Early Childhood Education

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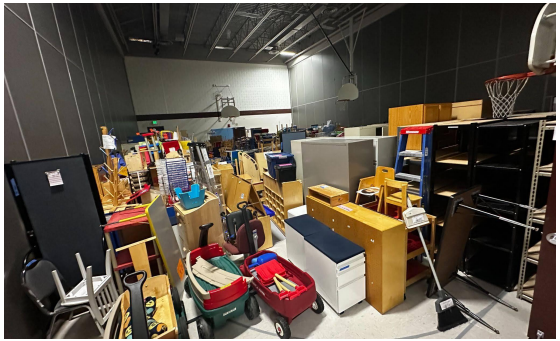
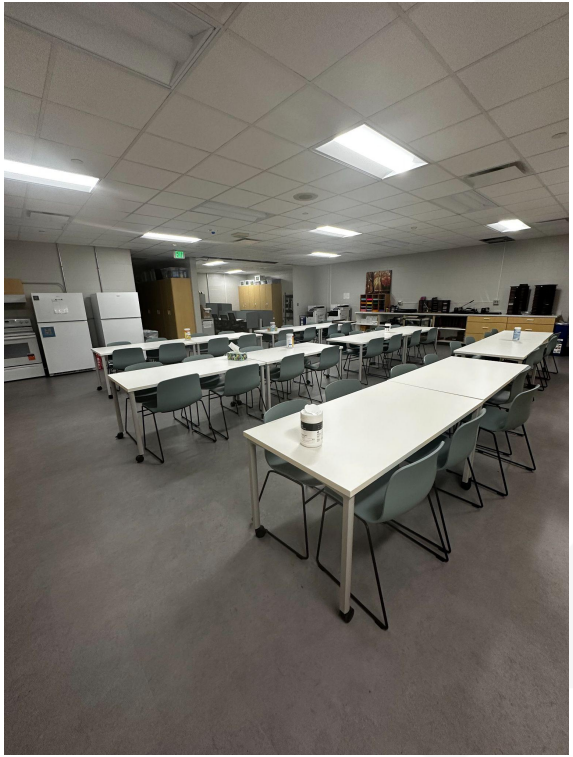
Early Childhood at Crystal Lake Education Center

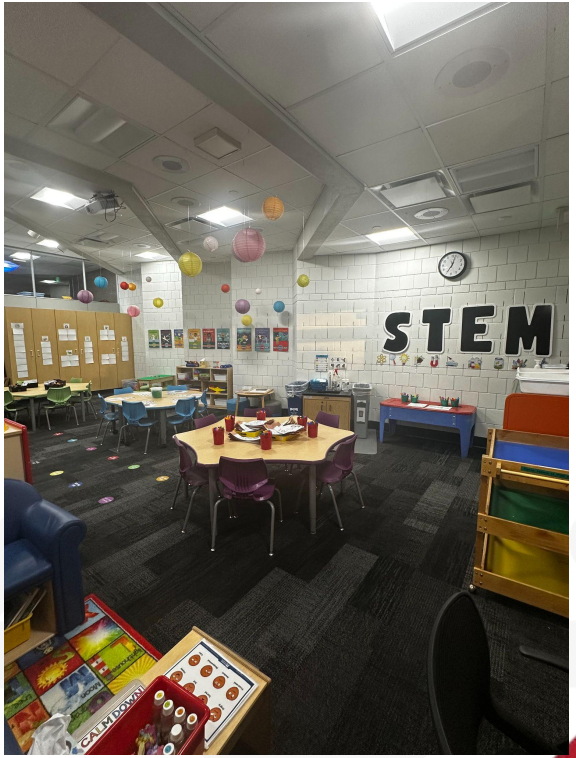
Est. 2012

Summer Construction



Refreshed Spaces





Early Childhood Programs Include:

- Small Wonders Preschool
- Early Childhood Special Education
- Early Childhood Family Education
- Wonder Zone Childcare
- Early Childhood Screening

Early Childhood Screening

Free Developmental Screening
Supports early identification of any health or developmental concerns

Year-Round Availability
Screening appointments are available throughout the entire year

Kindergarten Focus
Currently screening incoming kindergarten students not yet screened

740

Children Screened
2025/26 School Year Total

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE)

Unique to Minnesota

ECFE strengthens families with young children through education and support.

Parent-Child Interaction & Education

Provides Parent-Child interaction activities and parent education for families with children birth to age 6.

Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Enrollment

Current Enrollment (Fall/Winter)	
Children	251
Parents	281
Waitlist	21

2025-26 (full year total enrollment)	
Children	375
Parents	428
Waitlist	44

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE)

Free & Individualized Services
Available for children birth-5 who meet MN state criteria

Highly Qualified Staff
Licensed specialists and educators provide specialized services

Generates Program Funding
ECSE enrolled students generate some state educational funding

Open Enrollment Acceptance
Required to accept open enrollment students meeting criteria

District Transportation
Busing is provided within district boundaries

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Enrollment & Evaluation

Current ECSE Enrollment	
Age 3-5	153
Age birth - 3	89
Students outside district	28
Total	**270**

Current Status of ECSE Evaluations (July 1 start)			
	To be scheduled	In process	Completed
Age 3-5	16	25	13
Age birth - 3	19	8	30

School Year 2025-26 ECSE Evaluations			
	Referrals	Evaluations completed	Qualified for services
Age 3-5	261	105	96
Age birth - 3	199	156	145

Early Childhood Special Education (ECSE) Program Challenges

Inclusive Setting Space

Limited Spots in General Education Settings

- Need access to more ½ day preschool spots
- Community demand is for Full-Day preschool
- Must find placements for all students qualifying for services or open enrolling
- Many solutions being considered

Physical Space

Limited Space at CLEC

- Classroom spaces
- Therapeutic & sensory/calming spaces
- Furniture, equipment, materials - cost

Staffing

Current Openings:

- 6 ECSE Paraprofessional openings
- 2 Upcoming LTS ECSE Teacher openings

Small Wonders Preschool

4/4 Star Rating

Highest Parent Aware Rating awarded for exceptional early childhood education quality.

