



**ALBERT LEA**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 241



ALBERT LEA AREA  
**Community  
Education**  
*Gather. Discover. Grow.*

# 2026-2027

## Early Learning Guide



### Brookside Education Center

211 W. Richway Dr.  
Albert Lea, MN 56007  
507-379-4831

#### **Albert Lea Area Schools Mission:**

*To ensure individual academic, social and emotional growth  
that leads to engaged citizens and lifelong learners.*

# Welcome to Albert Lea Area Schools Early Learning

***Learning Through Play. Growing Together. Ready for Tomorrow.***

Welcome to Albert Lea Area Schools Early Learning! We are excited to partner with your family as your child begins another year of learning, growth, and discovery. Whether this is your child's first school experience or another step in their educational journey, we are honored to be part of these important early years.

Our Early Learning programs provide a safe, caring, and engaging environment where children feel valued, supported, and encouraged to explore. Our classrooms provide opportunities for children to explore, create, collaborate, and grow through play and meaningful experiences. These experiences help children build confidence, develop social-emotional skills, and create a strong foundation for future success.

Our classrooms use Creative Curriculum and the Teaching Strategies GOLD assessment system to support each child's individual growth and development. We recognize that every child learns and grows at their own pace, and our staff works to create experiences that celebrate each child's strengths while encouraging continued progress.

We believe families are our most important partners in a child's learning journey. Through open communication, collaboration, and mutual respect, we can create the best possible experience for every child. This Early Learning Guide provides important information about our programs, routines, expectations, and resources to support your family throughout the school year.

Thank you for trusting Albert Lea Area Schools Early Learning with your child. We appreciate the opportunity to learn, grow, and celebrate alongside your family. Together, we will create joyful experiences where every child feels they belong and is ready for tomorrow.

Welcome to our Early Learning family!

John Double  
*Director of Community Education*

Heather Harms  
*Assistant Director of Student Services*

**If you do not understand the information presented to you in this notice, please contact a Success Coach through the main office in your child's school. Interpreter services can be provided for you.**

**Si no entiende la información presentada en esta noticia, por favor contacte la oficina principal de la escuela de su hijo para comunicarse con un coordinador de logros estudiantiles (Success Coach). Se puede proveer servicios de intérprete.**

**နမ့်တန့်ပၢ်တၢ်ကစီၣ်လၢပဒုးသ့ၣ်ညါနၢ်တခါအံၤဝံသးစူၤဆဲးကျိးဘၣ် Success Coach လၢနမံအံၤဝံၤဒၢး(Main Office)န့ၢ်တက့ၢ်. ပုၤကတိၤကျိးထံတၢ်ဖိကအိၣ်ကတိၢ်ကတိၢ်ဟံၤလၢသုဂီၢ်န့ၢ်လီၤ.**

# ALBERT LEA AREA SCHOOLS

## SCHOOL YEAR CALENDAR 2026-2027



**ALBERT LEA**  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 241

- Student Days
- ALHS Student Days
- New Student Orientation
- Conferences
- Holidays & Breaks - No school
- District Days / No School
- AL Academy Day / No School

**August 2026**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 31 |    |    |    |    |

Aug 12 Grades 8-12 Conferences 7:30-7:30  
 Aug 12 ALC Open House 11-7:00  
 Aug 13 Grades 6-7 Open House 11-7:00  
 Aug 13 Preschool - Grade 5 Conferences 11-7:00  
 Aug 14 Preschool - Grade 5 Conferences 7:30-3:30  
 Aug 18 8th grade Student Orientation  
 Aug 19 Grades PreK-12 First Day of School

**September 2026**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
|    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 |    |    |

Sept. 4-7 Labor Day Weekend Break (NO SCHOOL)  
 Sept. 25 District Day (Staff Only)

**October 2026**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

Oct 15-16 Fall Break (NO SCHOOL)  
 Oct 22 Grades 8 - 12 & ALC Conferences 3:30-7:30

**November 2026**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  |
| 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 |
| 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 |
| 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 |
| 30 |    |    |    |    |

Nov. 5-6 No School Preschool - Grade 7  
 Nov. 5 Preschool - Grade 7 Conferences 11-7:00  
 Nov. 6 Preschool - Grade 7 Conferences 7:30-3:30  
 Nov 25-27 Thanksgiving Break (NO SCHOOL)

**December 2026**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
|    | 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  |
| 7  | 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 |
| 14 | 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 |
| 21 | 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 |
| 28 | 29 | 30 | 31 |    |

Dec 21 District Day - Staff Only  
 Dec 22-Jan 1 Winter Break (NO SCHOOL)

**January 2027**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    |    | 1  |
| 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  |
| 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 |
| 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 |
| 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 |

Jan 18 District Day (Staff Only)  
 Jan. 28 Grades 8-12 & ALC Conferences 3:30-7:30

**February 2027**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |

Feb 15 Holiday Break (NO SCHOOL)  
 Feb 25 No School Preschool - Grade 7  
 Feb. 25 Preschool - Grade 7 Conferences 11-7:00  
 Feb 26 No School - All sites  
 Feb. 26 Preschool - Grade 7 Conferences 7:30-3:30

