

Join Our Community at Explore and Discover!

Explore and Discover is more than just a place for early childhood education—it's a warm, collaborative community where educators, families, and children grow together. Our unique model blends high-quality infant and toddler care with a parent cooperative, creating an enriching environment rooted in connection, curiosity, and lifelong learning. Our Reggio Emilia-inspired approach combines exploration, creative expression, everyday practice, and small-group collaboration.

As our Director, you'll be the steadfast leader ensuring the educational excellence, operational sustainability, and community vitality that make E&D special. You'll work closely with our Board of Directors, lead a talented teaching team, and partner with families to create an environment where children thrive and our cooperative flourishes.

About Us

Explore & Discover is a NAEYC-accredited, Reggio Emilia-inspired parent cooperative serving 25 infants and toddlers (6 weeks - 3 years) in Denver's West Highlands/Wheat Ridge area. Founded in 2002, we are a small but mighty learning community where the youngest children experience education as discovery, relationships, and belonging.

As a parent cooperative, families are simultaneously consumers, volunteers, and stakeholders—creating a unique, high-engagement community where the Director partners deeply with both a parent-volunteer board and a dedicated teaching team.

The Opportunity

We're seeking an experienced early childhood leader who is:

- **Passionate about relationship-centered care** during the critical first three years
- **Committed to authentic Reggio Emilia practice**, not just marketing language
- **Comfortable with hands-on, scrappy** nonprofit operations
- **Dedicated to advancing equity and inclusion** in early childhood education

Position Overview

Position Title: Center Director

Reports To: Board of Directors

Status: Exempt, Salaried, At-Will

Compensation: \$58,000 - \$70,000 annually (commensurate with experience)

Benefits: Health, dental, vision, life insurance, disability coverage, 401(k), paid time off

The Director leads all aspects of center operations including educational programming, staff management, financial oversight, family relations, regulatory compliance, and strategic planning. This position requires a dynamic leader who can balance multiple priorities while maintaining our commitment to Reggio Emilia-inspired education and cooperative community values.

Core Responsibilities

Financial & Operational Management (30%)

- **Budget & Financial Oversight**
 - Develop annual operating budget with Board Treasurer(s)
 - Monitor monthly financial performance; provide reports to Board
 - Process tuition, manage accounts receivable, enforce payment policies
 - Maintain 90-180 days cash reserves as nonprofit best practice
 - Approve expenditures within approved budget
- **Enrollment & Capacity Management**
 - Maintain enrollment at or near 25-child capacity
 - Manage waitlist; conduct tours; process new family applications
 - Oversee enrollment agreements and tuition deposits
- **Facilities & Operations**
 - Coordinate with Wheat Ridge Congregational Church on facility needs
 - Order and manage supplies, food, and educational materials
 - Ensure USDA Child Care Food compliance - State and Federal regulations
 - Maintain safe, clean, well-organized classrooms and common areas
- **Technology & Systems**
 - Manage Brightwheel app for family communication, sign-in/out, and billing
 - Maintain organized digital filing systems (Google Drive)
 - Ensure data security and family privacy (FERPA compliance)
- **Fundraising & Development**
 - Support Board-led fundraising initiatives
 - Identify and apply for grants supporting early childhood education

Educational Leadership (25%)

- **Program Quality**
 - Ensure high-quality, developmentally appropriate Reggio Emilia-inspired curriculum for ages 6 weeks - 36 months
 - Maintain NAEYC accreditation; lead reaccreditation processes
 - Observe classrooms regularly; provide constructive feedback
 - Stay current on ECE research, trends, and best practices
- **Assessment & Documentation**
 - Oversee Brigance Inventory assessments
 - Ensure quality documentation (daily journals, portfolios, panels)
 - Facilitate biannual parent-teacher conferences
 - Coordinate support services for children with additional needs
- **Licensing & Compliance**
 - Ensure full compliance with Colorado Department of Human Services regulations
 - Prepare for and manage licensing inspections
 - Oversee health and safety policies (safe sleep, food safety, illness protocols, emergency preparedness)

Staff Management & Development (25%)

- **Recruitment & Hiring**
 - Recruit, interview, and hire qualified staff aligned with E&D's mission
 - Conduct comprehensive background checks per Colorado requirements
 - Provide comprehensive onboarding and orientation
- **Supervision & Performance Management**
 - Supervise 6-8 teaching staff plus administrative support
 - Conduct annual evaluations; provide ongoing coaching
 - Address performance issues promptly and professionally
 - Foster collaborative, supportive team culture
- **Professional Development**
 - Ensure all required certifications current (CPR/First Aid, Safe Sleep, Mandated Reporter)
 - Facilitate monthly staff meetings and professional development
 - Support staff pursuing ECE credentials and continuing education
 - Model Reggio Emilia principles and cooperative values in all interactions
- **Staff Scheduling & Ratios**
 - Create schedules meeting state ratios (1:5 infant, 1:5 tween, 2:10 toddler)
 - Manage time-off requests and substitute coverage
 - Ensure wage and hour law compliance

