

# The Family Times

Osseo Area Schools' Early Childhood Family Education

A Newsletter For Families With Young Children

December '07-January '08

## A Strategy For Life: The Problem Solving Process

You hold your breath as your child builds a complicated block tower. One more block and all their efforts will come tumbling down. Do you intervene or wait for the inevitable to happen? The answer lies in helping youngsters solve problems by finding their own solutions. Children learn to solve problems on their own by asking questions, investigating solutions, making mistakes, and trying again. Often they discover that more than one answer is possible. Guiding children through the problem-solving process gives them strategies for living that will last a lifetime. In addition, problem-solving stimulates thinking and reasoning-abilities that are essential for academic success.

Asking children open-ended questions that have no right or wrong answer allows them to come up with their own resolution. "Why do you think your tower collapsed?" "How can you make a larger base for your tower so it will not topple?" These questions take their young minds through the process of problem solving by encouraging them to think of solutions and to try again. "That's a good idea to use the long block. Try it and see what happens."

Be sure to give children sufficient time to answer questions. Listen carefully because their responses offer insights into their thinking. Allow children to make mistakes as long as they are not harmful ones. Explain that we all make mistakes and can learn from them. After a problem has been successfully solved, recap what happened. Identify the problem. List the solutions that were considered and tried. Discuss how the problem was finally resolved. Celebrate a job well done with a high five, words of praise, or a special treat.

Invite children to solve everyday problems by allowing them to:

- help with simple chores;
- select from two or three outfits of clothing each day;
- organize toys, games, and books so items can easily be found;
- solve simple conflicts without adult supervision;
- help in planning special events, such as a birthday party or a family vacation.

*Gayle Southwell  
Coordinator,  
Early Childhood Programming*



## Eat Broccoli?? Not Me!!

In August, the *Star Tribune* reported that a research study on 10,780 twins at University College in London showed that genetics had a greater role in the food preferences of children than did the environment. According to this study, 78% of pickiness can be attributed to genetics and 22% to environment. Before the study was published, most of the information we heard was that it was the parents' behaviors that were responsible for their child's picky eating. Being the parent of two picky eaters, I always wondered what I could have done differently so that my children would have been more willing to try new foods. This research makes me feel a little better because maybe their being picky about food wasn't all my fault after all! A child's refusal to try new foods may be an inherited trait, but it may also be a learned behavior. No matter what the reason is for a child's dislike of new foods, there are things parents can do to help their children learn to like foods.

Many children eat a variety of foods until around age two. Then, they begin to be more discerning and refuse foods that they previously liked as well as new foods. This continues in many children until four or five when they begin to eat a bigger variety. It's up to the parents to help children become familiar with new foods; disliked foods may eventually become liked foods.

According to Ellyn Satter, children need to have a number of experiences with a new food before they will accept it. This may mean that they will touch it, lick it, and spit it out before they'll finally try it. Parents will also discover that foods their children didn't like one day, may be liked another day. Satter believes that parents have the responsibility to serve wholesome, nutritious foods and that it's the child's decision to decide how much, or even if they want to, eat it. Letting go and allowing children to decide how much they eat is a hard thing for parents to do. However, when parents serve nutritious foods, children will eat what they need for health and growth.

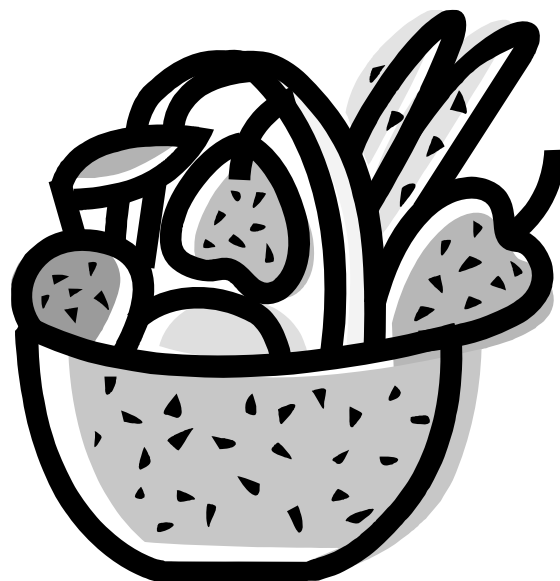
There are many helpful hints to encourage your children to try new foods. Choose a couple of ideas, stick with them, and when you've felt some success, add a couple more. These hints will lead your children to healthier eating:

- ◆ Stick to serving daily meals and snacks. When children are hungry, they'll tend to eat what's served.
- ◆ Buy and serve nutritious foods.
- ◆ Reel in the junk food.
- ◆ Serve liked foods alongside new foods. Don't cook special meals.