**March 2027**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 1  | 2  | 3  | 4  | 5  |
| 8  | 9  | 10 | 11 | 12 |
| 15 | 16 | 17 | 18 | 19 |
| 22 | 23 | 24 | 25 | 26 |
| 29 | 30 | 31 |    |    |

Mar 22-26 Spring Break (NO SCHOOL)

**April 2027**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
|    |    |    | 1  | 2  |
| 5  | 6  | 7  | 8  | 9  |
| 12 | 13 | 14 | 15 | 16 |
| 19 | 20 | 21 | 22 | 23 |
| 26 | 27 | 28 | 29 | 30 |

April 12 NO SCHOOL

**May 2027**

| M  | T  | W  | TH | F  |
|----|----|----|----|----|
| 3  | 4  | 5  | 6  | 7  |
| 10 | 11 | 12 | 13 | 14 |
| 17 | 18 | 19 | 20 | 21 |
| 24 | 25 | 26 | 27 | 28 |
| 31 |    |    |    |    |

May 20 ALC Graduation  
 May 21 ALHS Graduation  
 May 26 Last Day of School  
 May 27 District Day

Instructional Days  
 Preschool - Grade 8 = 171 days  
 Grades 9 - 12 = 175 days

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## Staff Contacts

|                                                                                                               |                        |                     |
|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Director of Community Education</b>                                                                        | John Double            | 507-379-5316        |
| <b>Asst. Director of Student Services</b>                                                                     | Heather Harms          | 507-379-4825        |
| <b>Early Learning Secretary</b>                                                                               | Megan LeBrun           | <b>507-379-4831</b> |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Welcome Center, Attendance</li><li>- New Student Enrollment</li></ul> |                        |                     |
| <b>Community Education Operations Specialist</b>                                                              | Whitney Sauer          | 507-379-5317        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Billing, Scholarships, WrapAround</li></ul>                           |                        |                     |
| <b>Community Education Marketing Specialist</b>                                                               | Kim Ehrich Blankenship | 507-379-5318        |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Enrollments, ECFE Class Information</li></ul>                         |                        |                     |

# **Program Descriptions**

## **4's Preschool; Age 4 on/before Sept. 1**

**Monday-Friday; 8:00-11:05am OR 12:00-3:05pm**

Children in this program are provided with a rich learning environment to build on skills they have been learning. These classroom experiences will build on a student's skills and knowledge through Social/Emotional Development, Cognitive Thinking, Literacy and the Arts, Physical/Motor Development and Growth, and Approaches to Learning. Teachers help guide students to achieve common goals.

## **3's Preschool; Age 3 on or before Sept. 1**

**Monday-Thursday; 8:00-10:45am OR 12:00-2:45pm**

Children in this program are provided with a rich learning environment to build on skills they have been learning at home or at child care. We will focus our attention on learning social/emotional skills such as how to express feelings and sharing; cognitive skills such as patterns and problem solving; getting creative with art, music and dramatic play; literacy and language skills such as how to hold and read a book and recognition of numbers and letters; and enhancing fine and gross motor skills.

## **Little Sprouts; Ages 3 or 4 on or before Sept. 1**

**Tuesday & Thursday; 8:00-10:45am OR 12:00-2:45pm**

Children enrolled in this program are provided with a rich learning environment in which to explore and understand new concepts. We will focus our attention on learning skill sets to problem solve; express feelings; sharing. We will create through art, music and dramatic play. We will enter the world of reading and explore books and stories in our daily activities.

## **Outdoor Adventures; Age 3 or 4 on or before Sept. 1**

**Monday-Friday; 8:00-11:05am OR 12:00-3:05pm**

Children in this program are provided with an Outdoor Classroom environment to explore the natural surroundings around the Brookside Education Center area. Activities are focused on the surroundings of nature and the outdoors through a curriculum and may include a daily hike exploring the nature trails, digging in the sand pit, sledding in the winter and learning more about the great outdoors. Students enrolled in this program will be outside most of the time except in severe or inclement weather.

# **EARLY LEARNING POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

## **ABSENCES AND ATTENDANCE**

Students who are absent, or plan to be absent, must have their caregiver call the Early Learning Office on the day of the absence to inform the program of their absence. If the phone is not answered, please leave a message with your child's name, their teacher, and the reason for their absence.

If your child will be leaving early for the day, please call the Early Learning Office.

**507-379-4831**

## **ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE**

**Please respect school safety and all traffic laws, including use of crosswalks whether with or without your child.**

Student and family safety are of great importance to us.

**Children should arrive no earlier than 5 minutes before the class begins.** This allows us to have the staff in place and ready to receive your students for the day. Long wait times can be difficult for the students. We would greatly appreciate your cooperation with this. **Caregivers must park in the designated parking areas. Please watch for pedestrian traffic. Enter the building through Door A-1 (Main Entrance) to check your child in with the Early Learning staff members. Your child will walk with staff to the South Gym to meet their classroom staff. It is crucial that you **BE ON TIME** when dropping off and picking up. **If arriving after the Staff Members have gone to classes (classes start at 8:00 am/12:00 pm), please check in at the Welcome Center.**** If you or your emergency contact are more than 10 minutes late for pick-up, we will call. Emergency personnel may be contacted if we cannot reach you after that extended time.

