolers at home. Parents’ participation in school events helps foster a love of learning and positive attitudes about school. At the fall conference, parents and the teacher set goals for the student. During the spring conference, they review the child’s progress. Childcare is not available.
Transportation: Busing
All parents of children riding the bus need to sign an agreement on safe busing for young children. If you misplace your copy, please ask for a duplicate so you will have these details on hand when you need them. An adult must be present at the bus stop for pick up and drop off. NOExceptions.

Transportation: Driving
- **Driver sign-in sheet**—A parent or authorized driver must sign-in at the classroom when dropping off and picking up the child.
- **Arrive promptly**—It is important for a child to feel comfortable entering the classroom and to not miss out on any activities. Drivers must accompany the child to the classroom door.
- **Pick up on time**—If you are running late, call the classroom to notify staff.
- **New driver**—To protect all students’ safety, teachers must be notified in advance if a newly authorized person will be picking up. Any adult not recognized as an authorized pick-up driver will be asked to show a photo ID before leaving with a child.

**Tuition**—due dates vary by program. If you have questions about payments please ask the office staff. Call 763-504-5330 for Creative Play/Great Start or 763-504-4170 for ECFE.
H. ECFE Parent-Child Classes

Parent-Child Interaction—This is a time to enjoy playing together to observe and learn about your child. The children’s teacher has chosen activities that specifically follow the curriculum for your child’s age and interests. Children love this undivided attention time to play with you. As soon as you arrive, follow your child’s lead to whatever activity area they are interested in. Have fun exploring, creating and learning together.

ECFE Parent Education—A Licensed Parent Educator leads the group in meaningful discussion, shares research-based information and guides parents through portions of the Parent Education Core Curriculum, prescribed by Minnesota’s Department of Education. Parents are able to build relationships and support one another along the parenting journey.

ECFE Children’s Program—The children’s curriculum follows the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress which includes Minnesota’s Early Learning Standards. Classes include time developing social/emotional, cognitive, language/literacy, physical development, math, science and the arts.

Siblings—Most ECFE classes offer child care for siblings, ages 3 months to 5 years. Children under 3 months are welcome to attend class with their parent. Every child attending sibling care must have an immunization record on file.

The goal of our Sibling Care staff is to provide a safe, supervised environment for siblings of children enrolled in an ECFE class with a parent. The adult to child ratio varies, depending on the children’s ages. Please help us meet this goal by following these requests:

- In order to keep all children safe, please do not allow your other children to open the Sibling Care door.
- Write any special instructions for the day and give them to a caregiver.
- Please label all items that are being left in the room, such as bottles, sippy cups, pacifiers, diaper bags.
- Children can be checked into the Sibling Care room 5 minutes before the ECFE class begins.
- Please return promptly to pick up your children when class is done.
- Our security procedure is posted outside the door. It is intended to keep every child safe and accounted for in a setting where children are frequently arriving and departing. Thank you in advance for following it carefully.

In order to provide the safest possible environment for families and staff, all children in the sibling care room must pre-register.
Sibling care registrations are taken on a first-come, first-served basis, so we encourage families to register siblings for the entire school year at the same time they register for their parent-child ECFE class.

If a parent only needs sibling care for one or two specific dates, the parent must call the office (763-504-4170) at least 24 hours in advance to confirm availability and register the child. Office staff will need to check on sibling care ratios and staffing availability before the registration can be confirmed.

**Adult Attendance and Visitors**—Parents must attend classes with their children, as ECFE is a parent/child program. If a parent cannot attend with the child, the ECFE office must be notified. Upon approval, alternate caregivers may be allowed to attend class with the child. Children are not allowed to attend parent/child classes without an adult present. Visitors and additional guests must also be pre-approved.

**Parent/Child Separation**—Older toddlers and preschool-age children separate from their parents during parent group. The teachers will listen and work with you and your child through this transition.

### I. Your Growing Child

**Separation**

**ECFE Parent/Child Classes**—Separation can be difficult for some children—and for some parents as well. Our staff is very experienced at supporting families while they are learning to separate with confidence. Most children who show initial distress calm down quickly. If a child is having a harder time, we will work with you to develop a plan that is comfortable for everyone.

Some suggestions to consider:

- Before class, bring your child to the parent discussion room to see where you’ll be while she’s “playing with her new friends.”
- Think about the best way for your child to enter the classroom. Some children may feel more capable and confident if they walk into the classroom. Others may feel more secure and supported if they are carried.
- If your child has a security object—toy, blanket, stuffed animal or pacifier—by all means bring it along! Self-calming and self-soothing is an important emotional skill for your child to learn. Some children are comforted by holding or “taking care of” Mom or Dad’s sweatshirt or scarf. Be sure to label the item with your child’s name. Masking tape from the classroom works well.
Some children ease their distress by sitting on a chair by the door as they “wait” for Mom or Dad to return. In the words of their reassuring teacher, they might murmur over and over, “Mommy comes back. Mommy comes back.” After a while many children will leave the chair to explore what’s going on in the room, then return for a little break.

Before leaving, involve your child in an activity. When you leave, get down to eye level as you briefly and cheerfully say, “Goodbye. I’m going to my class. I’ll come back for you after snack (story or gym time).” Leave with a smile. NEVER go out the door without making sure your child knows you’re leaving. Some children become anxious in a room where their parents mysteriously disappear whenever they attend class.

If your child is clinging to you, ask a teacher or assistant to take your child. This frees you to get out the door and gives the staff person a chance to cuddle, distract, reassure, and build a trusting relationship with your child.

Some children start to cry all over again when parents return, even though they settled and even participated while their parents were gone. Stay calm, smile, and be reassuring. Your child’s “meter” has just run out, and he or she is relieved to have you back!

