



COLLEGE *of*
CHARLESTON

N.E. MILES ECDC

2026-2027

Family Handbook

N.E. Miles Early Childhood Development Center
College of Charleston
91 Wentworth Street
Charleston, SC 29401

Dear Families,

Welcome to ECDC! We are happy to have the privilege of working together to start your child on the road to a love of learning. The ECDC at the College of Charleston ([CofC](#)) was founded in 1974 as a laboratory and demonstration program for preschool and kindergarten education, developmental research, teaching and mentoring of pre-service and practicing educators. We are part of the School of Education ([SOE](#)). We actively collaborate with many units and departments across campus and partner with other schools and organizations in the local and larger communities. ECDC is licensed by the South Carolina Department of Social Services ([DSS](#)), accredited through the National Association for the Education of Young Children ([NAEYC](#)), and certified as a [Nature Explore](#) classroom. Our three-part mission is to provide:

- A demonstration program for research, observation, and practicum purposes.
- Quality childcare and early education for children aged two through kindergarten.
- An active model of child advocacy in the greater Charleston community.

Current research across the spectrum of social, cognitive, and physical development provides the framework for our curriculum, with a focus on meeting children's individual needs and supporting their interests. Correspondingly, we support adult learning among the wide range of staff, family members, researchers, CofC students, and professional community colleagues that participate in our program. Our school explores new directions to meet the changing needs of education in the 21st Century.

This handbook is not intended to take the place of our program *Policies and Procedures*, which provide detailed information about all dimensions of ECDC operations. It is designed only to provide practical information that may be time-sensitive and useful for managing day-to-day routines and activities. Please keep this reference handy but also take the time to review our *Policies and Procedures* at least annually, or if you have a specific question about any aspect of our program. We will provide translation of any of our program's information on request. We encourage you to visit our [website](#) regularly where you may download program documents

As part of the College's [sustainability initiative](#), we distribute as many of our program materials electronically as possible. We keep in the building for your reference at any time hard copies of:

- DSS and DHEC Regulations & Licensing documentation
- NAEYC accreditation standards and documentation
- Emergency Plan
- Policies and Procedures
- Family Handbook
- Curriculum Reference notebooks (in each observation booth)
- Assessment System
- Annual Reports (CofC and NAEYC)
- New Staff Orientation Handbook
- Community Resource Notebook
- Program Publications and Presentations

Lastly, we invite each family to become involved in our mission. Our *Parent Teacher Organization* actively supports us in many ways, and we welcome opportunities for family members to share their languages, cultures, traditions, interests, and professional expertise with our children and teachers.

Warm regards,

Danielle Wheeler, MEd, Interim Director (on behalf of the entire staff)

Lead Staff Contact Information

N.E. Miles ECDC	91 Wentworth Street	Charleston	SC 29401/29424
Interim Director	Danielle Wheeler	843.953.5606	wheelerde@cofc.edu
Administrative Assistant	TBD	843.953.5631	
2's (Seashells)	Isabelle Grober	843.953.5631	groberik@cofc.edu
3's (Sunflowers)	Gordon Grasmann	843.953.5631	grasmanng@cofc.edu
4/5K (Butterflies)	Emily Quinn	843.953.8962	quinnel@cofc.edu

2026-2027 Attendance Calendar

The full attendance and events calendar is posted to the ECDC website after August 1. Attendance days are closely aligned with the CofC Academic Calendar, but do not coincide exactly. Sometimes we are in session when the College is out, and vice versa. We typically also plan 2-4 teacher work or professional development days throughout the year but try very hard to schedule these at times least disruptive to family demands/schedules.