## **BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS**

If behavior issues arise, we make every effort to model correct behavior and promote positive interaction.

### **Student Code of Conduct/Discipline**

It is the responsibility of all school district employees to safeguard the health, safety, and rights of each student. The School Board and District Administrators will support district personnel who act in accordance with State statute, State Board of Education regulations and School District Policies.

It is the responsibility of all students to follow Albert Lea Area Schools' policies so that all students receive the opportunity to learn in a safe and respectful environment.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

Teachers strive to acknowledge all birthdays as special occasions. We encourage you to donate an age-appropriate book to supplement your child's classroom instead of an edible treat. If you choose to bring birthday treats, please comply with the Minnesota health guidelines, which state that all food brought to school must be commercially made. State law prohibits homemade food from being shared at school. Please also refer to our health and wellness policy (Policy #533) for guidelines.

Birthday invitations should not be brought to school because they disrupt the learning environment. Please make arrangements to mail them or deliver the invitations in an alternate way.

PLEASE NOTE: Data privacy laws prohibit office and teaching staff from disclosing names, addresses, and phone numbers of our students.

### **CAREGIVER INVOLVEMENT**

Education is a lifelong process. Caregivers and early childhood staff have an important responsibility. We must work together to ensure that the children in our care develop the tools to be happy, healthy, independent and competent individuals. Through your participation you will:

- Begin to see your child in new ways with new skills and abilities
- Be better able to understand and define appropriate levels of expectation for your child's development
- Feel more comfortable with the preschool program that you have chosen for your child
- Become partners in learning with the teachers and school
- Show your child the value that you place on education
- Make your child feel special and cared for

You are encouraged to participate in caregiver-child activities. Here are some of the opportunities that have been planned thus far:

- Early Childhood Family Education Classes. There will be many opportunities available to families.
- Caregiver/Teacher Conferences twice a year.
- Caregiver/child home activity projects – we will occasionally ask your child to return a completed project to us
- Family Engagement Events
- Backpack Connections sent home monthly in your child's backpack.

### **COMMUNICATION**

Remember, you are required to stop by the Welcome Center to sign our Visitor's Log and receive your Visitor's pass. This process is for the safety and security of our students and staff.

For direct contact with the teacher, we recommend you call between 7:30 a.m. to 7:50 a.m. or 3:10 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. During the school day, you may call a teacher's direct line and leave a voicemail message or call the **Early Learning Office 507-379-4831**.

### **CONFERENCES**

Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled twice each year, in November and February. See the School Calendar on Page 3 for these dates. Please contact your child's teacher if you would like an interpreter.

### **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

**Emergency procedures will be taught** early in the school year and practiced periodically throughout the year.

### **EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

District 241 uses an instant alert system called Finalsite to deliver general, emergency and weather related messages to caregivers and students. Phone numbers and email addresses listed with the school will be used to communicate all closings, delays, and early dismissals immediately. Please keep all your contact information

updated with the school office if you have any changes. School closings will also be posted on the School District webpage at [alschools.org](http://alschools.org).

You can also check the Albert Lea Area Schools Facebook page and tune into radio stations KATE - AM 1450, KCPI - FM 94.9, POWER 96 - FM 96.1, or television stations KAAL - Ch 6, KTC - Ch 10 and KIMT - Ch 3 for school closing information.

Inclement weather days: The Minnesota Legislature has created "e-Learning Days," which allows students to do school work at home in the event school is canceled due to inclement weather. These days now qualify as a regular school day.

#### eLearning Days

Albert Lea School District has a learning plan in place for students. Early Learning students will receive eLearning BINGO boards, and will complete one for each inclement weather day within one week. The BINGO boards are to be signed by the caregiver or communicated with the teacher.

### **FIELD TRIPS**

To enhance classroom learning and provide a variety of experiences, classes will occasionally leave the school grounds for curricular activities (field trips). When field trips occur out of town, caregivers will be notified and a permission slip will be needed for students to attend the trip.

Parents who want to chaperone a field trip will need to complete a background check. These forms are available in the office. These need to be completed before attending the field trip. - [Volunteer Form](#)

### **FOOD SERVICE**

Free breakfast and lunch are available to all students this year. We encourage you to fill out the free and reduced meal forms to help determine whether your family qualifies for other programs. Our school may be eligible for additional funding sources. If you have particular food concerns for your child, please let us know by contacting the Early Learning Office at 507-379-4831. Other questions and concerns regarding Food Service can be directed to Jolene Svendsen at 507-379-5300.

### **HEALTH SERVICES**

Our district has three licensed school nurses that work with children's health needs. In early learning programs, most educators and the health clerk in the building are both certified in First Aid and CPR. The Health Clerk provides First Aid and administers medication under supervision of the licensed school nurse. In case of a medical emergency, First Aid is provided and 911 is called.

