

Policy Wins

“If [early childhood education] works in Oklahoma, why don’t we do it in the whole country? We’ve got an education system that’s leaving too many children behind.”

Then-US Senator Barack Obama
at Educare of Tulsa, March 2007

A Catalyst for Change



Photo: Michael Wyke, Tulsa World

When an Educare School opens in a community, its impact reaches far beyond the young children and families served within its walls. As a platform for change, Educare fires imaginations, provokes dialogue and sparks policy changes that create new and promising education opportunities for children in poverty.

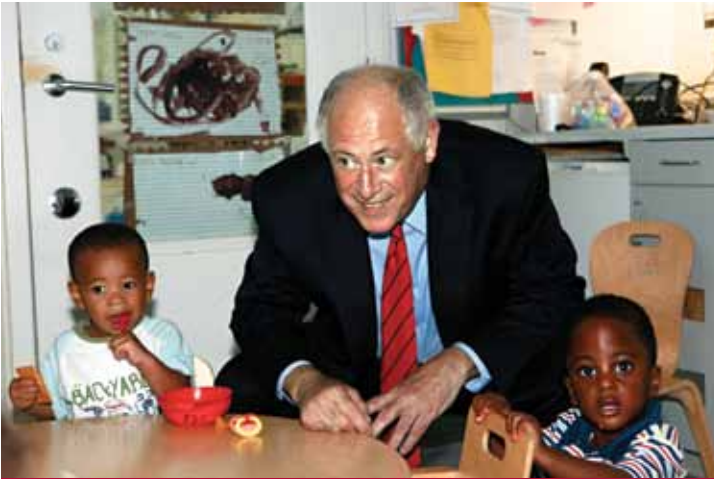
While infants, toddlers and their parents benefit from programming based on cutting-edge science that proves that early interventions can prevent the achievement gap, Educare also serves as a laboratory for generating data used to develop more effective teaching practices. And those techniques are taught and shared with other early childhood practitioners so that even more children can experience the kind of quality that prepares them for success in school and in life.

Sending a Message

In cities across the nation, Educare Schools stand as beacons of hope in otherwise distressed communities. Their striking architecture sends a strong signal that the investment in that neighborhood, and the investment in that community's children, is not just the smart thing to do, it is the right thing to do.

Policy makers hear that message when they visit an Educare School, and they experience the power of early childhood investments firsthand. As a showcase for data-driven programming and design, Educare has played an important role in cultivating new champions for birth-to-five programs and influenced or informed local, state and federal policies that are leveling the playing field for children and families living in poverty.





“Birth to five, there are tremendous learning opportunities for our kids. Early childhood education is one of the very best investments the government can ever make.”

Illinois Gov. Pat Quinn, at a bill-signing event at Educare of Chicago

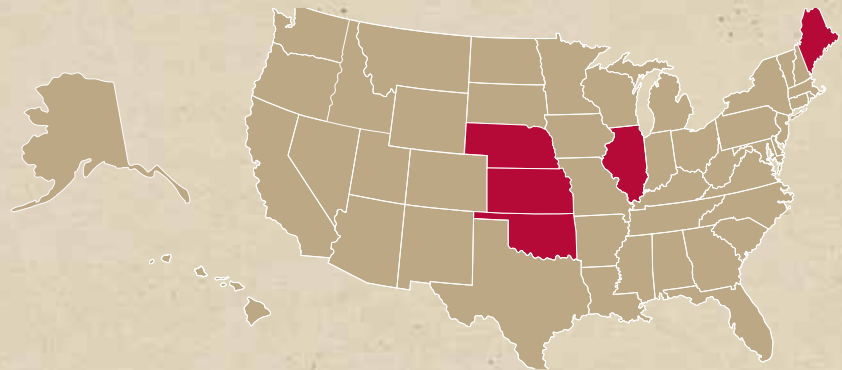
State Wins

Illinois

Educare of Chicago, the first school in the Network, opened in 2000 and has provided numerous leaders, including US Sen. Dick Durbin, with an opportunity to tour a high-quality school and learn how early childhood programs deliver a sound return on investment. In recent years, the state has increased early childhood investments by over \$172 million, and is now providing high-quality early learning opportunities to more than 140,000 at-risk infants, toddlers and preschoolers.

Oklahoma

Educare of Tulsa helped inspire a \$25 million pilot program to promote the school readiness of at-risk children, from birth to three, across the state. Under recent threats of state budget cuts, partners at Educare of Tulsa and Educare of Oklahoma City worked to protect—and save—this funding, which helps dozens of programs statewide.



Kansas

The state established an \$11 million early childhood block grant, with a set-aside for infants and toddlers, informed by discussions with public and private-sector leaders from Educare of Omaha in neighboring Nebraska.

Nebraska

Educare of Omaha helped advocacy and philanthropic leaders make the case for the state to dramatically increase its investments in early learning programs

for four year olds and establish a \$60 million, public-private endowment to create and support services for birth to three across the state. The state constitution was also amended to include the declaration that learning begins at birth.

