

Welcome!

Welcome or welcome back to our program! Whether this is your first experience with the Sauk Rapids - Rice Early Childhood Programs, or you are a returning family, we hope this will be an enjoyable and positive experience for both you and your child.

We are committed to offering the best possible learning experiences for you and your child * and look forward to a wonderful year of special times, new insights, and many memories to enjoy in the future.

If you have questions, after reading this booklet, please feel free to visit with a member of our staff or call our office.

Deb Campbell
Early Childhood Director

* Sauk Rapids - Rice Early Childhood Programs has received the national designation from the Doris Duke Foundation and the Center for the Study of Social Policy, along with 21 other programs throughout the nation, as an exemplary program. Our program follows the guidelines of the Minnesota Department of Education and hires only licensed teachers in early childhood and/or parent education. The curriculum is carefully planned to enhance children's development and learning through age appropriate activities and meaningful parent involvement. Minnesota's Early Learning Standards' Early Childhood Indicators and Progress are followed and the Creative Curriculum approach guides teachers in their work with children.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

- Parents are the first and most important teachers of their young children.
- Children learn best through **PLAY** and **SOCIAL EXPERIENCES**.
- A positive parent-child relationship is crucial to the healthy development of children.

OUR GOALS

- To support families
- To provide helpful information to parents
- To offer learning opportunities for children
- To provide positive experiences for parents and children to enjoy together
- To respect the individuality of each child and parent

What is available?

ECFE Parent - Child Classes* (weekly sessions in Sauk Rapids or Rice for children ages birth - K and parents)

School Readiness Preschool* (an option for 3 4, or 5 year olds already attending an ECFE parent-child class)

Family Literacy** (parents complete a GED or diploma and return to school with their children. Parent education, home visits and family events included.)

First Start** (free group for parents / children that meets 1 or 2xs/week. Some families are also enrolled in Early Head Start)

BAT ** (Behavioral Assistance Team helps families whose children have challenging behaviors. Any child residing in or attending childcare or school in Benton County is eligible. Funded by Benton Co. Children's Mental Health Collaborative)

Single Parents' Class* (focuses on unique issues of parenting alone -- partially funded by United Way)

Families and Kids Together** (Weekly sessions for families whose children have special needs -- funded by St. Cloud Area Interagency Early Intervention Committee, ECSE, and ECFE)

Child Care Connections** (home visits for licensed childcare providers includes special learning experiences for children and information for providers)

Spring Sampler Classes* (short term classes after regular groups have ended in the spring)

Home visiting** (for families in special circumstances to receive visits in their homes-- partially funded by United Way)

THRIVE Project (Infant/ Toddler Mental Health Initiative focuses on healthy social - emotional development of infants and toddlers -- funded by Central MN Initiative Foundation)

* Tuition based on sliding fee schedule, according to income

** FREE programs, funded by grants and collaborations

Funding for Early Childhood Programs

Funding for ECFE and School Readiness comes from local levy and/or state aid, as well as grants and family tuition. A sliding fee is used for tuition payments, based on family income. Everyone is welcome, regardless of ability to pay. If you are unable to pay the full amount, please contact the program director to make confidential arrangements.

Our programs rely on regular tuition payments from families. School Readiness yearly fees are spread out equally over 7 months during the school year for your ease in payments and our record keeping. (Number of classes will vary each month.)

If you are a UCare member, you are eligible for free tuition and/or discounts. Contact UCare for more information.

Help Us As You Shop!

We collect the following:

- ◇ Cub grocery store receipts
- ◇ Food Club product UPC labels
- ◇ Tyson Food Project A+ Labels
- ◇ General Mills Box Tops for Education

Mention Sauk Rapids - Rice Early Childhood Program when you shop at Office Depot and Target (when using your Target charge card) and we will receive a percent of each purchase.

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

THANK YOU!

Refund Policy

ECFE:

- ◇ \$5 nonrefundable fee included in tuition amount will be deducted from all refunds.
- ◇ Timely cancellation notices allow us to offer spots to others.
- ◇ Withdrawals after class begins, but before winter break will result in pro-rated refunds, based on date of parent notification to our office.
- ◇ PARENTS MUST REQUEST REFUNDS by contacting the Early Childhood Office Secretary.
- ◇ No refunds are given after winter holiday break.
- ◇ One session per class will be made up for weather cancellations. Additional cancellations will not be made up and refunds will not be given.