The licensed school nurses are responsible for the management of district health services in all of the schools. They are responsible for: health screening; vision and hearing screening, referral and follow-up; scoliosis screening, referral and follow-up; early childhood screening; health counseling; individualized health plans and emergency medical plans for students with special health concerns; health office supervision; and training of staff providing health services. The licensed school nurses are responsible for immunization verification and follow-up in compliance with immunization law. They are also responsible for training of staff regarding infection control, infectious diseases and specific health conditions. If at any time during the school year there are

changes in your child's health status, please notify the licensed school nurses. Nurses are available by phone, email, for conferences and meetings to address any health related concerns.

### **ILLNESS**

- Attendance in school is very important, but we value your child's health. If your child is very ill, vomiting or has a fever, they should not be sent to school. They need to be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child becomes ill during the day, they may not leave the school without reporting to the school office. The health office staff will evaluate your child and depending on the situation, will allow them to rest on a cot or contact you to take them home. It is important that either the caregiver or another responsible individual be available for your child if they become ill. Your child may return to school when they are feeling well, their temperature has been below 100 degrees, and they have had no vomiting or diarrhea for 24 hours.
- Any child having a communicable disease such as strep throat, impetigo, or ringworm will be excluded from school. The child should report to the school office upon return. If there is a question regarding the child returning, the licensed school nurse should be contacted. Decisions regarding this will be made on an individual basis dependent on the risk of transmission of illness to others.

### **IMMUNIZATIONS**

See [Policy 530](#) for Immunization Requirements

### **MEDICATIONS**

See [Policy 516](#) for prescription and over-the-counter medications

### **LEAD IN WATER**

Albert Lea Area Schools is committed to providing a safe working and learning environment for employees and students. The district has developed a lead in water management plan and testing program that complies with Minnesota Statute 121A.3345, as well as recommendations from the Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Lead Contamination Control Act (LCCA) of 1988 and the Minnesota Department of Health (MDH), and Minnesota Department of Education (MDE). Minnesota Statute 121A.335 requires public school buildings serving pre-kindergarten through grade 12 to test for lead in water every 5 years. This statute also requires school districts to make the results of the testing available to the public for review and to notify parents of the availability of the information. Information and test results are located in the Facilities Health and Safety section.

### **LOST AND FOUND**

Each building has a designated lost and found area. Valuable items such as money, keys, and watches are brought to the office where they can be claimed after being identified.

### **OUTDOOR GROSS MOTOR**

Students receive scheduled gross motor activities daily to promote physical activity and social learning.

- Please prepare your child for cold temperatures by dressing them properly with a heavy coat, hat, gloves/mittens, snow pants, and boots.
- Students will be outdoors for up to 20 minutes daily if the temperature and wind chill is 0 degrees or above.
- If your child is enrolled in the Outdoor Adventures class, contact your teacher for guidelines.

### **Pesticide Application Notice**

Parents/guardians and school employees may request to be notified prior to pesticide application on school property. Pesticides include chemicals which are used to control insects, weeds, rodents or other pests as defined by the law (M.S. 123B.575, Subd. 9). Pesticides and non-chemical treatments may be used in combination in and around schools for a variety of reasons, including the control of pests which have the potential to bite, sting, spread disease, cause asthma, and/or trigger an allergic reaction. Pesticides may also be used to prevent or control damage to materials within the school building or to the school building itself, or to control pests or weeds that are seen as a nuisance.

To limit the potential pesticide exposure, this school follows safety regulations to ensure pesticides are applied properly. All pesticide products, which are used in and around school buildings, are required to be registered with the Minnesota Department of Agriculture and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. In addition, school employees and certified and licensed applicators are required by state and federal law to comply with all requirements of the pesticide label, including building sites, application rates, re-entry intervals, posting, use of personal protective equipment, use restrictions, and disposal on the product label.

If you would like to be notified prior to pesticide applications, please contact **Lucas Possehl, Coordinator of Operations and Safety** at 507-379-4800.

### **Suicide Prevention Information**

If you're thinking about suicide, are worried about a friend or loved one, or would like emotional support, the Lifeline network is available 24/7 across the United States. If you're in crisis, there are options available to help you cope. You can also call the Lifeline at any time to speak to someone and get support. For confidential support available 24/7 for everyone in the United States, call 988. If someone you know is struggling emotionally or having a hard time, you can be the difference in getting them the help they need. It's important to take care of yourself when you are supporting someone through a difficult time, as this may stir up difficult emotions. If it does, please reach out to support yourself.

- National Suicide Prevention Hotline 1-800-273-TALK (8255) -or- 988
- Crisis Text Line Text HOPELINE to 741741
- Freeborn County Crisis Services 1-877-399-3040

### **REMINDERS**

- **CHECK YOUR CHILD'S BACKPACK DAILY.**
- Dress children in **play clothes**. Children are more comfortable and much more willing to get involved in projects if they do not have to worry about getting a nice outfit dirty. **Provide a change of clothes.**
- Dress children for the weather. We will be going outside when the weather permits. Make sure jackets, hats, mittens/gloves, boots, etc. are marked with your child's name.
- Children are allowed to bring a reusable water bottle labeled with their name for daily use. They will be sent home daily for cleaning. Water only.
- Please feel free to contact your child's teacher with any concerns or questions you have about your child and/or the programs.
- All personal toys should remain at home. If brought to class, the toys will remain in the child's backpack while attending Early Learning Programs. Toys are provided for exploration while the student is in class.

