

# Educare Learning Network Strategic Plan

## Summary

After ten years of expanding our reach in communities across the country, the Educare Learning Network comprises many like-minded individuals committed to improving the educational achievement of at-risk young children. We ask ourselves now:

***“How can we build on the collective knowledge, expertise and experience of our Educare Schools to continue to strengthen our work with children and families and serve as a catalyst for broader change in education across the country?”***

The Network’s strategic planning process in 2012 produced an exciting and ambitious roadmap for our work in the years ahead. A new vision statement and strategic directions will guide our progress as we work to dramatically increase our impact and extend our reach beyond the walls of our Educare Schools.

As a Network, we aim to ensure that many more young children can benefit from high-quality early learning experiences in our communities, in our states and at the national level. To that end, we will continue and expand our efforts at the forefront of early education program, policy, advocacy and research. We will leverage the power of families, engage new partners and build strong collaborations from birth to college in the years ahead.

## Broad-Based Input

Our new strategic plan reflects the input of several hundred families, Educare staff, strategic partners and philanthropic investors who participated in the planning process. These diverse individuals contributed their time, energy and compelling ideas through:

- **6 Task Teams** focused on key issues facing the Network today: collective learning, extending quality practices, policy and communications, research and evaluation, school expansion and sustainability
- **5 Focus Groups** with Educare parents (over 100 across the Network), master teachers and family support supervisors, local evaluation partners, advocates and Network training and implementation assistance staff
- **15 In-depth Interviews** with education experts and philanthropic partners

## A New Vision Statement

*The Educare Learning Network will demonstrate that research-based early childhood education prevents the persistent achievement gap for our nation’s most at-risk young children. The Network’s evidence, practice expertise and dynamic partnerships will help ensure that all children and families, especially those at greatest risk, will have access to effective early learning, and that the first five years will be an integral part of our country’s education system.*

## The Work Ahead

**Strategic Direction 1:** *Model best program practices, generate strong evidence for high quality early learning and communicate it to the broader field.* We will:

- Continue to demonstrate effective approaches for promoting school readiness and success
- Use the collective expertise and experience across the Network to improve our programs and promote new, innovative strategies for closing the achievement gap at kindergarten
- Continue and expand our research and evaluation efforts, leveraging partnerships with our unparalleled network of leading researchers to generate new knowledge for the field

**Strategic Direction 2:** *Expand access to high quality early learning by extending Educare practices and promoting policy change in early education.* We will:

- Extend the reach of Educare’s effective approaches, sharing “what’s working” in our Schools with other early learning programs in our communities and across the country
- Support the work of policy and advocacy leaders to increase the number of young children entering kindergarten ready to learn
- Build new connections and partnerships with parents, community and business leaders and other champions to expand support for early education at all levels

**Strategic Direction 3:** *Build strong connections with K–12 education and influence broader education efforts.* We will:

- Work with parents, teachers and school leaders in K–12 to sustain children’s success in early learning
- Partner with local elementary schools and school districts to contribute to a seamless education continuum from birth through college

### **Foundational, Cross-cutting Priorities:**

- Engage and empower parents as a force for change in their families, schools, and communities
- Position the Network for greater impact through strategic communications
- Address sustainability issues at individual Schools and at the Network level

In sum, as we enter the second decade of Educare, our new strategic plan defines the broad and far-reaching impact we want to have in the years ahead. Our ability to achieve these ambitious goals will continue to be grounded in the strength of our practice, partnerships, research evidence and our commitment to continuous improvement and learning as a national Network going forward.

# Educare Learning Network Vision

The Educare Learning Network will demonstrate that research-based early childhood education prevents the persistent achievement gap for our nation’s most at-risk young children. The Network’s evidence, practice expertise and dynamic partnerships will help ensure that all children and families, especially those at greatest risk, will have access to effective early learning, and that the first five years will be an integral part of our country’s education system.

## Strategic Direction 1

*Model best program practices, generate strong evidence for high quality early learning and communicate it to the broader field*

## Strategic Direction 2

*Expand access to high quality early learning through extending best practices and promoting policy change and increased investments*

## Strategic Direction 3

*Build strong connections with K-12 education and influence broader education efforts*

### Priorities

1. Identify, support and share ongoing collective learning and innovation in Educare’s core components and practices
2. Expand and leverage the Network's potential in research and evaluation

### Priorities

3. Coordinate and leverage extending quality efforts at the national, state and local levels
4. Contribute to policy change at the national, state and local levels
5. Strategically and intentionally expand the Network and its partnerships

### Priorities

6. Partner to increase K-12 leaders’ engagement and investment in 0-8 education
7. Partner effectively with teachers and school leaders in K-12 at the local level to sustain children’s success in early learning over the long term

## Foundational Priorities