- ◆ Let your child feel like he has a choice. Allow him to decide whether he eats, how much he eats, and what he eats from your nutritious meals.
- ◆ Don't expect clean plates.
- ◆ Encourage trying one bite, even if it's spit out into a napkin.
- ◆ Don't negotiate to get her to eat or use dessert as a reward.
- ◆ Be persistent.
- ◆ Involve your child in the planning and preparation of food.
- ◆ Offer no more than 4-6 ounces of juice each day and no soda.
- ◆ Offer smaller portions to reduce overeating and it's less overwhelming.
- ◆ Use positive peer pressure--invite friends who eat many foods to eat with you.
- ◆ Last, but not least, you need to be a good example for your child. Why would your child eat broccoli, for example, when you don't?

*Linda Hoden  
Family Educator*

Sources: *Star Tribune*, 8/25/07. [www.kidshealth.org](http://www.kidshealth.org), 10/07.  
*Child of Mine*, Ellyn Satter.



# Family Fun Page

## Old Compact Discs

Let your child make ornaments using old discs. Simply glue on foam shapes (found in craft stores); add glitter, bows, or stickers. Tie on a ribbon and you have an ornament to keep or give to someone special.

## Kwanzaa Candles

(Tune: Ten Little Indians)

One little, two little, three little candles  
Four little, five, little, six little candles  
Seven little candles shine for Kwanzaa  
Oh! What a beautiful sight

## Pepper Wreath

Cut a green pepper in half. Dip it in green paint. Stamp pepper in a circle on white paper. Decorate with red dots for holly berries and add a bow. For variety, use two shades of green or add glitter.

## Dreidel Painting

Dip a dreidel in paint and then spin it on paper. Repeat using other colors. Shake on glitter while paint is wet.

## Are We Ready?

(Tune: Skip to My Lou)

Pick up your snow pants, pull them on  
Pick up your snow pants, pull them on  
Pick up your snow pants, pull them on  
Are we ready to go? No!

Other verses:

Next are your tall boots left and right  
Next is the warm coat, zip it up  
Next is the fuzzy hat on your head  
Last are the mittens. Now we're done

## The Mitten

Read the story, *The Mitten*, by Jan Brett and then do some of these activities. *Create Mitten Puzzles*: cut out five mittens. Have your child create designs on them and then cut each mitten into several pieces. *Matching Mittens*: cut mitten shapes out of scraps of wrapping paper or wall paper. Make five sets. *Mystery Mitten*: use an adult sized mitten--place small objects inside. Have child try to guess what is in the mitten just by feeling the object.

## Mitten Song

(Tune: Where Has my Little Dog Gone?)

Where oh where did my new mitten go?  
Where oh where can it be?  
Oh I have looked high and I looked low  
Oh where oh where can it be?  
Repeat using: old, soft, red, etc.

Nancy Knapton  
Early Childhood Educator

## Science Fun

Winter is here and along with that comes the cold weather. Keeping kids inside for long stretches at a time can be difficult. Science is a great way to cure the winter blues. Here are a few science experiments that you can do inside with your children.

## Rubber Eggs

Put one egg in a clear glass of water. Put another egg in a clear glass of vinegar. Watch what happens. The vinegar egg shell will dissolve and the egg will only be left with the see through membrane on it. You will be able to see the yolk.

\*WARNING: the egg in the vinegar does start to stink and will pop easily if poked. You might want to use a glass that you can throw away afterwards.

## Ice Cube Pick Up

Fill a glass with water. Put an ice cube in it. Put a piece of string on top of the ice cube. Pour salt over the string. Wait about two minutes and try to pick up the ice cube.

## Rainbow Stew

1/3 C. sugar  
1 C. corn starch  
4 C. cold water

Cook until it gets thick. Put in a ziplock baggie. Add food coloring. Mix with hands. Try adding yellow and red, or blue and red.

## GermS

You need two plates and two pieces of bread. Mark one plate *Dirty* and one plate *Clean*. Have your child touch one piece of bread with dirty hands. Then have him go wash his hands with soap for 10 seconds and thoroughly dry them. Then rub his hands all over the piece marked *Clean*. Observe the changes to the bread. Discuss the importance of washing hands.

