

## Elevate Rock School ready for an encore at new school building

After 10 years of rocking inside a "pretty squished" space in the Liberty Square plaza, Elevate Rock School has opened a new school building at 4650 Agassiz Crossing S. in Fargo. The new building is three-times larger than the old spot and the children have loved it, Vice President Lisa Niemiller told The Forum. "They are extremely excited. They're just really pumped," she said. Written By: [Thomas Evarella](#) | 12:15 pm, Oct. 15, 2021



Elevate Rock School students, from left to right, Elaine Irvin, Logan Fischer, Rylie Sayre, and Khloe Cossette practice together along with their instructors Emily Kopp, Stacey Dohn-Shink, and Mitch Rittenbach on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at Elevate Rock School in Fargo. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

FARGO — The music may be the same but the setting is very much different for [Elevate Rock School](#), which recently opened their new school building at 4650 Agassiz Crossing S. in south Fargo.

The move, [which has been in the works since last year](#), was a short distance from their prior location inside the Liberty Square plaza at 4480 23rd Ave. S. The new location is nearly three-times larger than the original, according to Elevate Rock School's Vice President Lisa Niemiller.

“Our programs have all stayed that same, we’re just able to accommodate a few more kids and have larger lesson rooms,” Niemiller told The Forum. “It’s really nice for our students to be able to spread out a little bit. We have a couple extra classrooms, a larger band room and just larger rooms. We were pretty squished in our old space.”

Elevate Rock School has also started its own certified, music-themed preschool in addition to opening the new building. The preschool joins Elevate Rock School’s three other music education programs. Lil’ Peeps is intended for students between three- and six-years-old. Afterwards, students can move on to the Lil’ Rockers program — which is an introductory program covering all instruments for seven- and eight-year-olds — or join the Rock Band program, which is for those between seven and 18 and features the bass, drums, guitar, piano and vocals.



Lisa Niemiller, the Vice President of Elevate Rock School, is seen on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at the new Elevate Rock School location in south Fargo. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

Niemiller said that Elevate Rock School’s aim is to teach the fundamentals of instruments, music theory and reading music. They also offer students the chance to gain performance experience, holding several shows throughout the year.

The teacher-to-student ratio is two-to-one, Niemiller noted, saying that the personal instruction is beneficial for students. “We aim to just inspire kids and have the day they come for lessons be the best day of the week,” she said. “We want to make sure that we’re offering a positive atmosphere for learning lessons or learning their instrument and just make music fun.”

To help keep the school affordable for all students, Elevate also offers scholarship opportunities through [Excite Music](#). The goal is to make sure anyone who is interested has a chance to learn about music. “They’re are so many kids who would really love to be a part of this program and we really want to make sure to offer it to all kids,” Niemiller said. “It shouldn’t just be an opportunity for some, it should be an opportunity for all.”



Elevate Rock School students, from left to right, Rylie Sayre, Elaine Irvin, Logan Fischer, and Khloe Cossette pose together with their instructors Stacey Dohn-Shink, Emily Kopp, and Mitch Rittenbach and the school’s Vice President Lisa Niemiller, left, on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at Elevate Rock School in Fargo. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

The band program and live performances offer more than just a chance to jam with friends, she continued. “Being in a band is being a part of a team,” Niemiller said. “Beyond the music, they’re developing friendships and learning how to work together as a team.”

Elevate also keeps it current, sticking to the top 40 lists. “They’re learning the music that’s relevant to them, the things they hear on the radio,” Niemiller commented. “Oftentimes they’re not even necessarily realizing that they’re learning because it’s fun.”

Children and parents alike have been thrilled with the new school building, Niemiller said, adding that the students couldn’t wait to get inside. “They are extremely excited. They’re just really pumped,” she remarked. “It was fun to see the kids smile as they ran in for their first time here.”

## **'A great concept'**

Celebrating their tenth anniversary on Nov. 1, Niemiller said Elevate Rock School has been thankful for the support they’ve received to make those 10 years possible. “The community just seems to be embracing it and our Elevate family really continues to encourage and support us, which we appreciate so much,” she said.

Vanessa Bruley and her now 16-year-old son Ethan go all the way back to Elevate’s early days. “He has really enjoyed it,” Vanessa said. “He’s been actually going there since the day they opened, so it’s been 10 years for us, too. He still looks forward to going every week, hanging out with his bandmates and playing with them.”

