

**Strategic Planning
Final Report**

July 18, 2012

Dear Network Partners,

On July 18th, we will reconvene in Chicago to bring closure to the Educare Learning Network's Strategic Planning process. We're very much looking forward to our time together.

Over the last nine months, we have taken stock of our progress, challenges and opportunities as a Network to date, while defining an ambitious vision and direction for our ongoing work together in the next decade.

We appreciate your thoughtful, committed participation over the course of this process, which has been truly extraordinary in the depth and breadth of engagement and input from our diverse constituencies across the country. It is hard to believe how much we have accomplished together since our Strategic Planning Kick-Off Meeting in October 2011 in Chicago.

The enclosed Final Strategic Planning Report incorporates the ideas, enthusiasm and input of several hundred Educare staff and parents who participated in this planning process, along with our core research, policy and philanthropic partners across the country.

On July 18th, we will review, discuss and provide a final round of input on these materials, with particular attention to the draft 10 priorities and tactics included here. Our consultant, Leo Latz, will facilitate these discussions and help us begin to consider next steps for bringing the Network's new Strategic Plan to life as we enter the implementation phase.

The conclusion of our planning process marks a significant milestone for our Network after our first ten years of cross-country expansion, promising results, continuous learning, and leadership and capacity development for the field. In many ways, our first decade was about building our foundation; the next decade will be about leveraging that foundation for even greater impact.

Above all, our planning process has confirmed that our unique Network of practice, policy, research and private sector leaders is ready to take on this challenge and work in unison to realize significant and dramatic change in the lives of young children, families and communities in the years to come.

We look forward to the work ahead and to seeing you next week.



Final Report

Index of Materials

1	Final Session Agenda
2	Strategic Planning Process Summary
3	Vision Statement
4	Three Strategic Directions
5	Vision, Strategic Directions and Priorities
6	Strategic Priorities Map
7	Implementation Plan
8	Implementation Timeline
9	Task Team Reports
10	Focus Group Summaries
11	Key Stakeholder Interview Themes
12	Appendix



**Educare Learning Network
Final Strategic Planning Meeting**

Wednesday, July 18, 2012
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. CDT

Ounce of Prevention Fund Offices, 33 West Monroe Street, 5th Floor, Chicago, IL

AGENDA

9:30 – 10:00	Light Breakfast
10:00 – 10:15	Welcome & Meeting Purpose
10:15 – 11:15	Overview of Draft Strategic Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision Statement• 3 Strategic Directions• Strategic Priorities Map• Vision, Strategic Directions, and Priorities• Discussion of 10 Priorities
11:15 – 11:30	Short Break
11:30 – 12:15	Working Lunch – Large Group Discussion of 10 Priorities
12:15 – 1:30	Small Group Breakout & Report Back on Tactics
1:30 – 2:00	Moving Forward

Educare Learning Network Strategic Planning Process 2011-2012 - SUMMARY

In fall 2011, the Educare Learning Network launched a comprehensive strategic planning process, following a leadership retreat by partners at the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and the Ounce of Prevention Fund. The overall goal of the planning process was to establish a shared vision and strategic direction to guide the work of the Network as it enters its second decade, and to address the key question: **How can we increasingly leverage the collective knowledge and expertise of the Network to serve as a catalyst for change in practice, policy, and systems beyond the walls of our Educare Schools?**

Since the first Educare School opened in 2000, the growing national Network of Schools has achieved many important milestones. Each public-private partnership has worked to close the achievement gap for at-risk young children and to establish a broader platform for change. Each School has positively influenced the life trajectories of young children and families in its community and in some cases begun to raise the quality of early learning programs “beyond the walls” of Educare. As individual Schools have developed in diverse communities, the nationwide Network has coalesced in both organic and intentional ways. Today, we are a unique group of like-minded individuals powerfully united through our shared experiences and commitment to improving the school readiness and educational achievement of at-risk young children.

The question of whether the Educare model can be expanded to diverse communities across the country has been clearly answered. As we enter the second decade of Educare, leaders across the Network recognized that this was an opportune time to identify the broad and far-reaching impact we want to have collectively as a Network in the years ahead. Our ability to achieve these goals will continue to be grounded in the ongoing strength of our practice, partnerships and research evidence.

Strategic Planning Kick-Off

On October 4 and 5, 2011, executive, philanthropic, and evaluation leaders from across the Educare Learning Network gathered in Chicago to begin to chart the Network’s future strategic direction. Leaders began crafting a vision for the Network that will guide our work over the next decade and beyond. We considered and discussed strategic areas of focus, key questions, and important issues and outlined some preliminary bold steps necessary to achieve our collective vision. We agreed on the process, goals, and objectives for the strategic planning work ahead as well as a set of core commitments that undergird our work with Educare. (These Core Commitments can be found in the Appendix.)

At this meeting, Network leaders agreed on the structure and timeline for the Strategic Planning Process and identified its core components. These components include: 1) six strategic area task teams charged with refining the draft vision statement and producing recommendations that will constitute the core of the new Strategic Plan; 2) a series of focus groups with key stakeholders; and 3) interviews with key funders and potential funders, champions, and national education leaders. Understanding that a tremendous amount of input and information would be generated through this planning process, the co-chairs of the task teams and the Educare

Learning Network staff were assigned the responsibility of synthesizing the results of the planning process for consideration by the executive leadership.

Task Teams

Each task team was co-chaired by an executive leader from an Educare School and a representative from the Buffett Early Childhood Fund or the Ounce of Prevention Fund. Task team members constituted a wide array of executive and program directors from all local Educare Schools, national philanthropic investors, our national evaluation partner, and Educare Learning Network staff. The six task teams included:

- Collective Knowledge
- Extending Quality
- Policy and Communications
- Research and Evaluation
- School Expansion
- Sustainability

Each task team was asked to consider and suggest revisions to the Network's draft vision statement and to answer several key questions related to the strategic direction of the Network going forward. The teams held multiple conference calls and used online surveys to develop recommendations and priorities and to comment on the vision statement. Each team submitted a final report with key recommendations.

