



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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EARLY CHILDHOOD LEADER NANCY WALLACE RECOGNIZED
The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) presents
the Award in Honor of Lois Engstrom, Founder Figure in
Minnesota's Early Childhood Professional Field



St. Cloud, Minnesota, April 11, 2024 **Nancy Wallace, retired Early Childhood Family Education Program Supervisor from St. Francis Area Schools, was honored with the MNAFEE Lois Engstrom Leadership Award for 2024.**

Ms. Wallace started attending Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) classes in St. Francis with her preschool aged son the first year of statewide ECFE funding in 1985. Soon she was on the Advisory Council for the program, and within a couple years she subbed for parent education classes and administered a small grant the program received while she worked on appropriate licensure to more fully work in the program. In 1989 she became program supervisor for ECFE in St. Francis, and over the years, Preschool Place 15 and Early Childhood Screening were added to her duties. During her tenure, the programs grew from two classrooms at the Bethel Early Childhood Center (currently Sandhill) to occupying the entire building currently known as the Early Childhood Family Center. She continued her work with the district until her retirement five years ago.

While serving as program supervisor, Ms. Wallace developed innovative programs requiring collaboration with the wider school district and community. Examples include working with the district's Early Childhood Special Education supervisor to create a model of fully inclusive educational opportunities for all children that received statewide recognition for its collaboration and efficiency, cooperating with neighboring districts and Anoka County to strengthen early learning opportunities, and organizing with elementary staff for family opportunities as children enter kindergarten. Ms. Wallace says she was energized when she saw an opportunity to address barriers and increase parent and children participation in the early childhood programs. She especially enjoyed working with staff to implement quality programs that were responsive to children and parents. One colleague described Ms. Wallace as "a passionate advocate for education with a commitment to fostering an environment that promotes excellence."

In the late 1990's and early 2000's, Ms. Wallace worked with the Minnesota Departments of Education (MDE) and the Human Services (DHS) through an interagency agreement between the St. Francis Public Schools the State of Minnesota. She was a significant "go to" resource and leader of numerous statewide professional development initiatives of the departments. These include: a training leader in statewide use of Work Sampling System Assessment and the Ounce Scale for Infants and Toddlers for early childhood programs as well as Title 1 initiatives across the state, a leader in creation of the original Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPs) which are early learning standards for use by early education professionals, a leader in the development of the first Parent Education Core Curriculum Framework (PECCF) as a curriculum guide for parent education and in the

current revision, and a creator and presenter of many of the MDE ECFE and School Readiness Regional Inservice Workshops over the years.

Ms. Wallace has served on the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) Board for many years where she provides significant contributions as chair of the Nominating Committee and the Awards Committee, and she previously served on the Professional Development Committee.

As one of her colleagues said, “Nancy exemplifies what it means to be a leader. Nancy’s ability to be supportive, provide freedom to grow, maintain high standards and model the importance of relationships are among the many qualities she has.”

Ms. Wallace exemplifies everything that Lois Engstrom valued and is eminently qualified to receive this award in her memory. Ms. Wallace was recognized at the MNAEFEE Annual Conference on April 11, 2024 in St. Cloud.

About MNAFEE: The Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) is a non-profit association promoting parent education, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), and early childhood programming in public schools.

About the Lois Engstrom Leadership Award: Lois Engstrom was instrumental in the design, development and statewide expansion of the public school Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) program for all families with children from birth to kindergarten and their parents. She provided wise and inspirational leadership for this and other family and early learning initiatives including School Readiness over 25 years in her position at the Minnesota Department of Education. After retirement she shepherded founding of the Minnesota Association for Family and Early Education (MNAFEE) and helped build it into the organization it is today.

The Winner of the Lois Engstrom Leadership Award:

- Is a current or past member of MNAFEE
- Has five or more years of demonstrating strong leadership in the field of family and early education, particularly as it pertains to parent education, Early Childhood Family Education and/or early childhood programming in public schools in Minnesota
- Shows a career-long commitment to the field of family and early education, particularly as it pertains to parent education, Early Childhood Family Education and/or early childhood programming in public schools
- Has made a significant impact on the lives of young children, parents and/or families, and/or professionals in the field.
- Has had a statewide impact through their efforts to improve the lives of children, parents and/or families, and/or professionals in the field.