



Board Meeting Date: March 18, 2025

Title: Early Learning (and Family) Center Proposal Update

Type: Discussion

Presenter(s): Dr. Anne Marie Leland, Director of Community Education & Strategic Partnerships; and Kim Isley, Assistant Director of Early Learning

Description: This report provides additional information requested during the February 18, 2025 Edina Public Schools (EPS) Board work session to help determine the direction of a bond referendum supporting either renovation of the current Early Learning Center (ELC) or development of a new site.

We surveyed families who participated in our Early Childhood Screening program during 2023-2024 and 2024-2025. Eighty respondents provided feedback on our screening services and indicated their reasons for having their children screened, as well as their current or intended preschool enrollment choices. Survey results are detailed in this report.

Additionally, we analyzed the number of ELC four- and five-year-old students who were age-appropriately ready for kindergarten transition and tracked how many of these students subsequently enrolled in EPS kindergarten programming. This information is also detailed in this report.

Recommendation: Decision for bond referendum recommendation.

Desired Outcomes from the Board: Please review the information and come prepared with your questions.

Attachments: November 18, 2024 [slides](#), February 18, 2025 [report and slides](#).

Introduction

The data presented in this report provides valuable insights to inform the Board's decision regarding the bond referendum for the Early Learning Center.

Our survey results indicate that while families have numerous childcare options in the area, the ELC remains the most selected program among respondents at 16.3%. This demonstrates the continued demand for our services despite a competitive early education landscape. The high satisfaction ratings (4.5 out of 5 stars) for our Early Childhood Screening program further validate the quality of our current programs and services.

The enrollment data reveals important trends in the transition from ELC to EPS kindergarten. We have seen a significant positive shift in the percentage of ELC students continuing into EPS kindergarten -

from just 32% (42 out of 130) in 2022-2023 to a projected 71% (85 out of 119) for 2025-2026. This substantial increase suggests our efforts to create a stronger pipeline from early learning to kindergarten are gaining momentum.

Additionally, while our total EPS kindergarten enrollment has fluctuated over the post-pandemic years, the number of ELC students transitioning to EPS kindergarten has more than doubled. This trend aligns with our strategic goal of creating a more seamless educational journey for families from early childhood through elementary school.

As we consider options for renovation versus new construction, this data supports the importance of investing in our early learning infrastructure. Maintaining and enhancing our Early Learning Center is not only meeting a critical community need but is increasingly serving as an important entry point to the entire Edina Public Schools system.

We recommend the Board consider these trends alongside facility assessments and financial projections when determining the direction for the bond referendum. Our early learning programs are demonstrating their value both as standalone services and as pathways to continued enrollment in Edina Public Schools.

Survey results

A survey was conducted of approximately 450 families who participated in our Early Childhood Screening program during 2023-2024 and 2024-2025 as a follow up on the question, where are Edina families choosing to attend preschool. Of the 80 respondents, 88.8% or 71 currently reside in Edina and 66.3% or 53 have a child or children enrolled in Edina Public Schools, 38.8% or 31 had one child screened, 53.8% or 43 had two children screened, and 7.5% or 6 had three or more children screened. The survey remained open for one week and yielded 80 responses. Survey results follow in italicized headers and table formats.

Childcare, Preschool, and Prekindergarten Enrollment

Responses demonstrate that families have multiple childcare, preschool, and prekindergarten options. Note that screening years for children are ages 3, 4, and 5. The programs with the highest response rates were:

1. ELC - 16.3% (13 respondents)
2. Berry Patch - 12.5% (10 respondents)
3. Creekside - 6.3% (5 respondents)
4. Our Lady of Grace - 5% (4 respondents)
5. Casa de Corazón - 3.7% (3 respondents)
6. Especially for Children - 3.7% (3 respondents)
7. Lake Harriet United Methodist Preschool - 3.7% (3 respondents)
8. The remaining responses represented 23 other options in and around the Edina area.

