

## Quick Guide: Early Childhood Family Education (ECFE) Sliding Fee Scale

The purpose of this document is to provide sliding fee scale guidance to school districts.

Minnesota Statutes, section 124D.13, subdivision 6, states:

**Participants' fees.** A district must establish a reasonable sliding fee scale but it shall waive the fee for a participant unable to pay.

First and foremost, ECFE class fees are best determined by each local school district and community. It is expected that ECFE programs know their families and communities best, and therefore are in the best position to create or revise a sliding fee scale that is fair and acceptable to the families in their district.

The suggestions below may be helpful for developing or revising your sliding fee scale:

- Provide three to six levels of fees according to income, including one category indicating waived fees for those unable to pay.
  - Include language in your program brochures/website regarding waived fees, such as “All families are welcome. No one will be denied participation due to inability to pay.” The goal is to avoid making parents feel uncomfortable for having to request scholarships or fee waivers.
  - A recommended sliding fee scale allowing parents to pay confidentially on an honor system based on their income or special circumstances in one way to address this concern. Some programs allow families to pay the “amount you are comfortable paying.”
  - Keep the fee scale simple by avoiding too many levels, or requiring parents to calculate percentages of class fees based on income.
  - Keep additional fee scales for sibling/child care simple.
- Check with neighboring districts to see how they have designed their sliding fee scale. Neighboring ECFE administrators may have a plan in place that will work well for your program.
  - You may also want to inquire about their policies and procedures regarding the sliding fee scale.
- It is appropriate to consider using or adapting the free and reduced lunch income guidelines when developing or revising your sliding fee scale.
- Remember that participant fees are often a very small percentage of your total ECFE budget. If your goal is to be open to all families, consider strategies and procedures that ensure families are not avoiding ECFE due to costs, or perceived costs.
- Work with your ECFE advisory council to create or revise your sliding fee scale.
  - You may also want to gather information about how participants experience registering and paying fees.

If you have further questions, contact the Minnesota Department of Education, Early Learning Services:  
[MDE.ELS@state.mn.us](mailto:MDE.ELS@state.mn.us), 651-582-8412.