Variety & STEM

A rich variety of class offerings featuring integrated hands-on STEM learning experiences.

ECSE Collaboration

Strong partnership and collaboration with Early Childhood Special Education.

Scholarships Available

Financial support for families via School Readiness and Pathway I and II scholarship programs.

Parent Aware

Small Wonders Preschool Enrollment

Current Enrollment	
3 year olds	154
4 year olds	333
Small Wonders at Home	2
Total	**489**
Waitlist	16

* Enrollment opens in December for the following school year
* Academy classes are in highest demand (M - F, 9:00 - 3:00)

Small Wonders Preschool Program Challenges

Budget Pressures

Key Contributing Factors:

- Per statute, requirement to hire licensed lead teachers in public pre-K by July 2028
- Small Wonders teachers moved to EML contract with increased salaries
- Increased insurance rates
- MN Paid Family Medical Leave

* Potential need for cross-subsidy from the general fund

Budget Model

Fee-based Structure

Revenue Sources:

- Tuition (including Summer)
- ECSE Spots & School Readiness
- Pathways Scholarships

Largest Expenditures:

- Salaries
- Health Insurance
- District Chargebacks

Addressing Issues

Action Strategies:

- Increased Tuition for FY27
- Reducing Expenditures
  Focusing on supplies & operations
- Staying Competitive
  Benchmarking area preschools

Small Wonders Preschool Budget Overview

Revenue

$2,291,497

REVENUE SOURCES

Tuition, School Readiness, ECSE

Salaries	**$1,490,237**
Benefits	**$786,066**
Materials, Supplies & Equipment	**$63,858**
District Chargebacks	**$51,334**
Total Expenses	**$2,391,495**

Wonder Zone Childcare

Fee for Service
Program

Hours
6:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Priority Given
Students in Small Wonders or ECSE

Current Enrollment	
3 year olds	12
4 year olds	42
5 year olds	10
Total	**64**
Waitlist	3

**Summer 2026 Enrollment - 47 Students*

Total Early Childhood Enrollment

Current Enrollment

CLEC Facilities

STUDENTS

982

ADULTS

281

Total: 1,243

Projected Enrollment

By May, 2027

STUDENTS

1,132

ADULTS

434

Total: 1,566

Continuous Improvement

Early Childhood Framework

Indicators of Progress & Learning Targets

Ready Children • Ready Families • Ready Schools

PLCs – Data Driven – Multi-Tiered System of Supports

Kindergarten Alignment & Focus

- Diversity
- Equity
- Inclusion
- Accessibility
- Family Engagement & Partnership

Learning Domains

- Approaches to Learning
- The Arts
- Language, Literacy & Comm.
- Mathematics
- Physical & Movement Dev.
- Scientific Thinking
- Social & Emotional Dev.
- Social Systems

Approaches to Learning

- Curiosity and Inquisitiveness
- Attentiveness
- Imagination
- Processing & Using Information
- Play Based Scenarios
- Strengths-Based Play

Instructional Approach

Explicit, multi-sensory, and developmentally appropriate instruction that is play-based and supports the whole child.

Equitable Access

Active Learning

Play & Play Scenarios

Exploration

Emotional Regulation

Language Rich Interactions

Early Childhood Indicators of Progress (ECIPS)

Revised Early Childhood Standards
Updated benchmarks for early development and learning

3 Year Review Process
Structured evaluation cycle to maintain alignment

Learning Continuum
Increasingly complex learning for children from birth to kindergarten entrance

Full Implementation by 2028
Target timeline for complete system adoption

Professional Learning Communities (PLC) Reboot

Aligning with Elementary
Planning PD in collaboration with elementary

Focus on Collaborative Teams
Building highly functional and supportive team structures

Collective Commitment
Staff re-establishing mutual dedication within PLCs

Early Childhood Math Focus
Targeted goal focused on foundational Math Concepts

Time & PD Commitment
Dedicated upcoming schedule for PLC & Professional Development

Technology and Early Childhood

COVID-19 Pandemic Context
Heavily used during and right after COVID 19 pandemic

Parent & Research Feedback
Listened to feedback from parents as well as research

Minimal Screen Time
Screen time - have devices but only use them minimally

Teacher Supervision
Only used under direct supervision of a teacher

Hands-On Educational Play
Provide hands-on and learning through educational play

Future Growth/Needs

Pre-K – 12 Integration
Continuing to establish that we are a Pre-K - 12 district

Community Growth
Accommodating for continued community growth

Inclusive Settings
Meeting needs of students with IEPs in inclusive settings

2nd Early Childhood Center
Continue to express need for 2nd Early Childhood Center (especially south)

Educator Workforce
Growing the field of early childhood educators

Census & Enrollment Data
Dedicated staff member to collect census data for funding & forecasting

Off to a Great Start!