Early Childhood and Family Center uses Reggio Emilia approach to learning. It is based on listening, dialogue, participation, mutual respect and value of diversity of identities. It focuses on children’s interests and shared knowledge between adults and children. It lays a foundation for resilience and develops your children’s innate abilities, creative thinking, reflective thinking, and sensitivity.

Your children’s interests guide classroom activity and you will notice that materials are simple and organic. In our classrooms raw building materials for exploring and contemplating how things work become the norm rather than plastic toys. Overhead projectors invite exploration of light and shadows, cameras encourage discovering different ways objects can appear. Music performed by musicians heightens awareness of sounds. Large mirrors placed at floor level for crawling infants opens their world to themselves and others. Toddlers explore who they are through mirrors and building relationships with other children.

Mealtime at ECFC incorporates children in planning and preparation. Not only do they participate in growing food in our school garden, they harvest, clean, and prepare food in age-appropriate ways. Wonderful smells of food cooking will fill the air as mealtime approaches. Mealtime becomes community time and all children help prepare the tables for meals. Prior to setting a table children will often compose a centerpiece or table decoration for each table. The connection of food to school and community interaction helps build relationships and respect in the classrooms. This thoughtful process of preparing for meals helps our young children experience the process of preparation and satisfaction from working together to create a pleasant experience around food.

All of this takes time and ECFC children are not rushed through a prescribed curriculum. Our children spend their days in the center exploring, discovering, creating, and questioning. They move freely about the classroom with thoughtful support from the teachers who join with them as they explore and discover their interests.

A separate room for art exploration and projects is available all day to give children opportunity to build and express their ideas. They may move in and out of the studio as they create, question, and explore. An assortment of material is always available and we use recycled materials. Opportunity to explore the sounds of music and to sing and express through music happens daily, too.
ECFC has a unique inclusive outdoor learning environment that goes beyond a playground. Designed to encourage children to explore nature, move about, interact, climb, and express themselves, it has vegetable gardens, scented gardens, native plant gardens, pathways for riding tricycles, swings, climbing areas, slides, and more.

You will see the walls of Early Childhood and Development Center fill with images of your children's activities and projects. All activities are documented and put on the *living wall* for you to view every day and see what happens in your child's classroom. Enlarged images of the children at work and play are hung about the school at eye level for the children. This documentation gives everyone constant feedback on ideas and interests.

Our approach focuses on discovery. Children observe, predict, observe more, and predict more. The teacher's role is to help them seek understanding rather than telling them the answer. ECFC teachers are learners and guiders. They do not prescribe what a child should learn but rather listen to your children's interests and build thoughtful learning experiences/projects from these interests. Questions get asked to guide their discovery. Answers get discovered. Our teachers are flexible, adaptable, creative, curious, and have high energy. They are good listeners and connect easily to young children and to adults. They collaborate with each other and use reflective discourse to determine why lessons or projects work or fail. They willingly open and share their ideas and appreciate their colleagues' critiques.

Your child will have a brief quiet time each day to look at books. While children guide their own attention to books or thinking our teachers plan and discuss ideas with each other. Teachers rotate responsibility during quiet time giving everyone a chance to reflect. At the end of each week teachers reflect on what they learned, what they observed, and how they want to tap into the children's interests going forward. It is through this collaboration that they create a strong planning cycle. Every three weeks teachers present enrichment to colleagues for their professional growth.

UNM Gallup Early Childhood and Family Center will have an Advisory Board that meets monthly to discuss the needs and desires of our center’s community regarding early childhood development.

We strive to connect adults, children, and community to build strong citizens. We acknowledge all children’s right to education and the responsibility of the community to participate in it.

At Early Childhood and Development Center...Reggio Emilia 100 languages of children describe how children discover and explore. Our children are like twinkle lights...they shine brightly every day and we listen to them.
Reggio Emilia Approach
The Hundred Languages of Children

If you’ll help me to
Ask my own questions
Try out my own ideas
Explore what’s around me,
Share what I find:

If I have
plenty of time for
my special pace,
a nurturing space,
things to transform;

If you’ll be
my patient friend
trusted guide,
fellow investigator;

Then I will explore the world
discover my voice
and tell you what I know

author unknown