Vanessa and Ethan toured Elevate prior to their opening and were immediately sold on Lisa and her husband Bryce’s concept. “It really was a cool idea, we thought, 10 years ago, and we still think it’s a great concept to expose kids to music,” Vanessa said.



Logan Fischer practices drums on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at the new Elevate Rock School in Fargo. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

The Och family, Kate and Jeff as well as 11-year-old Aiden, 10-year-old McKinley and three-year-old Madigan, are new to Elevate but quickly noticed a domino effect in their family after then nine-year-old McKinley recently enrolled. “We weren’t musical or involved in any kind of music lessons or anything prior to this, but our then nine-year-old wanted to play guitar,” Kate recalled. “We looked up Elevate and went for a tour and she absolutely fell in love.”

Soon after, Aiden said he wanted to pick up an instrument, too. “Then our 11-year-old said ‘Well, I want to play the drums,’ so then he got on the drums,” Kate said. “They’ve been going ever since.”

Once Elevate debuted their preschool, Kate and Jeff knew it would be a great fit for their youngest daughter. “We talked with Lisa about the preschool option and took our daughter there,” Kate said. “We took her and she didn’t want to leave and absolutely just loved it.”



The preschool room inside of the new Elevate Rock School is shown on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at 4650 Agassiz Crossing S., Fargo. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

Madigan originally started going to Elevate’s preschool for two half-days per week, eventually switching to three full-days per week. She even has her own pink guitar at home to match the one she uses at school. “On her off days, she really wants to go,” Kate remarked. “She asks if she’s going to preschool and gets really bummed if she’s not.”

## More than music

Vanessa said keyboard-playing Ethan never lacked for confidence, but his time at Elevate has had a positive effect no less. “He has definitely gotten a confidence boost by doing this for so long,” she said. “It’s been good as far as giving him the confidence to do things like that.”

In spite of the fact that their family had never previously been musically inclined, Kate and Jeff reported that their three children have learned quickly, to the point they can pick up sheet music and instantly follow along. They even practice outside of school hours and “never complain” about going to Elevate.

Jeff was struck by how much progress his children had made while attending a recent performance. “It’s not a huge time commitment,” he said. “I was absolutely shocked at how good they were. They got on stage, played a song and absolutely rocked it. It was so cool to see that after only a few months of playing instruments, they were on stage, putting on a concert and playing a song live. It was really well done.”



The lobby of the new Elevate Rock School is shown on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at 4650 Agassiz Crossing S., Fargo. It is three times bigger than the old location and includes a new certified preschool. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

Beyond the music, Kate said that Elevate has helped her children develop in other areas. “It’s really tapping into different parts of their brain and that hand-eye coordination as well,” she said.

Even with Aiden’s hockey season starting up, Kate said he refused to give up going to Elevate. “There’s no end in sight,” she said of her children’s future at the school.

Vanessa credited Elevate with helping impart other life skills on Ethan as well. “Through the years, he’s had different groupings with the bands that he has been in, but he’s always made friends with the kids in his band,” she said. “They usually get along really well and learn how to work together and collaborate on what they’re doing.”

## 'Not about the bottom line'

Both families praised the Niemillers for bringing Elevate Rock School to Fargo, saying it's been an invaluable experience for their children.

The Ochs noticed quickly that both Lisa and Bryce were committed to the students, with dollars and cents a secondary concern. "You can just tell that it's really about the kids, not about the bottom line for them," Kate said. "They just want to see the kids happy and healthy."



The new Elevate Rock School's outdoor play area is shown on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at 4650 Agassiz Crossing S., Fargo. It is three times bigger than the old location and includes a newly certified preschool. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum

Vanessa, who said she's "probably as surprised as anybody" to see her son's response to Elevate, added that enrolling Ethan was one of their best choices as parents. "I would say that one of the best decisions we made was to enroll Ethan in this," she said. "Bryce and Lisa had a great idea when they started this and it's just a great concept. It's really worked out well and I think it has been really good for the kids in this community."

She was also happy to see the Niemillers' success. "I was really excited when I heard they were going to finally be able to build a new building," she concluded. "I'm glad everything fell into place for them. I don't think two people deserve it much more than them."

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Elevate Rock School has officially opened at their new south Fargo location. The new school is three times bigger than the old location and is seen on Wednesday, Sept. 29, 2021, at 4650 Agassiz Crossing S, Fargo. Alyssa Goelzer / The Forum