



Board Meeting Date: February 18, 2025

Title: Early Learning (and Family) Center Proposal

Type: Discussion

Presenter(s): Dr. Anne Marie Leland, Director of Community Education & Strategic Partnerships; Kim Isley, Assistant Director of Early Learning; Mert Woodard, Director of Finance and Operations; Sal Bagley, Wold Architects; and Rod Peterson, Director of Buildings and Grounds

Description: This report outlines the comprehensive vision and proposed transformation of the Edina Early Learning Center (ELC) to the Early Learning & Family Center. Building upon our November 19, 2024 presentation, we have refined our approach based on Board feedback and developed a strategic framework focused on three essential questions: who we are, who we want to be, and what is our vision for the future. The proposal addresses current challenges while positioning the ELC to better serve our growing community's needs through enhanced facilities, expanded programming, and improved learning environments.

Recommendation: Decision for bond referendum recommendation.

Desired Outcomes from the Board: The proposed changes will address current challenges while creating a more inclusive, effective, and forward-thinking learning environment. We seek the Board's support to move forward with this vital initiative to better serve our community's youngest learners and their families. Please review the information and come prepared with your questions.

Attachments: [Early Learning and \(Family\) Center Slide Presentation](#)

Commitment to Early Learning and Family Programming

The proposed transformation of the Edina Early Learning Center (ELC) to the Early Learning and Family Center represents more than just a name change – it reflects a recommitment to our core mission and community values. When our center transitioned from the Family Center to the Early Learning Center years ago, we inadvertently created a perception that diminished the vital role of family engagement in early childhood education. Today's proposal to restore "Family" to our name symbolizes our recognition that successful early learning is inherently intertwined with family partnership and support. This rebranding aligns with our comprehensive vision of being the destination where families can access integrated support services, from pre kindergarten classes to Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programming. Our

ThoughtExchange survey, which gathered over 750 ratings from 74 participants, revealed a strong community desire for more family-centered, accessible programming. By returning "Family" to our name, we signal our commitment to maintaining the excellent work of our ELC team while enhancing our identity as a welcoming hub for both early learning and family support services.

Current Assessment of Early Learning Center (ELC)

Program Overview

The Edina Early Learning Center currently serves as a dynamic learning community delivering educational excellence to our youngest learners and their families. Our current enrollment includes:

- 14 PreK classes serving 210 students
- Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) programming with enrollment levels returning to pre-Covid numbers
- Comprehensive family support and special education services
- Early childhood screening

Recent Community Feedback

A ThoughtExchange survey with 74 participants and over 750 ratings has provided valuable insights into community needs and preferences. Key findings include:

- Strong demand for extending options for two-year-old programming
- Need for enhanced marketing and community outreach
- Requests for more flexible scheduling options for working families
- Interest in sibling care options and program awareness

Current Transition to Program Integration and Enhancement

We are currently in a transition period that maintains the excellent work of our ELC team while exploring strategic improvements in four key areas:

1. Program and Service Integration
 - Enhancing communication and student support teams
 - Ensuring consistent information flow across all stakeholders
 - Implementing comprehensive progress reporting to parents and families
 - Creating seamless connections between different programs and services
2. Inclusive Practice Development
 - Establishing co-teaching classrooms to implement best practice instruction
 - Maintaining peer integration as a priority for all students
 - Creating environments that support diverse learning needs
 - Developing staff expertise in inclusive education practices
3. Family-Centered Programming
 - Expanding full-day PreK options to meet community needs
 - Exploring flexible ECFE scheduling and programming
 - Revamping childcare services to create inclusive spaces
 - Improving facility flow and accessibility for families
 - Adapting services based on ongoing family feedback

4. Community Presence Enhancement

- Building recognition as a premier early learning and family center
- Strengthening our position within the EPS K-12 continuum
- Developing community partnerships and engagement opportunities
- Creating a distinctive brand identity within the community

