



2011 ANNUAL REPORT
Educational Child Care Center





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MESSAGE FROM THE LEADERSHIP TEAM

In the late summer of 2010, EC3 began a transition that included new directors, many new families, and a renewed determination to build on its quarter-century reputation as a high-quality leader in mid-Michigan's early childhood education field. We engaged families and staff members in this transition through conversations and surveys, and by February the framework of a new strategic plan emerged. This work is stimulating growth in many areas of the organization and is bringing about much positive reinforcement of the principles that guided EC3's formation in 1985: namely, that providing developmentally-appropriate child care in a nurturing, educational environment is central to a child's success in kindergarten and in life.

This report provides a mere snapshot of where EC3 is today, strategically and financially. It barely scratches the surface of what we have accomplished over the past year, but it's important that the center's stakeholders share in its opportunities and challenges. We believe EC3 is in a very good position today and we look forward to continuing its success.

ELISABETH WESTON
Executive Director

PATTI CASEY
Program Director

OVERVIEW

Whether you are a current or former EC3 family, an early childhood educator, or a community friend, we feel privileged to be able to share what's been going on at EC3 with you.



Like many organizations across Michigan and around the country, EC3 continues to face the many challenges presented by trying economic times. When families struggle with unemployment and home mortgage issues, we feel their pain: over the past five years EC3 has seen enrollment fall and donation giving decrease. We tightened our belts; the teaching staff, in particular, made many sacrifices in order to keep the program moving forward.

But in the past year a recovery began to trickle in to EC3 and enrollment began to grow again. We started out the year in October 2010 with 89 students enrolled in our ten classrooms; by the end of September 2011 we had 105. Our staffing numbers grew as well: from 23 full-time and eight part-time employees to 26 full-time and 12 part-time employees.

As enrollment stabilized, we became able to loosen the belts slightly and give back to the staff members who do so much to educate tomorrow's leaders. Teachers were able to attend more professional development events, and they received much-needed program equipment and supplies to replace items that were worn or lacking. By the end of the fiscal year, dental and vision benefits were restored and the professional development budget for the next year was increased.

There is still room for improvement, of course, and there are additional benefits for both teachers and families that we would like to implement.

For this reason, we are increasing our market outreach to build awareness of EC3 so that its high-quality early childhood educational programs can make a difference in the lives of more mid-Michigan families. We rely on you—the EC3 families, early childhood educators, and community friends—to spread the word about EC3: an exceptional place for young children.

Improvements were made to the building and grounds as well. Appliances were added and updated; exterior doors were painted; dead trees were removed; classrooms and closets were de-cluttered; and long-needed minor repairs were made. We stepped up recycling efforts, and increased the cleaning schedule. And once a month, EC3 staff and parents volunteer to do yard-work or other projects to improve the center.



Physical and cosmetic upgrades have given the building a fresh look.

OUR JOB IS PLAY

You've heard it many times—children learn through play. Our job is to structure that play in a way that's effective for giving them the tools they need to be confident and prepared for kindergarten and beyond. So for EC3, play is almost a science.



Growth and learning for children is categorized into six “domains of development,” namely: cognitive, language/literacy, physical (gross and fine), social/emotional, creative/sensory, and pretend/dramatic play.

Throughout the day at EC3, we are careful to craft opportunities for exploration in all six by modeling the curriculum established by the Michigan Department of Education (*Michigan's Early Childhood Standards of Quality for PreKindergarten*).

EC3's teachers plan and implement developmentally appropriate lessons within that curriculum by using a learning tool called “The Project Approach.” This tool is a method of delivering curriculum through investigative discovery about a specific topic. Teachers take cues from children and develop projects around their interests.

The daily schedule in each of EC3's programs is balanced with opportunities for child-initiated play and teacher-directed activities. EC3 teachers embrace every opportunity for “teachable moments” and share in the joyful enlightenment—the “wonder”—that comes from spontaneous learning. EC3 teachers also understand the importance of intentional teaching, and they plan activities with specific goals in mind.

Throughout the day, children at EC3 have a variety of small group experiences and large group time. Classroom routines are consistent and predictable. Children know what to expect, which makes transitions from one activity to the next less hectic. Each week all children at EC3 are also exposed to learning through a special musical enrichment class.

At EC3, strong relationships between teachers, children, and families form the basis of a healthy educational environment. These interconnections are a key component to promoting the sense of trust and security that are essential for learning to take place. From this place of comfort and safety, a child's growth and self-esteem can flourish, nurturing the confidence and skills necessary to explore the wonders of his or her world.