## **TUITION PAYMENTS**

**Tuition payments are due by Saturday of each week.** We accept Visa, MasterCard and Discover for your convenience. Credit card payments may be completed through recurring, automatic payments, or online through your ARUX Account. Tuition may also be paid with a check or money order. Checks should be made out to **School District 241 Early Learning**. **Cash payments may be made with the exact amount only.** We do not have change. A \$20 late payment fee will be charged for weekly payments not received by midnight on Saturday.

## **VISITORS AND GUESTS**

Please remember to bring your ID and check in at the Welcome Center to receive your visitor badge. This quick process helps us ensure the safety and security of all our students and staff. Thank you for your cooperation!

Visitors or guests making a delivery will drop it off at the Welcome Center. Office staff will ensure the delivery is distributed to the appropriate individuals or locations as needed.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD SPECIAL EDUCATION**

### **Special Education Services**

Special education team members provide direct and indirect services to students across a range of developmental areas, including:

- Academic and pre-academic skills
- Emotional/behavioral regulation
- Fine and gross motor development
- Social interaction and play skills
- Functional and adaptive skills
- Vision services
- Deaf/Hard of Hearing services
- Speech and language therapy

### **Early Intervention (Birth–Age 2)**

Under IDEA Part C and Minnesota Rule 3525, children from birth through age 2 may be eligible for Early Intervention services. Eligible children develop an Individualized Family Service Plan (IFSP) with the support of a team member who partners with parents and caregivers to:

- Identify priorities and concerns
- Develop outcomes focused on the child's developmental needs
- Embed learning opportunities into everyday routines within the home and community

## Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) (Ages 3–5)

Under **IDEA Part B** and **Minnesota Statute 125A.02**, children ages 3–5 who have been evaluated and meet state disability criteria may qualify for **Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)**. Services are provided through a variety of models designed to meet each child's individual needs:

- **Inclusive preschool classrooms** where general education and special education teachers collaborate to embed supports and instruction throughout classroom routines
- **Center-based classrooms** designed for smaller groups (up to 8 children) where all students have **Individualized Education Programs (IEPs)**
- Additional individualized or small-group services, as outlined in the IEP, provided in natural preschool environments or other community settings

Each student's services are determined by their IEP team and are designed to support their unique developmental, functional, and learning needs.

### Help Me Grow

Help Me Grow provides resources to help families understand developmental milestones and recognize when there may be concerns. Families can take the lead in seeking additional support or make a referral for a free, confidential screening or evaluation to determine if their child may need extra help.

Learn more at: [www.helpmegrowmn.org](http://www.helpmegrowmn.org)

### Help Me Connect

Help Me Connect is an online navigation tool that links expectant families, families with children birth–8 years old, and professionals working with families to services and resources in their local communities. These supports promote healthy child development and family well-being.

<https://helpmeconnect.web.health.state.mn.us/HelpMeConnect/>

## EARLY CHILDHOOD SCREENING

[Early Childhood Screening](#) is a free and simple check of how your child is growing, developing and learning. Screening at age 3 is preferred, but a child may be screened between the ages of 3 and the start of kindergarten as required by law\*. This screening may help you link to other learning opportunities, such as prekindergarten programming, Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE), Minnesota Early Learning Scholarships for high-quality care and education, Head Start, Home Visiting, and Early Childhood Special Education.

Children enrolled in the Early Learning Programs **MUST** have completed Early Childhood Screening within 90 days of enrollment. If your child has not done this, caregivers will have the option for their child to be screened while at school or we may help you make an appointment. All students' Early Learning spots may be forfeited after the 90-day window. **Call: 507-379-4838 if you need a screening appointment.**

\*Your child may also be screened at their Head Start, Child and Teen Check-ups or a clinic that offers developmental screening. Parents may conscientiously object to screening. Minnesota Statutes 121A.17.

## **EARLY CHILDHOOD FAMILY EDUCATION**

[Early Childhood Family Education \(ECFE\)](#) is a program for all Minnesota families with children between the ages of birth to third grade. The program is offered through Minnesota public school districts. ECFE is based on the idea that the family provides a child's first and most significant learning environment and caregivers are a child's first and most important teachers. ECFE works to strengthen families. ECFE's goal is to enhance the ability of all caregivers and other family members to provide the best possible environment for their child's learning and growth.

### **Parent-Child Engagement Classes**

Engagement classes promote the interaction between caregivers and their little learner(s). These classes focus on a variety of different developmentally appropriate activities to be enjoyed together, helping to build that caregiver/child bond. These include one time classes or other Special Events.

### **Parent Only Classes**

A licensed Parent Educator leads a conversation between parents on a variety of parenting topics. These classes provide an opportunity to learn more or dig deeper into your parenting philosophies.

