



Answers to Commonly Asked Questions Regarding Early Childhood Screening (ECS)



The easy answer is all children should be screened prior to entering Kindergarten. Below are answers to the more specific questions regarding who gets screened.

Q: Is this to get into Kindergarten? My child won't be starting school until a year from this fall.

A: Early Childhood Screening is required for a student to enter public Kindergarten in Minnesota; however, we work hard to get children screened as soon as possible. Even if they are not planning to start Kindergarten for a year, checking to make sure there are no developmental, health, or learning concerns is a good idea so that we can get your child the assistance she needs before she is in school and her learning is further affected or impeded.

Q: We are sending our child to parochial school, so we don't need this – right?

A: You are right in the fact that it is not required by the parochial school, but when a developmental delay is not recognized early, children must wait to get the help they need. This can make it hard for them to learn when they start school, be it parochial or public.

In addition, many children have delays in language or other areas. But, less than half of children with such challenges are identified before starting school. During this time, the child could have received help and may even have entered school more ready to learn, which is everyone's preference.

Q: If my child is already in Early Childhood Special Education, do we still need to come?

A: The answer is, "yes." If you receive an invitation letter (see example on the website), this means your student has not been formally screened. This screening is more focused on Learning Readiness than other evaluations may have been, and more information is always better.

Q: Our child's hearing & vision has been checked on doctor's visits and we are current on all vaccinations. Do we still have to come?

A: It is true. Vision and hearing screening and vaccination record review are all parts of what happens at ECS, but there is more. We also check large and small muscle skills, thinking, language, and communication skills, and social and emotional development. Each piece is part of the puzzle that makes your whole child, and it is that whole child picture that we need to draw reliable conclusions regarding future needs or current development.

Q: We don't believe in immunizing our children? Is that a problem?

A: This is not a problem. There is a line right on the immunization form for you and a notary public to sign if you conscientiously object to immunization. There is also a line of the form for your physician to sign if your child has a medical exemption.

Q: Can I bring my other children along?

A: Children are often very excited to attend screening, and for many, it is a real milestone for them. In addition to detracting from the emotional value of screening, siblings can make it very difficult for the pre-school-age sibling to focus and do his best work. For these reasons, please make every effort *not* to bring other children along to screening.

What?

Q: Can we practice this at home so my child knows what to expect and will do well?

A: We have purposely chosen screening tools that are not designed to measure academic achievement and focus more on learning readiness and overall development. ISD #300 currently uses [FirstSteps](#) (this is a link to a very academic summary of the assessment kit, but it provides thorough description of the process). For this reason, “practicing” at home is not very helpful. On our main screening page there is a link to [What is Screening](#) and a definition provided by the Minnesota Department of Education along with additional links to information. The MDE page also includes a link to a [practice page](#) for the vision screening.

The good news is, you are “practicing” for screening every day by making sure your child gets to bed on time, providing proper nutrition and exercise, providing a safe and loving home, spending time with your child, etc. . . All of these can make a big difference in your child’s development.

For other ideas of activities to do with your child, and for child safety information, go to www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/child/ and look in the “developmental milestones” section. You can find similar information on the [Minnesota Parents Know](#) website that is provided by the Minnesota Department of Education.

Q: Will my child get a label from screening?

A: Your child will not get a label from screening. If the results of screening in any one of the areas are cause for concern, screening staff will often recommend that your child be re-screened at a later date. We are completely aware that young children have up and down days just like the rest of us. If you return for re-screening and there is still a concern, *then* staff members will help you decide if your child needs to see an educational or health specialist and will likely help you make those connections when necessary. Early Childhood Screening does not provide diagnoses or labels. It merely serves as a tool to help us see if there are areas that could use further investigation.

When?

Children should be screened any time after they are 3 years, nine months of age or older; however, we invite the oldest unscreened students first and then younger students after that. You should get a letter of invitation to screening sometime within one to two years before your child starts Kindergarten, but if you want to make sure your student is on the list to be screened, please feel free to contact Karn Schwartzhoff, Early Childhood Coordinator, using the contact information below.

Q: How long does it take?

A: Plan to spend around an hour and a half, 90 minutes, at school for the whole screening process, including consulting with the school nurse and reviewing overall results with the school psychologist.

Q: Can't they just do it in kindergarten?

A: It happens that some families move in to the district at the last minute before Kindergarten starts, and we have to screen the child at Kindergarten, however, barring extenuating circumstances, the state requires that screening be completed prior to entering a public Kindergarten program in the state of MN. It is also in the best interest of the student to have been screened prior to Kindergarten. This gives teachers and staff the opportunity to prepare for the unique needs of all students and it allows for the student's needs to be met sooner so that he hopefully enters school more ready to learn than he would have otherwise been.

Where?

Q: Where does it take place?

A: Early Childhood Screening takes place in the Early Childhood wing of La Crescent-Hokah Elementary, 504 South Oak St., La Crescent, MN. There will be an information and sign-in table in the lobby of the building to welcome you and point you in the right direction.

Why?

Q: Why do we have to do this?

A: As was reiterated several times in above questions, Early Childhood Screening is required for entrance into public Kindergarten in the state of Minnesota. But the best reason to have your child screened has nothing to do with state requirements and everything to do with what everyone wants for their children, opportunity. Early childhood screening gives you the opportunity to learn more about how your child is developing. It gives educational professionals in the district the opportunity to better understand your child and her needs prior to entering Kindergarten. Most importantly, Early Childhood Screening gives your child the opportunity to have his needs met as soon as possible.