A GLANCE AT YOUR CHILD'S DAY

We implement the domains of development into our curriculum by providing:

- opportunities for exploration
- investigative discovery
- child-initiated play
- teacher-directed activities
- intentional teaching
- small group experiences
- large group time
- special musical enrichment class
- relationships between teachers, children, and families
- trust and security
- confidence and skills

LOOKING TOWARD THE FUTURE

Our vision is to be the premier child care provider for the families of the Greater Lansing community. To accomplish this, we've outlined four strategic priorities.



PRIORITY: An Exceptional Program

Provide high-quality, curriculum-based educational and social development programming for enrolled children of every age.

- Effectively prepare all students for success in kindergarten and in life, and ensure curriculum remains in step with evolving standards for kindergarten readiness.
- Maintain an active program of continuing education and lifelong learning for teaching staff.
- Identify and implement opportunities for complementary educational enrichment programming.

PRIORITY: An Exceptional Staff

Attract and retain well-qualified and effective teachers and staff.

- Provide competitive salaries and benefits.
- Maintain a program of performance evaluation, professional development, and mentoring opportunities.
- Involve employees in the Center's policy and programming development.

PRIORITY: An Exceptional Value

Establish the long-term financial, enrollment, and tuition-rate stability of the center.

- Explore external fundraising opportunities to supplement tuition revenue.
- Develop, implement and maintain a parent-based, "word-of-mouth" marketing plan to attract new families and build enrollment.
- Establish and maintain communication with EC3 alumni families and other stakeholders.

PRIORITY: An Exceptional Environment

Maintain and improve the facility and classroom equipment.

- Identify and invest in equipment upgrades for indoor and outdoor classroom spaces.
- Maximize the advantages of the Center's property (large outdoor space, gym, and playgrounds) for enhanced educational programs and marketing opportunities.
- Maintain an attractive, well-maintained, and well-landscaped Center to ensure both the safety and well-being of students and staff and a positive first impression for visitors and guests.

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THE NUMBERS

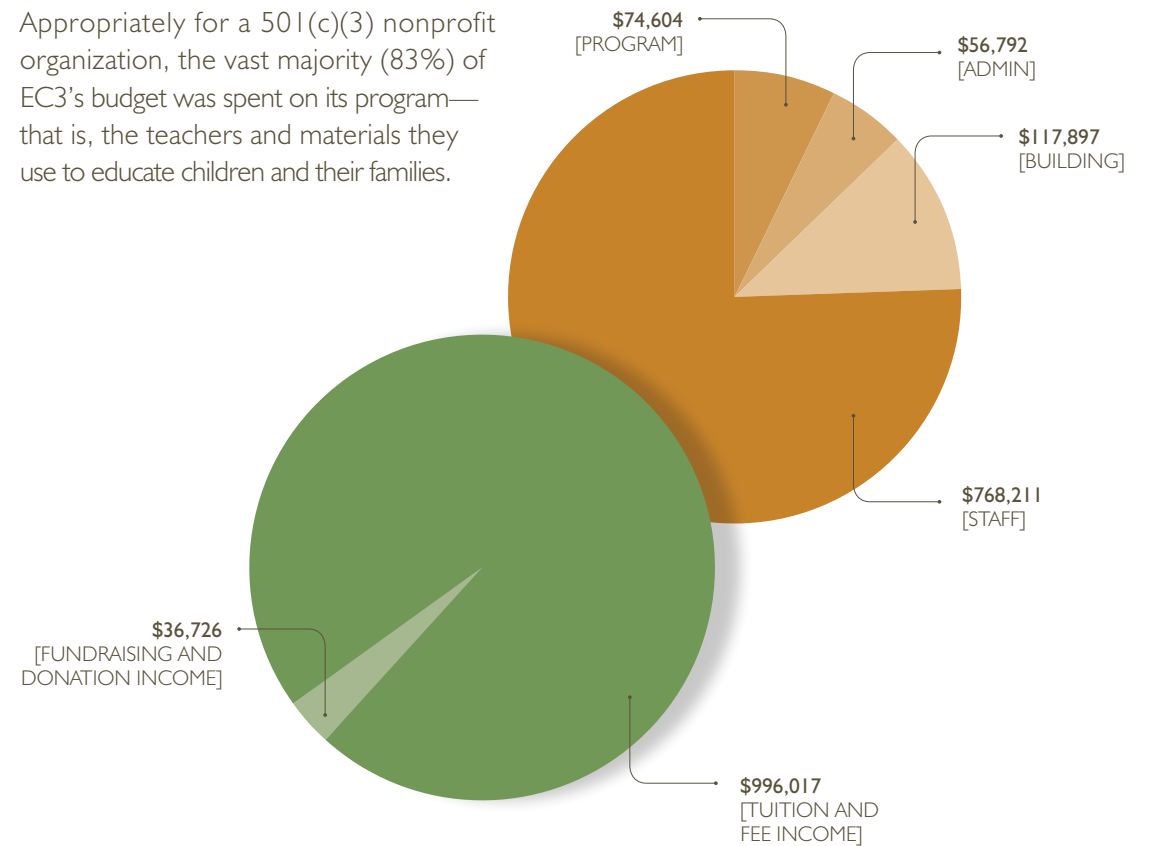
EC3 has traditionally brought in most of its operating funds from tuition and fees paid by families of enrolled children, and this was the case in FY 2010.