### **Early Childhood Education Series Classes**

Early childhood education runs simultaneously with parent education time and gives children the opportunity to participate with the licensed early childhood teacher, the educational assistant, and other children in free choice activities. Activities begun during parent-child interaction may be continued and new activities will be introduced during this time.

Early Childhood Education Goals For Children:

- Develop and express imagination and creativity.
- Express feelings and energy in healthy ways.
- Build strength and control of their bodies.
- Increase ability to concentrate.
- Develop a positive attitude toward learning.

### **ECFE Series Class Format**

**Caregiver-Child Interaction** provides caregivers and children opportunities to try developmentally appropriate play and learning activities. Language development, literacy-based activities, and math readiness activities are introduced.

**Circle Time** includes caregivers and children and is led by the Early Childhood Teacher. This can include songs, stories and/or concepts to build communication skills. We realize that sitting and listening may be difficult for some young children. Caregivers and staff will work together to ease into appropriate circle time behaviors.

### **Caregiver-Child Separation**

For separating classes, parents head next door for parent education following parent-child interaction time. Children stay with the Early Childhood Teacher and an Educational Assistant for play. The door between rooms

remains open. All toys remain in the classroom to encourage children to stay as well. Staff will work with you and your child to make separation as smooth as possible.

### **Parent Education**

The goal of parent education is to strengthen the caregiver-child relationship by offering helpful resources, support, and guidance. Parent education gives adults an opportunity to talk through ideas and concerns related to child development, parenting, and family relationships. A licensed Parent Educator leads the discussion and shares information based on research and knowledge of child development and family education. Caregivers are encouraged to share their experiences and observations with the group.

### **Learning Through Play**

ECFE weaves a "learning through play" philosophy into each class. Learning comes best when children are given space, materials, and time to play. Children experience the following play and learning activities in the early childhood classroom:

**Expressive Activities:** Children express their creativity with art materials. Since children learn by doing, we focus on the process of creating rather than the product created.

**Imaginative Play:** Dolls, blocks, puppets, transportation toys, dress-up clothes, and pretend play all help children use their imagination with role-playing activities.

**Large Muscle Activities:** Running, jumping, hopping, catching, throwing, etc., are all activities that encourage large muscle coordination.

**Small Muscle Activities:** Activities such as cutting, gluing, printing, painting, coloring, lacing, buttoning, zipping, kneading play dough, and fitting puzzles together provide children with practice in developing eye hand coordination and small muscle development.

**Activities to Encourage Social and Emotional Skills:** Children develop their social and emotional skills by playing with other children and learning from adults.

**Cognitive (Thinking) Activities:** Language, shapes, colors, sizes, letters, and numbers are the basis of cognitive (thinking) activities. Teachers use books, music, stories, educational games, and puzzles to help children develop problem-solving abilities and acquire school readiness skills.

### **Classroom Expectations and Behavior Policy**

It is important that all children feel good about themselves, develop good self-discipline, and consider other people's needs. We have established the following behavior guidelines:

- The environment is arranged in a manner so that children may choose from many activities and materials. However, staff will offer choices if disagreements arise between children while engaged in these activities.
- It is important for children to play both cooperatively and independently. Cooperation, however, is emphasized over competition.
- It is important that staff help children identify their feelings and manage them appropriately. We want children to know that it is okay to have good and bad feelings. We also want children to learn to express their emotions appropriately.
- Staff strive to state rules clearly and positively to children. It is important to focus on children's positive behaviors. However, when a child's behavior becomes inappropriate, we will take the following steps:
  - 1) Staff will tell the child what they should do and why, rather than what not to do.
  - 2) If necessary, staff will redirect the child to another activity and offer choices.
  - 3) In rare circumstances, staff will remove the child from the situation to a different area of the classroom.

- 4) Staff will help the child reflect upon their actions and decide what appropriate behavior is needed so the child can return to the group.
- 5) Staff will seek parent involvement if the child is unmanageable. Communication is important between staff and parents.

### **Parent/Guardian-Child Interaction Guidelines**

Caregivers are a child's first teachers. Activities during parent/guardian-child interaction time promote healthy family relationships and offer parent/guardian-teaching opportunities. The following guidelines will help you and your child experience a successful interaction time:

- Smile, laugh, relax, and enjoy the experience.
- Follow your child's lead. Visit activities your child is interested in first.
- Follow your child's pace and continue to try other activities, too.
- Include other parents and children in your interactions and activities. This shows your child how to be friendly with others.
- Verbalize. Use simple language to describe what is happening.
- Get down to your child's eye level by stooping or sitting on the floor.
- Reinforce. Stay positive. Establish a firm basis of support and trust.
- If an activity is full, encourage your child to try something else and come back. Waiting is a good skill to learn.
- Please keep adult interaction to a minimum during Parent-Child Interaction. Although building parent relationships is important in class, this time frame is dedicated to the parent-child relationship.