## Pulling Power of Magnets

Use a magnet to pick up a paper clip. Put a piece of paper over the paper clip and try to pick it up. Does it work? Next, put a piece of foil over the paper clip and pick it up. Does this work? Now, put a piece of cloth over the paper clip and see what happens. Can the magnet pick up the paper clip? Do you think the pulling power of a magnet is strong or weak?

Michelle Beeskow  
Early Childhood Educator

## Quick Tips To Help Toddler Language

### To help your child at home:

- ◆ Talk with your child. Talk with and listen to your child as you play with and do your daily activities.
- ◆ If your child points or uses sounds to communicate, fill in with real words.
- ◆ Sing slowly with your toddler to help her be able to join in with sounds and words.
- ◆ Model the right way to say words without sounding like you are correcting him.
- ◆ When talking with your child, wait and listen for her to talk.
- ◆ Try singing and stopping to let him fill in the words.
- ◆ Read together every day.
- ◆ Be the listener, questioner, and the supportive audience for your child.
- ◆ Encourage pretend play.
- ◆ Tell your child the names of things.
- ◆ Repeat, repeat, and repeat favorite songs and stories.
- ◆ Take a book with you wherever you go.
- ◆ When singing a favorite song or reading a favorite book, omit a word to let her fill in the blank.
- ◆ Name pictures in a book.
- ◆ Use humor. For example, with children who know their animals, hold up a farm animal (cow) and say, "This is a chicken." Children who know this concept will immediately tell you it's a cow and laugh.
- ◆ Play games with him like hiding toys or stuffed animals under a scarf and ask him to find it.
- ◆ Use puppets or plastic toys to tell stories and sing songs.
- ◆ Have pretend telephones and pretend you are calling someone like Grandma.
- ◆ Ask questions.
- ◆ When you do something together--visiting a relative or going for walk--talk about it.
- ◆ Take your child to new places to let her have new experiences.

Always remember to have fun! It is also important to remember to use the above activities but not to over do it.

*Patti McMurray  
Early Childhood Educator*

Source: *Early Literacy Activities for Toddlers*  
Grace A. Dow Memorial Library

## Emergent Literacy For 3-5 Year Olds

### Activity Ideas--"A is for Alliteration"

Alliteration Definition:

The repetition of the same sounds or of the same kind of sounds at the beginning of words or repeated stressed syllables. (Example: barber, baby, bubbles, bumble bee)

Book Ideas:

Dr Seuss's ABC Book

Berenstain's B Book

Web Site/Alliteration Picture Books:

<http://nancykeane.com/rl/266.htm>

Activities:

\* On a cereal box, point to all the "B" words you can find. (try As, Cs, etc)

\* In the toy box, find all of the toys that start with the "B" sound (ball, boat, bubbles, baby, etc.).

*Therese Thieschafer  
Family Educator*

### *We still have openings...*

#### Parent-Toddler (12-24 months) Activity Time NO SEPARATION

<b>Teddy Bear Time</b>		
#1-1106A	Sat., 12/1	9-10:15
<b>Come Read With Me</b>		
#1-1108A	Sat., 12/15	9-10:15
<b>Balls, Blocks, &amp; Bubbles</b>		
#1-1111A	Sat., 1/5	9-10:15
<b>Movers &amp; Shakers</b>		
#1-1109A	Sat., 1/12	9-10:15
<b>Toddlin' Time</b>		
#1-1110A	Sat., 1/19	9-10:15

#### Parent-Child (2-5s) Activity Time NO SEPARATION

<b>Career Day</b>		
#1-1916A	Wed., 12/5	6:30-7:45
<b>Backwards Day</b>		
#1-1917A	Sat., 12/8	11:00-12:15
#1-1923A	Wed., 1/16	6:30-7:45
<b>Forest Friends</b>		
#1-1918A	Wed., 12/12	6:30-7:45
<b>Holidays Around The World</b>		
#1-1920A	Wed., 12/19	6:30-7:45
<b>June In January</b>		
#1-1922A	Wed., 1/9	6:30-7:45

**Call 763-391-8777 to register!**

# Why Don't That Man's Legs Work?

I stepped into the parent education room to discuss our daily happenings with the parents at ECFE while the parent educator read a story to the children in class. She was reading *Go Away Big Green Monster*, a delightful story about a monster with a colorful face, huge nose, and purple scraggly hair that sticks straight out of the top of his head. One of the children said, "Jeanette has hair like that". Another child said, "It's not purple." How observant of them! I actually do have scraggly hair that sticks up...and it's not purple!