Sampler Classes:

- ◇ No refunds will be given without notification of withdrawal of at least two working days.

Early Childhood Staff

All teachers are licensed by the State of Minnesota Department of Education. They have a minimum of a 4 year degree in early childhood education and/or parent education. Support staff are experienced with young children and receive ongoing training.

Our staff is friendly and caring. We share a commitment to the goals of ECFE and School Readiness and enjoy working with parents and young children. Teachers are happy and ready to answer your questions about child development, discipline, and other topics related to parenting young children.

Differences Between Age Groups

Younger groups: less structured, more free play, snack, observation, a bit slower pace

Older groups: more structured, learning stations, pre-academic skills stressed, fieldtrips, transition to kindergarten

Peanut Allergies

Peanut allergies for some young children are potentially life threatening. We ask all parents bringing snack to **AVOID PEANUT BUTTER OR PEANUT PRODUCTS**. Every attempt will be made by the program to provide snack items that do not contain peanut butter, peanuts, or peanut products. Parents of children with peanut or other allergies are asked to communicate clearly to staff and other parents about their child's needs in order to ensure their safety. Please inform your teachers about any medical conditions of which we should be aware.

No Pets, Please

Because our classrooms are used by so many children during the week, allergies to pets can pose problems in another class. To keep all children safe, we ask families not to bring pets into the building for show and tell or any other reason.

Who Does What?

Teachers:

- ◇ model positive ways of being with children
- ◇ provide assistance to children and parents, if needed
- ◇ provide fun learning opportunities
- ◇ keep the classroom safe
- ◇ show respect to everyone

Parents:

- ◇ attend regularly
- ◇ respect children's choices and pace
- ◇ focus on their own child during parent-child time
- ◇ wait for discussion time to socialize with other adults
- ◇ actively participate in the parent group
- ◇ respect other group members
- ◇ take turns bringing snack

Snack

SIMPLE IS BETTER!

- ◇ one or two items only
- ◇ store-bought and unopened packages
- ◇ suggestions for nutritious snacks will be shared
- ◇ tell us about any food allergies your child has

What happens during an ECFE parent-child class?

- ◇ Welcome and a time to explore the activities
- ◇ Parent-child play time or learning stations
- ◇ Guided observation (typically from the parent room with one-way glass)
- ◇ Circle time with songs, puppets, stories, and fun
- ◇ Snack for children
- ◇ Parent discussion, new ideas, and information
- ◇ Children's class time with free play, circle, art, and activities

Parent Groups

If this is your first time, you may be wondering about the parent discussion time. It usually becomes one of the favorite parts of the program for parents. End of the year evaluations always give high marks to parent time.

These groups are:

informal, supportive, informational, and fun!

Parents choose topics of interest. The parent educator plans an agenda and brings information and resources. There is always time for parents to share their ideas and experiences.

A special request: Thank you for not using the parent group for promoting your sales / business. Parents have indicated, and we agree, that solicitations sharing product information, invitations to sales “parties,” and other promotional activities take away from class. We appreciate that you honor this request at ECFE.

Preschool Screening

Preschool screening is required of all children before kindergarten entrance. If your child is between 3 1/2 and 4 years (or older if they have not been screened), call the Nurses' Office at the High School at 258-1729 to schedule an appointment. Screenings include vision, hearing, speech, and development.

Immunization Records

Record of immunization is required upon enrollment. Parents may indicate that immunization is contrary to their conscientiously held beliefs.

Health Guidelines

Please do not bring your child to class if she/he has:

- ◇ a temperature above 100
- ◇ vomited during the previous 8 hours
- ◇ an undiagnosed or contagious rash
- ◇ open or draining skin sores
- ◇ inflamed / draining ears or eyes (including pink eye)
- ◇ diarrhea during the previous 12 hours
- ◇ has streptococcal throat infection

Please notify us if your child develops chicken pox, head lice, or other contagious health conditions, so we can inform other parents to check their children. Although these are common health issues for young children, we respect your privacy and names of children who are infected will not be shared.

Toys are sanitized regularly and sanitary guidelines are followed for food handling to minimize your child's exposure to illness.

If you need a little extra help....

Sometimes families go through difficult times and may need someone to talk to about issues beyond the scope of ECFE. There are a number of special services available at no charge through the Benton County Children's Mental Health Collaborative. Ask your teacher for more information about these services that are available right here at school.