Fundamental Challenges - our current space and layout hinders and/or prohibits implementation of strategic improvements

1. Space and Growth Limitations

- No room for enrollment expansion
- Inequitable classroom spaces
- Disconnected flow of programming
- Limited collaboration spaces for staff

2. Infrastructure Opportunities

- Enhanced safety features
- Lighting upgrades
- Designated STEAM learning spaces
- Optimization needed for fixture and equipment locations

3. Learning Environment Issues

- Limited problem-solving spaces for students
- Lack of natural light
- Cluttered classrooms with structural impediments
- Adult-sized fixtures inappropriate for young learners

Vision of Early Learning and Family Center

Learning Neighborhoods Concept

Our proposed transformation includes the development of specialized learning pods organized around a central lunchroom space, like successful models at Creek Valley and Concord Elementary schools. These neighborhoods will feature:

1. Specialized Program Areas

- ECFE wing with front-facing parent rooms and screening facilities
- Dedicated PreK-4-year-old section
- Dedicated PreK-3-year-old section
- ECSE (Early Childhood Special Education) area
- Two-year-old program expansion space

2. Professional Collaboration Spaces

- Dedicated PLC room with collaboration cubicles (accommodating 43-45 staff)
- Removal of offices from classrooms
- Centralized staff planning areas
- Integrated support service spaces

Enrollment Growth Strategy

Our enrollment projections reflect careful consideration of community needs and facility capacity:

Current State (2024-2025):

- 14 classes
- 210 students
- 74% current resident enrollment

Projected Growth (2028-2029):

- 17 classes
- 325 students
- 82% target resident enrollment
- 1 additional classroom to increase 2-year-old options

Strategic Instructional and Educational Priorities:

- Nature-based and STEAM
- Inclusivity and Co-Teaching
- Family outreach and wraparound support

Facility Feasibility Analysis

Options for a refreshed or new Early Learning and Family Center:

- Renovate existing ELC space that would provide:
 - Community continuity and relationships
 - Possible operational benefits
 - Financial considerations
 - Sustainability of current footprint
 - Staged transition management
- Find new site location - same as the bullets for what to add in a renovation of the existing ELC that would optimize:
 - Intentional design
 - Expanded capabilities
 - New infrastructure
 - Location possibilities for families
 - Operational advantages

Option: Remodel Current Early Learning Center - Operational and Cost Estimates

Operational Costs Remodel ELC

Personnel costs reflect FY 25 salary & benefits:

- 3.0 FTE PreK teachers - \$273,000
- 1.5 FTE ECSE teachers - \$177,000 (support for co-teaching)
- 4.5 FTE Instructional paraprofessionals - \$148,500
- 1.5 FTE Special Education paraprofessionals - \$53,250
- Curriculum and Materials - \$7,000
- ***TOTAL - \$658,750**

***Revenue collected through tuition and scholarships will cover these costs.**

NOTE: All the following timelines and estimates related to building costs have been provided by Wold Architects. Costs related to purchasing land and/or existing building are not included.

Timeline: Remodel ELC

- Existing square footage used (including parts of building support like boiler, etc.) for 65,000-70,000 square feet
- Heavy renovation - reimagine layout to create neighborhoods and other proposed design elements.
- Timeline: 10 months for design; 16-24 months for construction depending on district tolerance for construction during school year (if low tolerance for construction during school year - would take three summers to complete renovation)

Option: Cost Estimates: Remodel ELC

- **Total Project Costs: ~28M (Current Market Rates)**
- Includes: General Conditions (Temp heat, barricades, energy, etc.), Site Services, Contingency
- **Excludes:** Land Acquisition, Asbestos / Abatement, Playground (Existing), Sitework, Storm Shelter (Existing Building)
- **Clarifications:** Add 10%-15% (5%-8% per year) for inflation.
- Timeline: 18-24 Months - This depends heavily on if work can be continuous or summers only. If summers only, this would increase overall timeline of completion