ECDC 2026-2027 Session Begin/End Dates:

Fall Term	Tuesday, August 18- Tuesday, December 8
Spring Term	Monday, January 11- Friday, April 30
Maymester	Monday, May 3 - Friday, May 28
Summer I	Monday, June 7- Friday, June 25

NON-ATTENDANCE DAYS FOR CHILDREN IN 2026-2027:

Tuesday, August 18	Phase-in Day #1 (half of the children attend)
Wednesday, August 19	Phase-in Day #2 (half of the children attend)

Tuesday, August 18 & Wednesday, August 19	Seashell Phase-in Day #1 (half of the children attend)
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Thursday, August 20, & Friday, August 21	Seashell Phase-in Day #2 (half of the children attend)
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Monday, August 24	All children attend
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Monday, September 7	Teacher Workday
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Friday, October 9	Teacher Workday
Mon-Tues, October 12-13	CofC Fall Break

Tuesday, November 3	Election Day- ECDC Closed
Wed-Fri, November 25-27	CofC Thanksgiving Break

Tuesday, December 2	Reading Day/ Parent Teacher Conferences
Wednesday, December 9	Parent/Teacher Conferences

Thurs-Fri, December 10-11	Teacher Workday
Monday, Dec. 14- Friday, Jan 8	CofC Winter Break
Monday, January 18	Martin Luther King Holiday
Monday, February 15	Teacher Workday
Mon-Fri, March 1-5	CofC Spring Break
Monday, April 12	Teacher Workday
Wednesday, April 28	Reading Day/ Parent Teacher Conference/ Paper Day
Monday, May 31	Memorial Day Holiday
Tues-Fri, June 1-4	ECDC Break

Hours

ECDC is open Monday-Friday 7:45 AM-5:15 PM

The center closes at 5:15 PM. ECDC. Parents must be in the building by this time and if for some reason, are delayed due to unforeseen circumstances, they will call the office.

Habitual late pick-up (more than 3 times) may result in a late fee assessment of \$10 per child for every 15 minutes late.

2026-2027 Enrollment & Registration

Children are enrolled for the academic year; Maymester and Summer I sessions are optional, but only open to currently enrolled children. We distribute registration forms for currently enrolled children in mid-spring for the summer sessions and following fall. Once the number of available openings is confirmed, we contact families on our waiting list and make enrollment offers. Annual registration fees are \$375 for returning children, \$400 for new children, and \$50 per summer session. All new and returning families are required to complete required DSS paperwork on our April "Paper Day," which is the same day our program is closed for Parent-Teacher conferences.

Registration constitutes a "reservation" for a particular schedule and the program then staffs accordingly; therefore, ECDC FEEs are due regardless of whether the child attends or not.

ECDC FEES & Scholarships

ECDC FEES may be paid annually, per semester, or in eight equal monthly payments, September-April. Check payments only may be dropped at the ECDC office. Checks or cash payments may be made at the Treasurer's Office on Calhoun Street. At this time the College does not make arrangements for automatic payroll deductions for ECDC FEEs, but pre-tax accounts can be processed. The Treasurer's office also accepts credit cards. Parents are required to sign a Financial Responsibility Agreement.

Tuition for Fall 2026

ECDC Fall 2025 Academic Year Tuition		
Child Schedule	Semester	Monthly (Sept-Dec)
Seashell Full Day M-F	\$3800	\$950
Sunflower Full Day M-F	\$3600	\$900
PreK Full Day M-F	\$3600	\$900
Kindergarten	\$3600	\$900

Tuition for Spring 2027

ECDC Spring 2026 Academic Year Tuition		
Child Schedule	Semester	Monthly (Jan-April)
Seashell Full Day M-F	\$3800	\$950
Sunflower Full Day M-F	\$3600	\$900
PreK Full Day M-F	\$3600	\$900
Kindergarten	\$3600	\$900

A limited number of need-based scholarships are available through the Nathan E. Miles Endowment Fund. Applications are available at any time, but due by August 1. Award notifications are made before the first ECDC payment is due.