Okay, I can find humor in this situation because I know that young children notice differences and similarities in people and they usually don't have a judgment attached to their statements. But I also know that sometimes their observations can make us feel very uncomfortable...we don't think it's funny. What's more concerning is that our response is what teaches them the judgment or acceptance of diversity. Sometimes we're so embarrassed we can't think of an appropriate response. Other times, we just don't know what the appropriate response is!

Once when my son was very young he noticed a black baby in a stroller at the mall. He told me that someone should "wash" him. He was inexperienced with diversity. What he knew was that when his skin was dark it was because he was dirty. That was my opportunity...and I explained that that was the color of the baby's skin. The baby was born with black skin. After reading parts of *Hate Hurts: How Children Learn and Unlearn Prejudice* by Caryl Stern-LaRossa and Ellen Hofheimer Bettmann, I now know some better ways to explain differences to young children.

A common question is, "Is her skin brown because she's dirty? Will it wash off?" An appropriate response would be, "People's skin comes in all different colors. Some people are a darker shade than others. This is not dirt and it does not wash off. People are born with their skin color. That child has skin like his mommy and daddy's skin." An inappropriate response is something like, "We are all the same color underneath the skin. It doesn't matter that she is brown." Unfortunately this response never answers the child's question; furthermore it implies that noticing differences is bad and that differences themselves are bad. By asking children to ignore skin color we imply that it's not worth noticing. Skin color can reflect a rich heritage. It's worth noticing and it's not bad.

Another common question is, "Why don't that man's legs work?" An appropriate response would be something like, "Perhaps he was in an accident or had a disease that left his legs not working. I bet he has to find other ways to do some things that we don't even think about when we do them, huh?" According to LaRossa and Bettmann, this response answers the

child's question and allows the child to see the whole person, not just the disability. (The authors note that if your child fears that an illness might be contagious you will need to add information.) An inappropriate response would sound something like this: "Shhh, I don't know why, but don't worry about it. It isn't nice to notice people's handicaps." Again, this type of response doesn't answer your child's question. It also implies that questioning was wrong.

One more common question: "Why does he sound so funny when he talks?" According to *Hate Hurts*, an appropriate response would be something like: "I am sure that the way he speaks sounds different to you. It is different from the way you speak. There is a reason for that. People who learn another language first often say words a bit differently from those people who learn English first. He is Chinese. His mom and dad speak Chinese and they taught him to speak Chinese. It is great to speak more than one language, don't you think? Maybe he will teach us how to say a few words in Chinese. If you don't understand what he is saying, it is okay to ask him to say it again or to explain it in a different way. But it is not a good idea to say he is speaking *funny*. He is just speaking *differently* from the way you speak. Saying *funny* might hurt his feelings, and we wouldn't want to do that." This response helps your child understand the language difference and shows that asking about differences isn't a bad or negative thing. It also gives expectations on treating others with respect. An inappropriate response for this question would sound like: "He can't help how he speaks. Just pretend you don't notice it." By saying this, you imply that he does speak *funny* and that something is wrong. This response subtly tells your child that English is superior and the way the other child is speaking is wrong. Again, this response doesn't answer your child's question.

The bottom line is: How you respond to questions about diversity can determine how accepting your child is of others. Answer your child's questions. Try to keep your answers free of judgment and help your child understand people as whole beings not just by color or disability. A recommendation by the authors is to expose your child to diversity so that questions will be asked as naturally as everyday life.

The world is a rapidly changing place. It becomes more diverse everyday. Our children will need skills to survive...accepting others is on top of the list.

*Jeanette Lepore M.A.  
Early Childhood Educator*

Resources: *Hate Hurts: How Children Learn and Unlearn Prejudice* by Caryl Stern-LaRossa and Ellen Hofheimer Bettmann

# Developing Character

When I was a child, and when television was in its infancy, there was a program for children called *Ding Dong School*. I remember, with fondness, watching this program which featured Miss Frances. A few years ago, I read an article in *Young Children* (a professional journal) celebrating Miss Frances' life and work. Since this was a part of my past, I was fascinated to read about this lady I only knew through TV.