- ◇ A licensed therapist from the Central MN Mental Health Center is onsite once a week for individual counseling with children and/or parents. Issues such as children's behavioral challenges, adjustments to family change, stressful events, depression, etc. are examples of typical issues. Appointments are necessary.
- ◇ A family advocate is available to families who are in need of assistance navigating the "system" of social services, housing or financial assistance, or a variety of other community and/or school services.
- ◇ BAT (Behavioral Assessment Team) works with parents, day care providers, and teachers to better understand and respond to children's repetitive challenging behaviors. If your child's life and yours are being negatively affected by his/her behavior, this approach may be helpful.
- ◇ Individual homevisits or one-to-one visits at school regarding parenting issues.

Mandated Reporting Law

Minnesota State law requires all school employees to report suspected child abuse and neglect. If any parent is concerned about abuse or neglect, please talk to a teacher who will assist you in finding help.

Weather Cancelations

Classes will be canceled when:

- ◇ the district closes school
- ◇ the temperature and or wind chill are extremely low
- ◇ travel is unsafe due to fog, poor roads, or other conditions

One canceled session per group will be rescheduled. Additional canceled classes due to weather will not be rescheduled and refunds will not be given.

Morning classes are typically canceled when ISD 47 has a late start due to weather conditions. Afternoon and evening classes will be held at the regular times.

On regularly scheduled late start mornings (for teacher inservice, not weather) all Early Childhood programs meet at their regular class time.

Listen to local radio stations for cancelations or call the district weather hotline (258-1950).

Arrival Time

If your family is late, come anyway! We encourage families to be on time, but know that is not always possible. Most children need warming-in time at the beginning of class to play and get comfortable. Children who arrive late each week may not adjust as quickly to the group. At the same time, arriving early is not necessary. Teachers have limited time for preparation for groups and appreciate when families do not arrive too early.

Dress Comfortably!

Art activities can be messy; don't come in your best clothes!

Who Should Attend?

- ◇ One or both parents / guardians and the enrolled child.
- ◇ Occasionally a special adult in your child's life (check with your teacher beforehand).
- ◇ Day care providers may enroll their own child and another they care for of similar age with parent permission and tuition.

We ask that siblings not attend a class in which they are not enrolled. We offer mixed age groups for families to attend with more than one child. Our teachers plan carefully for each group and the individual children enrolled.

No Balloons at School, Please!

Balloons are not allowed in ISD 47 buildings because of latex allergies.

Advisory Council

The Early Childhood Programs have an active Advisory Council composed of parents, school, and community representatives. The council meets every other month during the school year and provides input and suggestions regarding outreach, evaluation, schedules, policies, and other issues. Over half of the council's membership must be parents.

If you would like more information about the council or would consider being a member, please contact the Early Childhood Director. We welcome you!

Photos and Videos

Photos / videos are sometimes taken by staff for use in district newsletters, brochures, and other promotional materials. No names of children or parents will be published with photos. If you do not want your child's photo used, you may request a form from our office indicating this preference.

We ask that parents not bring video cameras to class. If you would like to take a snapshot of your child with others at the last class, you may talk to the teacher.

Cell Phones

Please turn your cell phones off when you are at school. This is a special time to spend focusing only on your child.

Parking

Hillside: Park in south lot or on the street. Enter door #1 or 2.

Rice: Park in the lot or on the street. Enter door by flag pole.

Emergency / Safety Plans

Each building in the district has a “crisis plan” in the event of an emergency. Fire drills and safety procedures are practiced regularly, according to state law. In the event of an actual emergency evacuation, the following sites will be used:

Rice Elementary: Catholic Church across from school

Hillside: Sauk Rapids - Rice Middle School (2 blocks east)

Phones are available in each room for emergency use:
Dial 9-911

Reminder: District 47 school grounds and buildings are “no smoking” areas.

We’d like to hear from you....

We welcome feedback from parents. You will be asked to evaluate the program at the end of the year and to share suggestions. If you have concerns or questions, please feel free to discuss it with your teachers or contact the Early Childhood Director.

SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL

School Readiness Philosophy

To enhance the development of readiness
and social skills

To encourage a love for learning

To promote family involvement in the
learning process

All of these establish a strong foundation on
which future success in school and life can be built.

Thank you for choosing our “family focused” early childhood programs where parents and teachers work as partners for the best interest of children. We wish you a wonderful year in our program!

SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL

Communication Between Parents and Teachers

We believe that parents and teachers are partners in children's education. As partners, it is important to communicate frequently with any questions or concerns.

Regular **newsletters** will be sent home with your child indicating what activities the children are working on in class and any special events or upcoming learning experiences.

Parents are encourage to **call their child's teacher** with questions or concerns.

Parent-teacher conferences will be held each year as an opportunity for the School Readiness preschool teachers and parents to meet, discuss children's progress and address concerns. This is a wonderful opportunity for our school to acquaint parents with the school experience and prepare them for continued involvement as their child enters kindergarten.

Custodial and noncustodial parents of children are asked to schedule one conference for their child and attend together. In special circumstances when this is not possible, please speak with your teacher to make other arrangements.

Please communicate with your teachers about any family changes, medical issues, or other circumstances that may be helpful in understanding your child.

SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL

Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is a key part of the School Readiness Preschool program. All families enroll FIRST in an ECFE parent-child class and THEN have the option of adding preschool classes for their 3,4, or 5 year old. Parents of School Readiness children want to be involved in their child's education at the very beginning and to continue on through K-12. Families who do not attend regularly may be asked to drop both programs to allow others on waiting lists to participate.

Preschool Daily Schedule

A typical day in School Readiness includes:

- ◇ free play time
- ◇ learning stations
- ◇ circle time
- ◇ snack
- ◇ gym/outdoor time

Children make choices about what they want to do during play time in the following areas: sensory table, dramatic play/housekeeping area, science, writing, and art centers, and small muscle activities. Children gather at circle time for calendar, stories, songs, finger plays, and games. Learning stations offer children structured opportunities to work on kindergarten readiness skill individually or in small groups.

SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL

Integration With Other Children

Most School Readiness sections are integrated with Early Childhood Special Education. The experience of meeting new children with varying abilities is good preparation for young children as they enter school. Integration benefits all children.

Curriculum

School Readiness Preschool teachers use the Creative Curriculum approach and teach according to the Early Childhood Indicators of Progress: Minnesota's Early Learning Standards. Additionally, children's progress is tracked through work sampling that demonstrates children's growing abilities to master skills that enhance readiness for school entrance. Checklists are shared with parents indicating children's progress.

A strong emphasis on personal, social, and physical development, language and literacy, and mathematical thinking is used in planning each class.

Tuition

Funding comes from state aid and family tuition. Tuition rates are based on a sliding fee scale for family income. Seven equal monthly payments begin in the fall. Although months vary according to the number of days, payments are equal to assist in your record keeping and our billing. Parents' prompt payments are appreciated, since School Readiness relies greatly on family tuition to maintain the program. If your family situation changes during the year and the monthly amount needs to be adjusted, please contact our office to make confidential arrangements.

SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL

Refund Policy

If a family withdraws during a month that tuition has been paid, they may request a prorated refund for that month.

Emergency Cards

Each child must have an emergency card completed by parents on file at the school. Two emergency daytime numbers of someone who is readily available need to be included in case of emergency or illness. Parents'/guardians' cell phone numbers and work numbers are also requested. If any of these numbers change during the year, it is important to inform our office.

Arrival and Pickup Times

Children must be accompanied to and from the classroom by an adult for safety reasons. Please bring your child to school on time, but not too early, as teachers will be busy preparing for class. Being prompt at pickup time is also appreciated. If a parent / adult is not present by 10 minutes after a class ends, the teacher will begin calling numbers listed on the child's emergency card. No child will be released to anyone other than a parent, unless prior permission has been given.

SCHOOL READINESS PRESCHOOL

Car Pooling

Transportation is not available to preschoolers in our district through School Readiness. However, as parents register they may indicate a need for a ride for their child or an interest in offering a ride to another child. The school district does not endorse or arrange car pooling arrangements. However, lists of interested parents will be shared during the summer and parents may contact each other. Parents who offer to drive another child to or from school will receive a reduction in their tuition payment.

We offer this assistance to help children who may otherwise not be able to attend. We ask parents to avoid sharing rides for convenience and then requesting a reduction in fees.

We look forward to having your child in our School Readiness Preschool program. It will be a year of learning, growing, and moving closer to entering kindergarten ready to succeed! Thank you for choosing School Readiness Preschool through the Sauk Rapids - Rice Public Schools.

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