Policies & Procedures

This Family handbook is not intended to take the place of or supersede ECDC's official *Policies and Procedures*, which cover all aspects of our program operations and are coded to correspond with NAEYC accreditation standards. The P/P's are posted on our website ([Parent Page](#)) and parents must sign-off on policies annually. Please refer to that document for detailed information about all aspects of our program. This includes information about the following:

- Guidance and Discipline
- Building Security and Access
- Storage and Administration of Medicine
- Inclusion and Exclusion of Ill Children
- Emergency Response Plans

Documentation

We need to keep all of our child file information current at all times, specifically immunization and health records, authorized pick-up permissions, and documentation of referrals or instructional plans (ISFP/IEP/504's) for children with special health or learning needs. Please make sure you provide us with copies of updated information and keep us apprised of any temporary special circumstances or needs that you may have. Our confidentiality policies and procedures ensure your child and family's privacy at all times.

Arrivals & Departures

Parking & Access: ECDC has *one public entrance* at 91 Wentworth Street (we only use the playground gate as an entrance/exit in emergencies or for special events). There are two drop-off parking spaces in front of the building and several more in the "P" parking lot behind the adjacent fraternity houses (entrance between last fraternity house and Memminger Staff parking lot. Families are issued TWO parking decals (front driver-side window of vehicle). Decals are free. The parking decal is NOT an official campus parking sticker and is only valid for drop-off and pick-up in either the two YELLOW lined spaces on Wentworth Street in front of the building, or the YELLOW-lined area in the P lot next to the fence. Parents who park in any other area are subject to parking tickets and we have no authority to intervene on your behalf if you park in unauthorized spaces for longer than a few minutes.

Security: Parents are issued TWO keycards or Key FOBs per family for the front door at no charge. Additional cards or replacements are available at the current cost of cards to us (presently \$10). Someone in the office must physically check the security monitors and buzz in anyone without a card, so it is extremely helpful to us if parents who use the front door request cards and replace them if lost/stolen. NO MARKINGS are to be made on key cards, as a lost/stolen card with ECDC written on it would crash our entire security system!!!! DO NOT allow children to use your swipe card!

Signing In/Out: All children must be signed in AND out daily at the sign-in notebook outside the classroom door. This is very important, especially in the event of emergency. Each teacher will share preferences for drop-off/pick-up routines. Children will only be released to parents/guardians or other adults listed on the *Authorized Pick-up* list, which parents can edit at any time. Written permission must be provided for release to anyone else. We are required by DSS to have a copy of any legal document regarding special circumstances such as visitation/custody. *As long as no such document is on file, we are required to release children to either parent/legal guardian!*

Home/School Communications

One of our primary goals is to establish mutually respectful, friendly relationships with all of our children and families. Good communications are essential, and we strive for a balance of formal/informal communications that acknowledge the needs and desires of both families and the teachers/director. We use the classroom sign-in areas as communications centers - things you should see there and that we expect you to review/use regularly:

- Sign-in/out book for grown-ups (some classrooms have a book for children as well)
- Daily schedule
- Activity Plans
- Special Events calendar and/or notifications
- Classroom News
- Field trip permission forms
- Current monthly snack menu
- Staff/Child Ratio chart

Drop-off times can be stressful, especially at the beginning of the year. Our children arrive/depart at different times. Sometimes the most convenient time for drop-off does not necessarily coincide with what the teacher needs to be doing inside the classroom and we want to minimize the effect of separations on other children in the classroom and on-going activities. Therefore, we recommend that parents develop a reasonable routine for saying good-bye in the hallway, so that when a teacher greets your child at the door, the transition can be smooth and quick. Drop off time is usually NOT a good time to attempt a substantive conversation with the teacher. If the master teacher has usually left for the day when you pick up your child, he/she will certainly work with you to identify a means by which those kinds of conversations can occur.

ECDC has a [Facebook](#) page that can be accessed at (@ECDCCOFC.) ECDC also has a [Google Site](#) that can be accessed by clicking the link provided through our weekly email. The Director posts information about daily activities, special events, etc. Classroom teachers are responsible for daily bulletins and communications about the curriculum, activities, events, and scheduling of meetings, conferences, etc. for their particular classroom. Our teachers are moving increasingly away from paper-based communications and you may expect most communications via email or posted to secure online locations.