Ninety-six percent of its income came from tuition and fees, and 4% came from charitable events and donations. The annual Spring Auction continues to be EC3's biggest fundraising venture, and this year we set a new record of nearly \$20,000 in gross revenue. The proceeds from the auction (more than \$15,000) allowed the center to purchase and install a new climber on the toddler playground and new swings on the preschool playground.

Owning a 1929-built structure brings with it an ongoing host of repairs and improvements, but EC3 has managed to contain such costs to just 12% of its budget. Administrative expenses took up the remaining 5%.

In its budget for FY 2011, EC3 has planned for a year with similar revenue and expenses. A copy of this budget is available upon request.

Appropriately for a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization, the vast majority (83%) of EC3's budget was spent on its program—that is, the teachers and materials they use to educate children and their families.



EC3 TESTIMONIALS

Our number-one priority is providing exceptional care for young children and it gives us great pride to receive such wonderful and thoughtful accolades from our EC3 parents.



...It was the people, curriculum, and communication that were most important to us, so that made EC3 an easy choice and we've been very pleased.

—Linda Beach, current parent

Keep up the great work and thanks for the new additions to communicating with parents (i.e., the whiteboard and weekly newsletters). You are doing a great job and I truly feel fortunate to be able to send my child to EC3.

EC3 has been the best decision we've made for our son. He absolutely loves it and we are thrilled with all he is receiving there. Even with the turn-over of teachers in his classroom, there has still been some element of consistency which has comforted him and made the transitions as seamless as possible. For a kid who doesn't always like change, we were surprised at how easily and quickly he transitioned to attending EC3 and with the subsequent shifts in staffing. I feel that speaks to the quality of attention, care, and educational challenge he's experiencing. We couldn't be happier. Thank you.

This is the third daycare facility that we tried in my daughter's life. I wish it were the first. I am so incredibly impressed with the office staff. They were all very receptive when we came for an impromptu tour, provided support and information to facilitate my decision in enrolling my child. I remain so pleased each day with the teachers. They are in tune to the needs of my daughter and work to help her to set and achieve personal goals. When we have issues with drop off the staff handles my daughter with such grace and kindness. They really, really understand and work to make the transition easier. I can't say enough how pleased I am and how at peace I am each day to drop her off at the facility. What I like the best is when I pick her up and she does not want to leave, that speaks volumes to me. Thank you for all you do.

I can't say enough good things about the teachers and their work in helping our son transition. They went over and above their responsibility to help him adjust (and to help us adjust!) and we are very thankful that we chose EC3. Thank you!!

We have been extremely pleased since moving our child to EC3. The teachers are very kind and show a true concern for our child.

I'd like to first thank God for EC3. It is a place that provides families with a sense of security for their children. The people that grace this environment come with many labels: babysitters, caregivers, teachers, employees, friends, even family members. Whichever label is chosen, you can be sure that they don't only provide care for the children, but also to the entire family.

When entering the building, you will be sure to hear a voice that welcomes you in. No matter what type of day you are having when you enter, you will be guaranteed a smile given and a smile received. Whether it's the innocence of a baby in the stages of new life or the inquisitiveness of a child in their last year of preschool, it has been a continuous joy to walk by each classroom and hear learning, discipline, and love between the teachers and little ones.

EC3 has been a great place of learning for both of my children, and for me. When both boys began their journey here everything seemed "super-sized" to them and I was filled with the anxiety of letting them go to begin life in a new independence.

Each child here at EC3 has the privilege of graduating with "honors"—not only are the teachers honored, but the teachers also honor the students for their daily accomplishments of listening and being the best! I will continue to highly recommend EC3 to families that believe in providing a great learning environment for their children.

Thank you, EC3, for being more than just an exceptional learning experience for my family. You all will be missed and never forgotten!

Thank you so much!
Rameisha Ray, Siylais (2009), and Taquarius (2011)

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