Separation in Preschool Classes—Learning to be comfortable and confident while apart from familiar people and settings is an important kindergarten readiness skill. Our staff understand this may be hard for some children and are ready to work with you and your child to make this adjustment. Some suggestions:

- Model a relaxed attitude. “I know you’re sad, but this will get easier.”
- Express confidence in your child. “I think you’ll want to play when you’re finished crying. I wonder which toy you’ll choose.”
- Describe what he/she will be doing at preschool.
- If your child has a special item, such as a small toy, a blanket or stuffed animal, label it and let the teacher know you’re sending it to school. She will guide your child to put it in his/her cubby or locker during times when it’s not needed. To avoid possible loss or damage, we recommend not sending your child’s most precious security object.
- Books can also help, such as The Kissing Hand, by Audrey Penn (about separation) or Maisy Goes to Preschool, by Lucy Cousins, and Friends at School, by Rochelle Bunnett (what happens at preschool).
Teaching and Guiding Positive Behavior—Young children need patient, calm, caring adults who can guide them towards positive behavior. The TACSEI model (Technical Assistance Center on Social Emotional Intervention) is the cornerstone of our approach to guiding behavior, supporting social/emotional growth, and strengthening learner outcomes for all children. TACSEI’s innovative perspective and strategies are highly successful in teaching social emotional skills. Visit [http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu](http://challengingbehavior.fmhi.usf.edu) to learn how this model applies to parents as well as teachers.

Birthdays—If your child would like to bring a favorite book or other item to share with the class, talk with your teacher. Please do not send “goody bags,” treats or food of any kind to class. **If you choose not to have your child participate in birthday celebrations, please let us know.** In consideration of each child’s feelings, please send invitations to birthday parties by mail, rather than passing them out at school. Children with summer birthdays are welcome to celebrate during the school year, too. Just check with the teacher to find the best day to celebrate.

J. Miscellaneous, But Important!

**Clothing**—Children learn from a variety of activities, including outdoor play and messy indoor activities.

- Dress your child (babies too) in comfortable, practical, washable play clothes. Choose sturdy footwear, such as tennis shoes, instead of sandals or dress shoes.
- Bring appropriate clothing for outdoor play such as hats, gloves, snow pants, etc.
- Remember to send or bring shoes when your child wears boots to school.

**Donations**—Contributions such as crayons, tissue, and scissors are greatly appreciated. Please understand that your donations will go to the classroom with the most need, not necessarily your child’s room. If you wish to donate any items to our program, a receipt for tax purposes can be provided.
**Family Library**—We have a parent lending library in room 16 at New Hope Learning Center. It includes children’s books and helpful parenting books. Items are checked in and out on an honor system. Also, at New Hope Learning Center, each end of the building has two shelves of books for children to take home. This is a sharing library where children can take one book home and bring back another that they have read or are finished with.

**Immunization Records**—State law requires a completed immunization record for each child in any of our programs, or any non-enrolled child who is present in a classroom on a regular basis. Every year a new immunization record must be completed or an old one updated. Immunization records are due at registration. Early childhood programs cannot guarantee that all students in class have been immunized. If students do not provide an up to date immunization record, they are required to submit the Student Immunization Form with a signed medical exemption or notarized conscientious exemption waiver.

**Insurance**—District 281 carries general liability insurance and automobile liability coverage. The district does not provide accident or health insurance for students.

**School Closings**—In the case of severe weather, consult your local TV or radio channels. We are included under “Robbinsdale Schools District 281.” Severe weather closings are also listed on the district’s web page at [www.rdale.org](http://www.rdale.org). If Robbinsdale is closed due to severe weather, our programs do not run. When schools begin one or two hours late, all morning classes are canceled, but afternoon and evening classes will run. Classes are not rescheduled or refunded in the event of weather or emergency school closings.

**Snacks**—Due to health concerns, each teacher will share with you the policy on food in the classroom. Thank you for donating snacks for the children.

**Staff Teams**—All Parent Educators and Children’s Teachers are licensed by the Minnesota Department of Education. Educational Assistants (EAs) are professionals experienced in early childhood learning and care settings. Continuing education, training and in-services for all staff are provided throughout the school year.

**Toys from Home**—To prevent loss or damage, please do not send toys from home unless an item relates to a unit of study or helps with separation. Label all items sent to school.
Connect with Us!

Whether you’re reporting an absence, need some answers, have a concern or a message, or ideas to share with any of us, we want to hear from you!

Many questions and all absentee reports should go to the teachers. If you do not know the room number, phone number, or teachers’ names, call from the phone list below. The office staff will be happy to assist you!

**Preschool**
Phone 763-504-5330
Fax 763-504-5339

**ECFE Classes, Sibling Care**
**ECFE Preschool**
Phone 763-504-4170
Fax 763-504-4174

**Family Literacy**
(at Crystal Learning Center)
763-504-8300
Quick Reference

1st Child

Program (circle one)

ECFE  ECFE Preschool  Preschool
Family Literacy  Sibling Care

Day(s) ________  Time ____________
Room Number ________  Classroom Phone ________________
Bus Pick-up Time ________  Bus Drop-off Time ________
Teacher(s) and assistant(s)

___________________________  ____________________________
 ____________________________  ____________________________

2nd Child

Program (circle one)

ECFE  ECFE Preschool  Preschool
Family Literacy  Sibling Care

Day(s) ________  Time ____________
Room Number ________  Classroom Phone ________________
Bus Pick-up Time ________  Bus Drop-off Time ________
Teacher(s) and assistant(s)

___________________________  ____________________________
___________________________  ____________________________

Sibling Care is Room 17 at New Hope Learning Center, 763-504-4497.

If found, please return this handbook to the classroom teacher or ___________ (your name)