Factors Influencing Program Selection

Based on survey responses, the following key factors influenced parents' childcare choices:

Convenience and Logistics

- Proximity to home/work
- Flexible scheduling options
- Convenience for drop-off/pickup, especially with multiple children
- Earlier enrollment availability compared to home district

Program Quality

- Play-based learning philosophy
- Language immersion opportunities
- Strong academic preparation
- Social-emotional development
- Regular outdoor time
- Staff quality and retention

Community and Relationships

- Opportunity for children to make friendships with other local children
- Sense of belonging
- Caring atmosphere
- Positive prior experiences with siblings

Continuity

- Desire to maintain consistency before kindergarten transition
- Alignment with future elementary school plans

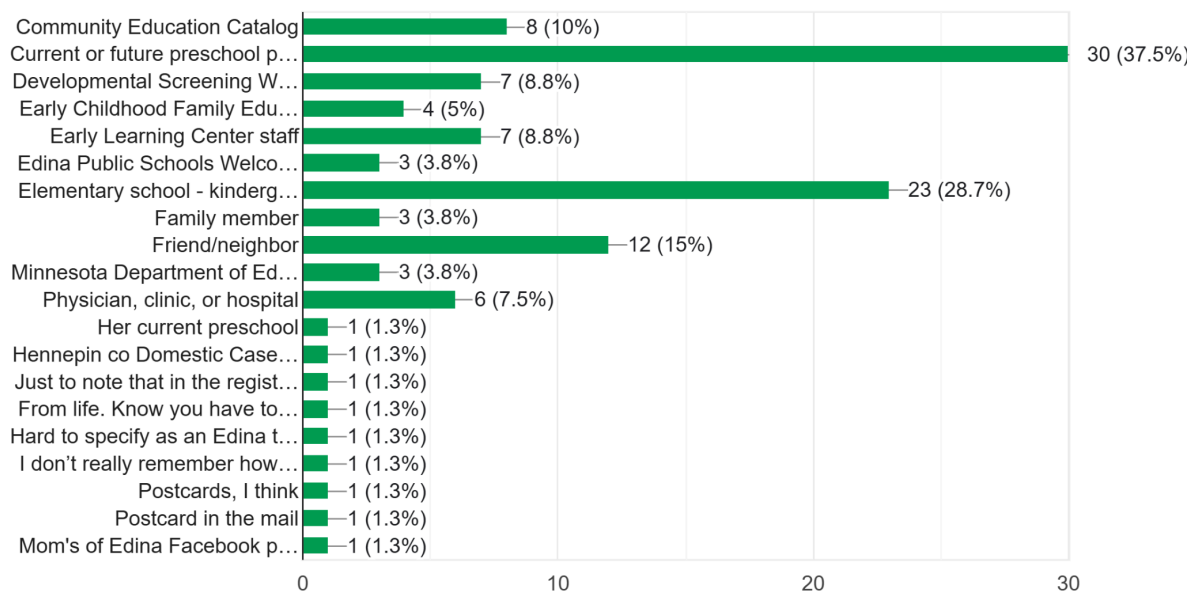
Concerns

- Cost of programming
- Limited screening availability, particularly during summer months

Another insight that the survey lended us was how our families are finding out about our screening program and services, which is helpful for reaching potential ELC families. See following table:

How did you find out about our Early Childhood Screening program? Check all that apply. Use the "other" option to fill in any other ways you found out about this program.

80 responses



Early Childhood Screening Satisfaction

The survey also asked respondents to rate their experience finding a screening appointment that worked with their schedule, their overall satisfaction with the experience, and the resources provided to them. All of these questions yielded a 4.5 out of 5 stars, indicating our Early Childhood Screening program and services are exceptional.

ELC Students Transitioning to EPS Kindergarten

To provide a follow up on another question from the February work session, we analyzed how many ELC four- and five-year-old students were ready for kindergarten and how many subsequently enrolled in EPS kindergarten programming. Our enrollment team provided the following data:

Table: Post-Pandemic Enrollment Trends from Early Learning Center to Edina Public Schools Kindergarten

School Year	# ELC 4/5	# ELC to EPS K	# Differential	Total EPS K
2025-2026	119	85	34	521
2024-2025	128	95	33	607
2023-2024	140	65	75	601
2022-2023	130	42	88	535

Please note that the number of ELC to EPS kindergarten transitions is self-reported by parents

Please note that families are continuing to register for the 2025-2026 school year

Conclusion

Thank you for considering an investment in our early learners. This will help to ensure the continued success of our programs and support robust enrollment throughout the district for years to come.