Miss Frances (really Frances Horwich) received her Bachelor, Master, and Doctorate Degrees in early childhood education, teacher education, child development, and parent education. She taught students in kindergarten through graduate school, served as Dean of Education at a college, directed a private school, and edited a magazine about children. She led a national professional organization for teachers of young children. Very impressive credentials for a children's TV "star".

So what were her principles for developing *Ding Dong School* for television? "We must have faith in children; we can't work with children alone, but must work with parents at the same time; and what happens to children up to the age of six is terribly important."

These principles still ring true today! Our program, Early Childhood Family Education, is based on the same principles. On each program, Miss Frances modeled what we call developmentally appropriate practice. She invited children to draw, finger paint, and cut with scissors; she read stories, sang songs, and spoke directly to the children. Mr. Rogers later followed this model. The last five minutes of each program were directed to the parents. She would suggest to parents how to finish projects started on the show and explained what supplies were needed for the next day.

Reading about Miss Frances/Dr. Horwich, I learned that even though she was a "pioneer" in TV broadcasting, she was an early childhood educator first and foremost. At the time her program was broadcast on *NBC*, six minutes of commercials were allowed per half hour of programming. Miss Frances would permit only 4 minutes! When *NBC* wanted to advertise children's flavored aspirin during the program, she refused because this new product was linked to the deaths of many children who had eaten it like candy. Later, as the popularity of the program grew, she was asked to expand it from 30 minutes to 60 minutes. She declined because she said that children already watched too much television.

How refreshing to read about a woman who knew what was important and stood up for her beliefs and principles! What are the ways we (you and I) can follow her example? Here are four tips:

- ◆ Be a good example. We cannot avoid being an example to children--whether a good one or a bad one. Children learn primarily through modeling. Being a good example is perhaps your most important job.
- ◆ Be aware of what your children are absorbing--whether through books, songs, TV, Internet, or films. All of these are delivering messages to our children. Be ready to discuss and control these influences.
- ◆ Make a big deal out of the family meal. Once a day or several times a week, your family needs to "reconnect" over a meal. Manners, rules and values are subtly absorbed over the dinner table. Even a toddler can be expected to sit for a few short minutes at mealtime.
- ◆ Character development is behavior--the child's behavior and your's. Children gain virtue through practice. So, "practice what you preach!" Promote kind and considerate behavior to others. Community service is another way for children to develop strong character. Remember the saying "actions speak louder than words!"
- ◆ As a new state legislative session begins in January, be a voice for all the young children in Minnesota. Follow Miss Frances' lead and speak up for children who do not have a "voice" with state leaders and decision-makers.

*Martha Debelak*  
*Family Educator*

Sources: *Young Children* November 2001;  
*"Ten Commandments for Parents"* by Kevin Ryan, 1999.

## Preschool Parenting

*Preschool Parenting* is discussion time only. Child care will be provided for one child.

### Children with Challenging Behaviors

Children are not just out to *get you*. There really can be a reason behind difficult behaviors. Come become a detective and learn to identify the *real issue* behind a child's difficult behavior.

1-1804A

Thurs., 1/10

6-7:30 pm

**Call 763.391.8777 to register  
or for more information.**

## Wordless/Picture Books

Wordless books, also known as picture books, have a place on your book shelf. Think for a moment: Have you ever seen a wordless/picture book? Do you have access to wordless/picture books? If you don't have any at your home, the public library is a great place to find good books.

You may be wondering why wordless books are important in early childhood education. The progression of learning how to read begins with speaking and understanding the sequence of a story. Using wordless books can help children in the actual development of emergent literacy. Some of the benefits of using wordless books are listed below.

- ◆ Wordless books put the child in charge of the telling and retelling of the story.
- ◆ Wordless books provide language opportunities for labeling and identifying.
- ◆ Wordless books teach the left-to-right pattern of reading.
- ◆ Wordless books help develop advanced use of oral language when retelling and acting out stories.
- ◆ Wordless books promote higher order thinking skills of imagining, predicting, sharing favorite parts of stories, or identifying with specific characters.

