For children:
- Focused time with parent to learn and explore in an early childhood environment
- A home environment with parents who have positive parenting skills and promote healthy child development
- Positive changes in child development
- Social skills developed in interaction with other young children in a rich early childhood environment
- Early identification of developmental and learning concerns
- Familiarity and comfort with a school setting

For schools & communities:
- Parents who have positive connections to schools and other community programs
- Parents who are engaged and ready for leadership in the schools
- Enhanced social connections and informal support between families in the community
- Community norms for appropriate and effective discipline for young children

All of society benefits from strong families and healthy, capable children. Strong families are the foundation of a strong society now and far into the future.

Developed by a group of Minnesota early childhood and parent education professionals - 2018
4 What happens in ECFE?

All ECFE programs include parenting education, early childhood education, and parent-child interaction. Since ECFE programs are locally designed to meet the needs of children, parents, and families, programming and services are unique to each community.

Most programs include the following components based on best practices for children and parents:

- Parenting education classes guided by a licensed parenting educator focused on research-based curriculum topics related to child and parent development and learning and tailored to meet parent and family needs (some parenting education classes available online)
- Early childhood education activities for children based on their developmental needs planned by a licensed early childhood teacher
- Parent-child interaction activities during which parents observe positive models of interaction and build new skills in an environment that supports parent-child relationships
- Family events and other opportunities for building community connections
- Home visits to address individual child, parent, and family needs
- Early screening for children’s health and developmental concerns
- Community resource information and referrals for families with young children

Programs are locally designed to meet the needs of parents and families in the community including fathers, parents of children with disabilities, first-time parents, teen parents, and culturally specific populations. ECFE functions as a base for more intensive, costly services which are made available to meet unique child, parent, and family needs through partnerships with other service providers. Examples include working with Early Head Start, adult basic education, family literacy programs, and collaborating with social services and child welfare.

Building community and social support is an important factor for young families’ success. In ECFE, parents learn about community resources and gain social support from relationships with other families that often continue long past the time families leave the program.

For more information contact the ECFE program in your local school district.

5 Who participates in ECFE?

Parents and children usually participate together. Parents can also attend alone, and they can receive other services. Since the beginning of ECFE as a statewide program in 1984, hundreds of thousands of Minnesota parents and children have participated and benefitted from ECFE. Participation by families is voluntary and services are offered free or for a nominal fee. Costs to deliver the program vary with extent, intensity, and location of services. Early Childhood Family Education is committed to universal access for all families. Availability of the program to all families avoids the potential segregation, stigma, and labeling associated with targeted programs. This also sets a norm for parenting education and support to be a valued service for all members of the community. All parents can benefit from support and information, especially during the early years of parenting.

6 How is ECFE funded?

ECFE is a low cost, low intensity, two-generation program that offers tailored and more intensive services based on family and local community needs. The programs are financed with combined local and state funding, which may be supplemented with registration fees and funds from other sources through partnerships and collaboration. Fees are typically based on a sliding scale, and no family is turned away due to inability to pay.