Essential communications from the director are distributed in the hallway cubbies and/or email. If you ever have questions or concerns, please make them known to your child's Master Teacher, Lead Teacher, or Danielle Wheeler, as we prefer to head off problems before they occur! We distribute *New Family Surveys* in the Fall and *Annual Family Surveys* at Spring Paper Day to collect formal feedback from our families. Annual reports are posted to the website and emailed to families when published.

Emergency Communications

ECDC uses an internal communications alert system ([ClassDojo](#)) in addition to the official campus *Cougar Alert* system that is available from the College. The ClassDojo system allows us to distribute time-sensitive information to all our families that might affect drop-off/pick-up procedures, weather or traffic issues, etc. that may only be relevant to ECDC families and staff, and not appropriate for distribution via the campus system.

Observation Booths & Open Door Policy

Families are welcome in the observation booths between the hours of 7:45am-11:30am and 2:45pm-5:15pm. **No parent or visitor observations are permitted during naptime.** Observation hours for other visitors and College of Charleston students are scheduled ahead of time and restricted to limited hours in the AM and PM (not during naptime). Parents may also visit inside the classroom but must not disrupt instructional activities or classroom routines. Parents and visitor observers must sign in on the observation sign in sheet located at the front office prior to entering the observation rooms.

Personal Care Routines

Clothing & personal effects:

Dress your child in comfortable clothing! Each child is required to have at least one extra set of seasonally appropriate clothing in the event of toileting accidents, spills, etc. **Please label all your child's personal possessions.** We do have laundry facilities and will wash/dry clothing when necessary if time permits. We believe in outdoor play for all children! Dress your child for the weather. If your child is not well enough to play outside, your child should not be at school. Remember that open-toed shoes are not allowed on the playground. Parents must provide all diapering supplies as well as sunscreens, insect repellents, etc. Beginning with the Sunflower Class, (3's) children must be toilet-trained!

Nap/rest time:

Rest Mat: We are required by both DSS and our NAEYC accreditation standards to provide time and equipment for midday rest. We provide a durable rest mat for your child that will be labeled with his/her name and only be used by your child for the length of time your child is in that classroom. These mats are cleaned and disinfected weekly.

Nap Item Storage: While children are not required to sleep, they are encouraged to be quiet during this time and therefore, we suggest you provide your child with a comforting/familiar rest item. A favorite blanket may be kept at school for rest time. HOWEVER, our storage space is VERY limited. While each child has an individual cubby in the hallway, (and the 2's have an additional cubby inside the classroom for diapering supplies), these cubbies are 9"x 19 ½", not big enough to accommodate full size pillows, comforters, gigantic stuffed toys, etc. In order to ensure your children's nap items stay in the cubby, please keep nap items to a minimum. We provide each new child with an 'official' ECDC "dry bag" that we will use daily to send home dirty or soiled clothes. Each child is allowed an additional bag that must fit entirely inside the hallway cubby with the students' spare clothes, lunch box, and nap items. We encourage your child to be independent right from the start, so even the youngest children are encouraged to pack and unpack their cubbies unassisted so please make sure they can open and close their bag with limited or no assistance.

Nut/Peanut/Perfume Free Center: ECDC is designated "nut/peanut/perfume free." No nuts, nut oils, or other nut-based items are used in any of the classrooms or allowed for snack or lunchtimes. Since non-allergic children's favorite foods often do include peanut butter, we suggest substitutes such as 'sun butter' (made from sunflower seeds) that can be found at local grocery stores and are similar in taste/texture to peanut butter, but not cause a threat to children with allergies. We also prohibit the use of perfumes or other strongly scented products, as we have staff and children with serious asthmatic conditions triggered by these materials.

Special Health Needs: Parents of any child with special food-related or dietary health needs must provide a written individualized care plan prepared in consultation with the child's health care provider that specifies particular needs or prohibitions. This information is added to the *ECDC Child Health Advisory* list and posted in the kitchen and classrooms. If needed, a daily log is maintained for the child documenting the type and quantity of food consumed. While we try to meet everyone's dietary needs, students with restrictions or allergies may be asked to supply safe alternatives to keep at school.

