Degreed Teachers
ECDC employs degreed teachers. All Lead Teachers have Bachelor or Master’s Degrees in Education. Associate Teachers have Associate or Bachelor’s Degrees in Education or a related field. Quality in early childhood programs is directly correlated with teachers who have the education and skills to teach young children. ECDC lead teachers understand child development, how children learn and the most effective curriculum for young children to develop knowledge, skills, attributes and disposition for learning.

College Student Involvement
ECDC is a college lab school with college students completing practicums in Education, Psychology, Communicative Disorders, and Social Work. ECDC works with a variety of local colleges/universities including Saint Mary’s College, The University of Notre Dame, Indiana University South Bend, Bethel College, Ivy Tech, and Southwestern Michigan University. College student involvement allows ECDC to exceed both NAEYC and State Licensing recommendations for adult to child ratios. College students provide extra hands, laps and adult friends to support children’s activities, learning and play. Our college students attend weekly, building relationships with the children. They read to children, push them on swings, help with art activities and share their special interests, talents and hobbies with the children.

Project Approach Curriculum
ECDC provides a unique educational experience. Children engage in meaningful learning through the Project Approach and Creative Curriculum. Teachers plan intentional integrated, emergent curriculum (literacy, math, science, fine arts, fine/gross motor) throughout the project. Quality children's literature is used as the basis of our activities. Children are engaged in hands-on activities with concrete materials throughout their day, learning about a variety of subjects in a developmentally appropriate learning environment with excellent teachers. A few examples of the many projects that children engaged in are Community Helpers, Families, Pumpkins, Multicultural Farms and Markets, and Winter/Snow.

Approach to Child Guidance
Teachers and college students are trained in Rudolf Dreikurs’ non-authoritarian approach to child guidance based on the work of Alfred Adler, which is a positive approach focusing on choices, encouragement, and natural and logical consequences. Class meetings and the democratic problem solving process are also key to the approach. Teachers teach and model the 4 R’s (respect, responsibility, resourcefulness, and responsiveness). Teachers problem-solve with children during the child guidance process supporting the children's involvement in making helpful and friendly choices with their behavior. Sessions are provided to interested families about the ECDC approach embracing topics such as sibling rivalry, bedtime routines, mealtime routines, and supporting very active children.

Family Communication/Involvement
Families are encouraged to participate in their child’s educational experience at ECDC in a variety of ways. Parents can run and serve on the ECDC Board of Directors. Parents can volunteer to help in the classroom, donate materials, serve as “experts” on a topic, be a parent helper on a field trip, wash toys, or make playdough. Families are encouraged to talk with their child’s teachers at drop off and pick up times. There are also more formal times scheduled in the fall and the spring for thirty minute parent teacher conferences. Teachers send out daily emails that include a summary of the day’s events in addition to ways you can support your child’s development at home, and the early childhood foundations (early childhood standards) we are focusing on for the current week.
Field Trips
ECDC believes in the importance of hands-on, experienced-based learning activities to support the children’s learning, concept development and vocabulary. Field trips are an important part of experience-based learning. Our ECDC bus comfortably seats a whole class of children and teachers with a few seats for parent helpers. The bus has seat belts and integrated 3 point harness safety belts for our younger children. ECDC employs two bus drivers from South Bend Community Schools who drive our bus. Field trip destinations are throughout the community including the zoo, theater and musical performances, nature centers, children’s museums, gardens, libraries and locations on campus.

Summer Day Camp
ECDC offers a summer day camp program for children up to age 10. Children ages 4 and older go on a variety of field trips in the community and participate in recreational sessions including two weeks of swim lessons at Notre Dame. All children have special activities scheduled throughout the week. Special activities include soccer, yoga, creative dramatics, sing-alongs, picnic lunches, recreational games, gardening, creative dramatics and Spanish. A variety of part time and full time schedules are available during the ECDC summer program at both ECDC program locations.

Enrichment Activities During the School Year
ECDC provides several optional enrichment programs: Gymnastics, Creative Movement/Dance, and Ice Skating (4’s, 4/5’s, and Kindergarten). In addition, speech/language and hearing screenings are offered. Individual and Class Photos are taken each fall.

Family Resource Consultant
ECDC partners with a social worker who provides our families with topical sessions entitled “Conversations About Everyday Life with Children.” These sessions include bedtime routines, mealtime struggles, sibling rivalry and more.

Various Therapies for Children with Special Needs
ECDC is a community placement for South Bend Community Schools (SNAP) Program. Children with special needs are included in our classrooms and receive speech, occupational, developmental, and physical therapy as needed.