### **Parent Education Group Guidelines**

Parenting is a time for you to share your joys and challenges of being a parent. Please remember:

- There are many good ways to be a parent, so try not to judge others.
- Please silence your cell phones during class time and refrain from using cell phones for non-emergency calls and texts.
- It is alright to share ideas from your discussions outside of the group, but please do not share names.
- This is your group and much of what you get out of it depends on what you put into it.
- Please be respectful when someone is speaking. Side conversations make it difficult for the person talking.
- It is important that all parents/guardians return to the early childhood classroom at the same time. Children may become frightened if they don't see their parents when other parents arrive.
- Please do not bring food or drinks into the classroom for your child. There may be allergy concerns and it may cause jealousy issues. When appropriate, a snack may be provided during the class time.
- Please only exit through the parent classroom door during class time. Children may become confused that it is time to leave.

### **Absences**

We recognize that a family illness or emergency may prevent you from attending an ECFE class on occasion with your child. If this happens, another adult caregiver can accompany your child to class. If you or your child are absent more than two consecutive class times, your teacher will call or email you to check-in.

### **Arrival**

Please be on time for class. It is easier for your child to be successful when they can participate in the same things as everyone else. Because teachers are preparing their classrooms, please wait for the instructor to invite you into their classroom space.

### **Bathroom Needs**

Diapering your child should only be done on the changing table in the student restroom in #243. Staff cannot assist in diapering, but if your child is toilet learning, please let your teacher know if staff can take your child to the bathroom or if you should be called.

### **Behavior**

Albert Lea ECCE believes in positive intervention. When difficulties arise, we encourage you to talk calmly and redirect your child to other choices. We realize it is not always easy to remember this during a difficult situation! That's why we are always available for more ideas, information and support.

### **Cell Phones**

Cell phone calls or texting can be disruptive to the classroom and to the flow of the parenting session. Please turn off or silence your phone when you come into the classroom space.

### **Classroom Cleaning Procedures**

We clean tables, toys and equipment with a disinfectant after each class. If you notice your child mouthing a toy, place it in the sink when they are done playing with it, and it will be washed. Our clean-up procedure of bodily fluids follows school district guidelines.

### **Clothing**

Dress your child in washable, comfortable play clothes so they will be free to participate in all activities, including messy activities. Tennis shoes allow your child to play and climb! Remember to bring shoes in the winter when your child wears boots to school. Bring extra clothes if your child is toilet learning.

### **Family Resources**

Resources are available in the parenting classroom to check out at no cost. They include children's books, books on parenting, child development, discipline and family relations. You may keep books for three weeks at a time. Please return all borrowed materials to the teacher.

### **Guests**

Only children who are registered will be allowed to participate in class. Visiting children will be expected to use sibling care. (See Sibling Care Guidelines) Any exception must be approved in advance. However, feel free to bring along a grandparent or other meaningful adult for a visit.

### **Handwashing**

Staff, caregivers, and children are encouraged to wash their hands or use hand sanitizer when they enter the classroom. Children are taught to wash their hands or use sanitizer during the day as needed. For example, after using the toilet, blowing their nose, and playtime.

### **Home Visits**

Under certain circumstances, a licensed teacher is available to make home visits. If a family is unable to attend site-based classes, a teacher will bring children's activities and parenting ideas for parents and children at home.

### **Parent Advisory Council - PAC [Part of our CEAC]**

The Parent Advisory Council is a part of our Community Education Advisory Council. Albert Lea Area School District parents are asked to provide input for early childhood program development, including class design and family and community events. New members are always welcome. Call 507-379-5318 for more information.

### **Sibling Care**

Sibling care is available for some classes. Caregivers must register each child seeking to access sibling care online. An additional fee is due at registration. An occasional "drop-in" basis will be provided if there is space available. The purpose of sibling care is to provide a safe, supervised environment staffed by Educational Assistants for children, ages birth to six, while caregivers are enrolled in a class. Caregivers with infants up to three months old can choose to keep their babies with them in class or enroll them in sibling care. Please try to make other arrangements for children who are older than six years old.

### **Sibling Care Guidelines**

These guidelines will make your child's stay in sibling care more enjoyable. If you have any questions, please ask.

- All siblings should arrive toileted and with dry diapers. Parents will be asked to change their own child's diaper if necessary.
- Please feed your child before coming to sibling care.
- Please bring along a blanket, pacifier, or any other comfort item your child uses at home. Be sure to label all items with your child's name.
- If your child is having a difficult time separating, you may be asked to return to sibling care to comfort your child.
- Please pick up your child immediately after class. Children may become frightened if they don't see their caregiver when other parents arrive.
- The sibling care room will not be staffed until five minutes before the start of class. Please give the Educational Assistants time to prepare the room for your child.
- Children will not be allowed to stay if they are showing any signs of illness noted in our Illness Policy.

## **CHILD CARE OPTIONS**

### **TIGER CUB CHILD CARE CENTER**

The [Tiger Cub Child Care Center](#) serves the Albert Lea Area Schools' staff, families, and the surrounding community. Our licensed child care center serves children ages six weeks through preschool age. We provide an environment that encourages adventure, creativity, health self-concepts, respect for others, responsible behavior and positive attitudes. The Tiger Cub Child Care Center is open from 6:45 am - 5:15 pm and has various care options available to families.