Maine

Even before Educare of Central Maine opened its doors, it helped to promote expansion of state prekindergarten programs, the redirection of funds to early education and prevention programs, and improvements to the state’s child-care quality standards.



Former First Lady of Maine Karen Baldacci, Susie Buffett, Former Maine Governor John Baldacci

“Every community wants an Educare, but not everyone can have one. But we can all have best practice applications. You can bring people to advocacy, but Educare was the action piece. It allows us to show people what best practices look like and sound like. Educare showed them how we can help all preschoolers, all communities, and all parents. It makes the case that we need to invest more in early childhood.”

Karen Baldacci, former First Lady of Maine
July 2010



US Rep. John Boehner, R-Ohio, (left) and George Kaiser at Educare of Tulsa

Connecting to K-12

The genesis of any Educare School begins with forging a solid partnership with the local public school system. Educare Schools are located either adjacent to or very close to the neighboring elementary school to intentionally demonstrate that Educare students are being prepared for school success and to drive home the message that learning begins at birth.

But the relationship goes much deeper. Educare Schools are often constructed on land donated by the school district, which, in some instances, also provides custodial services and utilities. School districts also can direct local or federal dollars to help sustain an Educare operating budget.

Educare programs are designed to meet K-12 priorities such as reading by third grade and increasing high school graduation rates. And to ensure that gains made in the early years continue into elementary school, Educare staff focus on transitions through planning with parents and developing partnerships with kindergarten teachers to create a seamless and dynamic educational system.

In Omaha, where two Educare Schools operate, the public school system has embraced the value of early childhood education throughout the district. The school superintendent is a member of the Educare governing board. And Educare’s standards for high quality—class size, staff qualifications and child-staff ratios—are becoming the community norm.

“Educare means everything to us. It’s going to bring students into our school system who are ready to learn. No longer will we have to wait for students to fall behind before we help them. Educare will allow them to start school ready to learn.”

Jeffrey Smith, Superintendent of Balsz Elementary School District, at groundbreaking of Educare of Arizona in September 2010

Influencing Policy and Practice in the Classroom

Educare Schools are intentionally designed to serve the children and families who cross their thresholds, and to extend their reach into the communities by working with other early childhood education providers to build a more skilled early childhood workforce that benefits all children.

Educare of Miami-Dade provides resources and training for parents, teachers and providers who serve over 5,000 adults and 80,000 children annually. Educare of Miami-Dade's Early Childhood Program Administrator's Institute has benefitted more than 20,000 children during its first two years of operation.

Creating Better Teachers

Educare of Denver shares a campus with the Clayton Institute and Training Center and serves as a demonstration site for teacher education, leadership development, parent engagement and program evaluation to improve the quality of early childhood services throughout Colorado. Professionals come there to learn the latest in best practices in a real classroom setting.

Newer Educare Schools have been designed with observation rooms off the classroom spaces to allow students, other early education providers and visitors to see what effective early learning looks like, and what infants, toddlers and preschoolers need to succeed.



Health clinic at
Educare of Milwaukee



“It is not enough to think outside the box. We need to find a different box to frame our thinking. Educare is one of those different boxes. It has caused us to think differently about children and families and how we need to better embed and connect schools to their communities.”

Dr. Douglas D. Christensen, Retired Commissioner of Education,
Nebraska Department of Education

“Educare is vital to creating high-quality early care and education. The organization is a catalyst for change in Florida, and beyond. Educare provides a framework for other organizations by demonstrating the importance of affordable, quality early learning for our children. I know that, together, we can achieve this goal for all our children.”

US Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz, D-Fla., after visiting Educare of Miami-Dade

An Integrated Strategy

The Educare movement and two related policy initiatives—the Birth to Five Policy Alliance, focused on state policies, and the First Five Years Fund, focused on federal policies – are supported by a group of like-minded philanthropists: the Buffett Early Childhood Fund; the W.K. Kellogg Foundation; the George Kaiser Family Foundation; The Children’s Initiative: A Project of the J.B. & M.K. Pritzker Foundation; the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; and the Irving Harris Foundation.

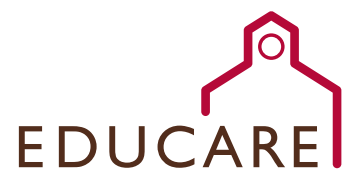


First Five Years Fund



“Spending a morning at Educare, seeing the children so excited about what they were learning, really brought focus to our discussions about the child care policy barriers that often hinder access to high-quality early childhood education for children most in need. We found that when children come into Educare as a toddler and stay through their preschool years they tend to reach kindergarten ready for success. We also found that many children drop out of the program due to child care subsidy policies and processing. That helped motivate us to enact legislation to assure at-risk children a great chance for continuous enrollment in quality early care and education programs.”

Colorado State Rep. Tom Massey, R-60,
after visiting Educare of Denver



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