Lunch: Parents need to provide their child with an appropriate lunch box or other leak-proof receptacle clearly labeled with the child's name. Our staff is expected to spend snack/mealtimes at the tables interacting with children; the time needed to heat lunches prevents them from being able to do that. Therefore, *we do not heat left-overs or pre-packaged meals or snacks*, so cold or hot packs must be used if food needs to be kept warm or cold. We prefer items that do not need refrigeration as the school fridge holds our school snacks and there is not room for student lunches. ECDC provides 1% or 2% milk at lunch and *parents are responsible for providing a healthy lunch for their child* - no candy or other junk food items that are high in sugar, salt, or fats.

All foods for children younger than four must be cut into pieces no larger than ½ inch square, as we have required DSS choke-tube regulations. Popcorn is also not allowed for children under four and grapes should be cut in half length wise before sending to school with your student.

Snacks: Morning snack is served between 9:00 and 9:30 AM and afternoon snack following rest time (after 2:30 PM). ECDC provides nutritious items that are appealing to children, such as fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain crackers, pita chips, salsa, rice/beans, bagels, waffles, muffins, cereal, cheese, and pastas. Children are often involved in cooking or baking activities as part of the curriculum that we subsequently serve for snack. *Food Storage, Preparation, and Serving Procedures*, adapted from [Caring for our Children National Health and Safety Performance Standards](#) are posted in the kitchen and followed when staff members handle food.

Special Occasions: We make exceptions for birthdays and other special occasions and parents are welcome to send in (or bring) whatever kind of treats they wish at these times! These items need to be commercially prepared rather than home-cooked for quality assurance.

Medications: Our medications policy permits only master teachers or the director to administer medications. A parent must enter instructions in the *Medication Log*, which is located in the office each day medication is to be administered for temporary medications, and/or provide a copy of physician instructions for long-term meds. For more details about medications, see section 5.7 in the Policies/Procedures.

Activities & Special Events

We sponsor or participate in a number of campus/ECDC special events throughout the year and you will receive information ahead of time with details. An Events Calendar is posted on the [Parent Information page](#) of the website.) Typically, these include:

- Family Meet & Greet (August)
- New Family Orientation (Early September)
- Fall Family Picnic (September)
- Campus Costume Parade (Halloween)
- Thanksgiving Feast (Tuesday before Thanksgiving)

- PJ's/Movie Night Out for Parents (last Thursday of Fall Semester)
- Evening info sessions on timely topics of interest
- Teacher Appreciation Week
- ECDC/Elementary School Transitions Evening Info session (with sufficient interest)
- Play Day & Family Picnic (April)
- Kindergarten Graduation & Family Picnic (Maymester)

Parent Teacher Organization

There are many ways you can support our program! All parents are invited (and expected) to participate in our PTO, and we sponsor many kinds of activities and events. We have monthly PTO meetings that we encourage you to attend. There are many opportunities to volunteer for our events and community service projects. We have a dedicated PTO Board made up of two Co-Presidents, a Secretary, and a Treasurer. Each classroom also has two room parents that assist the PTO Board and the Lead or Master Teachers with celebrations in the classroom and school.

Parent Advisory Committee

You are also represented by a Parent Advisory Committee (PAC), composed of six parents with at least 2 from each age group/class. These parents are appointed by the Director to act as spokespersons on behalf of families as needed for mediation of any problems that may arise and for strategic planning purposes. The 2026-2027 PAC will be Laney Friedman, Kayana Flores, Kendra Kimbro, Brian Leounis, Laruen Herterich, and Gareth Smail.

Procedures for Negotiating Difficulties and Differences

We encourage open and honest communication; parents should express questions and/or complaints originating in the classroom to their child's Lead Teacher, the Master Teachers, or the Program Director. When conflicts arise, the Program Director will request a conference with the family to discuss the problem and work toward solutions. If a parent is not satisfied or feels uncomfortable with this process, any member of the Parent Advisory Committee (PAC) can be contacted, and the issue will be relayed to the Program Director anonymously or carried forward to the Dean of SOE who may forward to other campus bodies or administrators as needed to resolve (10E.6; 10B.)