## **WRAPAROUND CARE PROGRAM**

The [WrapAround Care](#) program is offered only to students who are enrolled in qualifying programs at our Albert Lea Area Schools [Early Learning Department](#). It is for children who register to attend on a regular basis throughout the school year. WrapAround Care is open from 6:45 am - 5:15 pm and has slotted times available for care before and after qualifying programs with our Early Learning Department.

## **School District Policies**

Student behavior policies are directed by School Board adopted policies. This document can be found at: [www.alschools.org](http://www.alschools.org) Go to tab School Board / School District Policies.

***Parents are asked to sign acknowledgement of the handbook and school district policies during Parent Teacher Interviews or upon enrollment.***

### **Employee/Personnel**

#### [Policy 413 - Policy Against Religious, Racial, and Sexual Harassment and Violence\\*](#)

This policy is to maintain a learning & working environment that is free from harassment and violence on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, national origin, sex, age, marital status, family status, status with regard to public assistance, sexual orientation, or disability.

#### [Policy 414 - Mandated Reporting of Child Neglect or Physical or Sexual Abuse](#)

The purpose of this policy is to make clear the statutory requirements of school personnel to report child neglect or physical or sexual abuse. All licensed school personnel are mandatory reporters. The Department of Human Services/Freeborn County is responsible for all investigations. Minn STAT. § 626.556

### **Students**

#### [Policy 501 - School Weapons Policy](#)

This policy is to assure a safe school environment for students, staff, and the public. It defines a weapon, exceptions, and consequences for students and non-students.

#### [Policy 502 - Lockers](#)

The purpose of this policy is to provide for a safe and healthful educational environment by enforcing the school district's policies against contraband.

#### [Policy 503 - Attendance](#)

The school board believes that regular school attendance is directly related to success in academic work, benefits students socially, provides opportunities for important communications between teachers and students, and establishes regular habits of dependability important to the future of the student. The purpose of this policy is to encourage regular school attendance. It is intended to be positive and not punitive.

#### [Policy 504 - Student Dress & Appearance](#)

The purpose of this policy is to enhance the education of students by establishing expectations of dress and grooming that are related to educational goals and community standards. The policy of the school district is to encourage students to be dressed appropriately for school activities and in keeping with community standards. This is a joint responsibility of the student and the student's parent(s) or guardian(s).

#### [Policy 506 - Student Discipline](#)

The purpose of this policy is to ensure that students are aware of and comply with the school district's expectations for

student conduct. Such compliance will enhance the school district's ability to maintain discipline and ensure that there is no interference with the educational process. The school district will take appropriate disciplinary action when students fail to adhere to the Code of Student Conduct established by this policy.

#### [Policy 514 - Bullying Prohibition Policy\\*](#)

An act of bullying, by either an individual student or a group of students, is expressly prohibited on school premises, on school district property, at school functions or activities, or on school transportation.

#### [Policy 515 - Protection & Privacy of Pupil Records](#)

The school district recognizes its responsibility in regard to the collection, maintenance, and dissemination of pupil records and the protection of the privacy rights of students as provided in federal law and state statutes.

#### [Policy 522 - Student Non-Discrimination](#)

Students are protected from discrimination on the basis of sex pursuant to Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 and the Minnesota Human Rights Act. The purpose of this policy is to provide equal educational opportunity for all students and to prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex.

#### [Policy 524 - Technology Acceptable Use Policy](#)

This policy sets forth guidelines for access to the school district computer system and acceptable and safe use of the internet, including electronic communications. This policy applies to any personal computing devices (iPads, iPods, cell phones or other personal devices) that access the internet at school.

#### [Policy 526 - Hazing Prohibition\\*](#)

The purpose of this policy is to maintain a safe learning environment for students and staff that is free from hazing. Hazing activities of any type are inconsistent with the educational goals of the school district and are prohibited at all times.

#### [Policy 529 - Staff Notification of Violent Behavior by Students](#)

The purpose of this policy is to address the circumstances in which data should be provided to classroom teachers and other school staff members about students with a history of violent behavior and to establish a procedure for notifying staff regarding the placement of students with a history of violent behavior in an effort to provide a safe school environment.

#### [Policy 531 - The Pledge of Allegiance\\*](#)

The school board recognizes the need to display an appropriate United States flag and to provide instruction to students in the proper etiquette, display, and respect of the flag. The purpose of this policy is to provide for recitation of the Pledge of Allegiance and instruction in school to help further that end. Anyone who does not wish to participate in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance for any personal reasons may elect not to do so. Students and school personnel must respect another person's right to make that choice.

#### [Policy 533 - Wellness Policy](#)

The purpose of this policy is to assure a school environment that promotes and protects students' health, well-being, and ability to learn by supporting healthy eating and physical activity.

#### [Policy 516- School Medication](#)

This policy includes BOTH prescription AND over-the-counter medications. Students requiring medicine at school shall be identified by parents to the school nurse, health coordinator, secretary, principal or teacher.