Family & Community Relations (15%)

- **Family Partnership**
 - Serve as primary contact for family questions and concerns
 - Facilitate conflict resolution
 - Coordinate quarterly parent meetings
 - Communicate regularly via email, newsletters, and Brightwheel
- **Cooperative Model**
 - Partner with family coordinators on co-op requirements (monthly shifts, family jobs, laundry)
 - Support families meeting cooperative obligations
 - Foster strong sense of community and shared ownership
- **Diversity, Equity & Inclusion**
 - Champion E&D's DEI commitment
 - Ensure culturally responsive practices in curriculum, staffing, and family engagement
 - Create welcoming environment for all families

Board Relations & Governance (5%)

- Attend monthly Board meetings; provide comprehensive operational reports
- Collaborate with Board Chair on agenda-setting and strategic priorities
- Implement Board policies; recommend policy improvements
- Support Board committees as needed
- Lead annual operational goal-setting aligned with strategic plan
- Assess market positioning; recommend tuition and enrollment strategies

Required Qualifications

Education & Credentials

- **Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood Education, Child Development, or related field** (Master's preferred)
- **Colorado Director Qualified** (or ability to obtain within 6 months)
- Current certifications: Infant/Toddler CPR/First Aid, Safe Sleep, Mandated Reporter, Medication Administration (or willingness to obtain)

Experience

- **Minimum 5 years ECE experience**, including 2+ years in leadership/management
- **Demonstrated infant/toddler expertise**
- Reggio Emilia, emergent curriculum, or play-based approaches strongly preferred
- NAEYC accreditation experience preferred
- **Financial management** (budgeting, payroll, bookkeeping)
- Cooperative or parent-participation model experience a plus

Skills & Competencies

Leadership

- Strong organizational and time management skills
- Proven ability to lead and develop diverse teams
- Excellent problem-solving and decision-making
- Calm professionalism under pressure

Communication

- Exceptional written and verbal skills
- Effective communication across diverse audiences
- Strong active listening and conflict resolution
- Cultural competency and commitment to inclusion

Technical

- Google Workspace proficiency (Drive, Docs, Sheets, Gmail)
- Childcare management software (Brightwheel or similar)
- Nonprofit financial management understanding
- Colorado childcare licensing regulations knowledge
- Excellent attention to detail; eye for streamlining systems

Personal Attributes

- Genuine passion for early childhood education
- Commitment to E&D's mission, values, and cooperative model
- High integrity and ethical standards
- Flexibility, adaptability, and sense of humor
- Self-directed with strong initiative
- Collaborative mindset

Schedule & Expectations

This is a full-time, salaried exempt position requiring the flexibility to meet the varied demands of center leadership.

Typical work pattern:

- **Core operational hours:** Monday-Friday, 7:30 AM - 5:30 PM (on-site)
- **On-site presence:** Approximately 95% of work time to support daily operations, staff supervision, and family engagement
- **Variable hours:** Leadership demands fluctuate—some weeks require 45-50 hours (enrollment season, Board preparation, licensing inspections, events), while others may be lighter

Required availability beyond core hours:

- Monthly Board meetings: First Wednesday, 6:30-8:30 PM
- Quarterly parent meetings: Second Monday, 6:00-7:30 PM
- Occasional evenings/weekends for workdays, events, professional development
- Responsive to urgent matters (staff absences, facility emergencies, family crises) as they arise

This position requires someone who:

- Understands that leadership means being present when the team and families need you
- Can manage their time autonomously to balance operational demands with strategic work
- Is comfortable with the "always-on" nature of small nonprofit leadership
- Views flexibility as a two-way street (you adjust to center needs; we accommodate personal commitments when possible)

How to Apply

Submit the following to hiring@exploreanddiscover.org:

1. Cover letter describing your leadership philosophy and interest in E&D's cooperative model
2. Current resume with three professional references

3. Copies of relevant certifications and transcripts

Application Deadline: December 15, 2025

Position Start Date: February 15, 2026 (flexible for the right candidate)

Explore and Discover is an equal opportunity employer committed to building a diverse and inclusive community. We strongly encourage applications from candidates of all backgrounds, particularly those from historically underrepresented communities in early childhood education leadership.

Questions? Contact our hiring committee at hiring@exploreanddiscover.org