Current Location Parking Lot Assessment and Plan

Initial analysis by Buildings and Grounds Director Rod Peterson indicates:

- Central lot capacity can accommodate increased programming needs
- Sufficient overflow capacity in lower Southview Middle School lot
- Additional parking available in north lot
- Implementation would require strategic communication and behavior change management

Option: New Building at the Same Size as Current ELC (“apples to apples”)

Estimated Timeline

- Size: 65,000-75,000 Square Feet
- New Construction
- Timeline: 10 months for design; 16-20 months for construction

Estimated Costs for 65,000-75,000 Square Feet

- **Total Project Costs: ~41.5M (Current Market Rates)**
- Includes: Storm Shelter, Playground, Sitework, General Conditions (Temp heat, barricades, energy, etc.), Site Services, Contingency
- **Excludes:** Land Acquisition
- **Clarifications: Add 10%-15% (5%-8% per year) for inflation.**
- Timeline: 16-20 Months

Operational Costs for Same Size Building as Current ELC

A new site would require custodial support as well as the personnel and materials to serve three additional classrooms:

- Total personnel and materials - \$658,750
- Ongoing maintenance and utility costs:
 - \$1.75 per square foot in utility costs (\$122,500)
 - \$0.25 per square foot in supply/chemical costs (\$17,500)
 - 1.0 FTE custodial staff (\$67,500)
- ***TOTAL - \$866,250**

Revenue collected through tuition and scholarships will cover the personnel and materials costs. - *Would require additional funding for ongoing maintenance and utility costs.

Option: New Building at 80,000 Square Feet for Future Growth

New Building @80,000 SF for Future Growth - Estimated Costs and Timeline

- **Total Project Costs: ~49.5M (Current Market Rates)**
- Includes: Storm Shelter, Playground, Sitework, General Conditions (Temp heat, barricades, energy, etc.), Site Services, Contingency
- **Excludes:** Land Acquisition
- **Clarifications: Add 10%-15% (5%-8% per year) for inflation.**
- Timeline: 16-20 Months

MN Department of Human Services Requirements for Early Learning

Location requirements

- All programs for children must be on the first floor of the building
- If mixed-use building, must have dedicated entrance and separate from other businesses
- Classrooms can't be more than 2 feet below ground level
- All exits must lead directly to ground level

Space Calculations

- 35 square feet of usable indoor space per child
- 75 square feet of usable outdoor space per child
- Outdoor play space must be adjacent or within 1,500 feet of facility
- Fenced outdoor areas required for safety

Room Requirements

- Diaper changing areas with specific ventilation requirements
- Isolation area for ill children
- Kitchen facilities meeting health department standards
- Adult bathroom separate from children's bathrooms
- Drinking water must be readily available
- Storage space for bedding, supplies, and personal items

Additional Considerations

- Clear sight lines for supervision throughout spaces
- Natural light requirements for each classroom

- Proper ventilation systems
- Adequate storage for program materials
- Staff break room/workspace
- Parent conference/meeting space
- Administrative office space

Implementation Considerations

The final location decision will be guided by:

- Board direction
- Community input
- Cost-benefit analysis
- Programming needs
- Long-term growth projections

Recommendations and Next Steps

1. Immediate Actions

- Board review and decision on proposed vision
- Formation of stakeholder input groups
- Development of detailed architectural plans

2. Long-term Considerations

- Implementation timeline refinement
- Community engagement strategy
- Funding mechanism development

Suggested Implementation Timeline

- February 2025: Board Presentation
- May 2025: Board Decision
- Post-Decision: Design Teams/Stakeholder Input
- Following Approval: Architect Plan Development

Conclusion

The transformation of the Edina Early Learning & Family Center represents a significant opportunity to enhance early childhood and family education in our community. Through thoughtful planning and strategic implementation, we can create a facility that better serves our students, families, and staff while positioning Edina Public Schools as a leader in early childhood education.