Ten wordless books to check out:

- 1) Pancakes for Breakfast ~ Author: Tomie DePaola
- 2) School ~ Author: Emily Arnold McCully
- 3) Time Flies ~ Author: Eric Rohmann
- 4) Tuba Lesson ~ Author: Monique Felix and T.C. Bartlett
- 5) Up and Up ~ Author: Shirley Hughes
- 6) Mouse Letters: My Very First Alphabet Book ~ Author: Jim Arnosky
- 7) Deep in the Forest ~ Author: Brinton Turkle
- 8) Do Not Disturb ~ Author: Nancy Tafuri
- 9) Clementina's Cactus ~ Author: Ezra Jack Keats
- 10) Hunter and the Animals ~ Author: Tomie DePaola

*Mary Schwanz  
Early Childhood Educator*

Source: *Why Wordless Books?* Leslie Ross-Degnan and Christina Silvi [earlychildhoodnews.com](http://earlychildhoodnews.com)



## Slow Cooker Recipes

I know how busy parents of young ones are so I thought I would pass along a few recipes for the 3½ to 4 qt. slow cooker (aka "crock pot"). These only take a few minutes to throw together in the morning and then cook all day. So when the kids say, "what's for supper?" you can have a quick answer for them rather than the puzzled look I tend to have more often than not. So pull out that wedding gift from the box, dust it off, and let's get cooking!

### **Meatball Stone Soup** (my all time favorite!)

1 bag (16oz) frozen Italian-style meatballs  
2 cans (14 oz) beef broth  
2 cans (14½ oz) diced tomatoes with Italian herbs, undrained  
1 medium potato, chopped (I always add more)  
1 medium onion, chopped (½ cup)  
¼ tsp garlic pepper  
1 bag (1 lb) frozen mixed vegetables  
Shredded parmesan cheese, if desired  
Mix frozen meatballs, broth, tomatoes, potato, onion, and garlic pepper in slow cooker. Cover and cook on low heat setting for 9 to 11 hours or until potato is tender. Stir in frozen mixed vegetables. Cover and cook on high heat setting for one hour. Serve with parmesan cheese. Serves 6.

### **Pizza Joe Sandwiches**

2 lbs lean ground beef  
1 large onion, chopped (1 cup)  
1 small green pepper, chopped (½ cup)  
2 jars (14 oz each) pizza sauce  
1 package (3½ oz) sliced pepperoni, chopped  
1 tsp dried basil leaves  
½ tsp dried oregano leaves  
18 sandwich buns, split  
2 cups shredded mozzarella cheese (8 oz)  
Cook beef and onion in 12-inch skillet over medium-high heat about eight minutes, stirring frequently, until beef is brown. Drain. Spray slow cooker with cooking spray. Spoon beef mixture into cooker. Stir in green pepper, pizza sauce, pepperoni, basil, and oregano. Cover and cook on low heat setting 4 to 6 hours. Serve beef mixture with buns and cheese. Beef mixture will hold on low heat setting for up to 4 hours. Serves 8.

*Now go out and enjoy the rest of the day with your kids...you deserve it!*

*Greta Gruba  
Early Childhood Educator*

# Pop In & Play

## Open Play

Parents and Children, Birth to 5

**\$3.00/parent-child**

Willow Lane  
7020 Perry Avenue N  
Brooklyn Center

Thursdays  
9:00-10:30

12/6 12/13 12/20  
1/10 1/17 1/31

It is necessary to pre-register. Call  
763.585.7330 no sooner than two business  
days before the date you are interested in.

Arbor View  
9401 Fernbrook Lane  
Maple Grove

Thursdays Fridays  
6:15-7:45 pm 11:00-12:30

12/6 12/13 12/7 12/14 12/21  
1/4 1/11 2/1

It is necessary to pre-register. Call 763.391.8777 no sooner than  
two business days before the date you are interested in.

## Madeline's Christmas

For Parents and Kids, Ages 3-5  
Stages Theatre Company -- Hopkins

It's Christmas time and all the little girls (and Miss Clavel) are ill. All, that is, except Madeline. When a magical, mysterious Rug Merchant arrives at the door on Christmas Eve, the day is saved.

1-1805X Wed., 12/12 8:45 am - 12:15 pm

FEE: \$10.00 per person--NO REFUNDS

Bus leaves from Arbor View promptly at 8:45 am and will  
return at approximately 12:15 pm.

Call 763.391.8777  
for complete information.



The Family Times is a publication of the Osseo Area Schools' Early Childhood Family Education program. ECFE is a Community Education and Services program.  
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at either site, call  
763.391.8777 to have a  
brochure mailed, or check  
out our website at  
[www.district279.org/ecfe](http://www.district279.org/ecfe).

Registration for  
Semester II ECFE Classes  
(January 25-May 19)  
begins December 6th  
and continues until  
classes fill.