February 2012 Co-chairs Meeting and Presentations

On February 7, 2012, the Task Team Co-Chairs met in Chicago to consider a revised Network vision statement that incorporated feedback from the planning process to date; to synthesize the work across task teams into a comprehensive set of recommendations and priorities; and to continue to discuss key strategic directions necessary to achieve the vision.

The Co-Chairs suggested additional changes to the vision statement with the goal of making it bold, aspirational, and distinct from our colleague organizations. An additional priority was to limit the statement to a description of our desired end state and not reference the "how" of our work together.

At the meeting, the Co-Chairs also reported on the work of their task team in response to three questions:

1. What was the process your group undertook to gather input?
2. Please share two to three of your task team's most compelling recommendations, big ideas, or take-aways that will have the most profound impact on the strategic direction of the Network.
3. If your team encountered an issue that you were unable to resolve or that seemed to present an impasse to the process of prioritizing your recommendations, please share this with the group.

Through lively and thorough discussion and debate, Co-Chairs identified key priorities across the task teams. Having revised the vision statement and surfaced key priorities and strategic directions, the co-chairs began planning for the February 2012 Annual Network Meeting. At this meeting, the full group of executive and philanthropic leaders who launched the planning process in October 2011 reconvened to review progress to date, discuss emerging themes, and provide additional high-level input to the Strategic Plan which will guide the Network in the next ten years.

Focus Groups and Interviews

From January – June 2012, we conducted a series of focus groups and one-on-one interviews to reach out to a wide variety of the Network’s key stakeholders to obtain additional input and further refine the emerging vision and strategic directions of the Network.

Focus Groups

Five groups of stakeholders participated in focus groups in January through March 2012:

- Educare parents (100+ participants)
- Master Teachers and Family Support Supervisors from Educare Schools (37 participants)
- Educare Learning Network staff (13 participants)
- Local evaluation partners from among the operating Educare Schools (12 participants)
- Early childhood state advocates (10 participants)

The following Educare schools conducted parent focus groups:

- Arizona
- Central Maine
- Chicago
- Denver
- Kansas City
- Miami
- Milwaukee
- Oklahoma City
- Omaha at Indian Hill
- Omaha at Kellom
- Tulsa at Kendall-Whittier

With the exception of the parent focus groups that were facilitated by each Educare School and/or a member of the local Head Start Policy Council, the focus groups were conducted by our strategic planning consultant, Leo Latz, and Ounce staff who work closely with the Network.

Key Stakeholder Interviews

One-on-one interviews were conducted by senior Network leadership with:

- Current national funders
- Prospective national funders
- Local anchor funders who were not able to participate in the task teams
- Public sector and education leaders

A list of interviews completed to date can be found in the Appendix.

2012 Annual Network Meeting

On March 1, 2012 at the Annual Network Meeting in Kansas City, Jessie Rasmussen and Diana Rauner provided an overview of the strategic planning process to all Network Meeting attendees at the Plenary Session. Representatives from several Educare Schools, including a parent, master teacher and family support staff shared their reflections on the strategic planning process to date with all attendees.

In the Executive Session that afternoon, Educare executives and philanthropic leaders continued work on the Educare Learning Network Strategic Plan. Leaders received a copy of the Interim Strategic Planning Report in advance of the meeting.

During the session, Network leaders shared reflections on the planning process, including the breadth of participation that had been secured from across the Educare Learning Network. Attendees reviewed and unanimously approved a new vision statement for the Network, which reflected input from all of the task teams, focus groups and key stakeholder interviews completed thus far. The group agreed that this vision statement captured the Network's aspirations and potential to spark far-reaching change for young children in poverty in the next ten years.

Network leaders reviewed and ratified three new Strategic Directions to guide the Network in realizing its vision:

- *Strategic Direction 1:* Model best program practices, generate strong evidence for high quality early learning and communicate it to the field
- *Strategic Direction 2:* Expand access to high quality early learning by 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

The group commended the six task teams for their work and detailed recommendations in key areas. Leaders reviewed the list of "15 Priorities with General Agreement" that had emerged from the planning process to date. While agreeing that these 15 Interim Priorities were accurate, leaders requested that the importance of the Network's partnerships with Head Start be strengthened and that the term "education alignment" replace references to "education reform" in the Interim Report document and going forward.

Network leaders broke into three small groups for detailed discussion. Each group considered two of the following tactical questions:

1. How should we develop a shared understanding and approach to model fidelity going forward?
2. How can Network sites work together to address shared sustainability gaps and challenges?

3. How should the Network strengthen our connections to K-12 and increase our influence in broader education reform conversations?
4. How should we make a more effective collaboration among the Educare Learning Network, First Five Years Fund, and the Birth to Five Policy Alliance?
5. How can the Network best leverage our work with and further engage families to support progress on our long-term vision and strategic directions?
6. How can the Network contribute to ongoing conversation related to workforce development and leadership succession issues within our own sites and in the field at large?

Through these discussions and subsequent report-outs to the full group, Network leaders provided further input to inform the next phase of the planning process, which focused on development of a draft Implementation Plan and finalizing the full Strategic Planning Report.

Final Strategic Planning Report

Between March and June 2012, BECF and Ounce leadership along with our consultant, Leo Latz, worked to synthesize all of the information and feedback generated since the October 2011 Strategic Planning Kick-Off Meeting into a high-level Implementation Plan. This plan links the Network's new vision and three strategic directions to corresponding priorities and high-level tactics to guide the Network's activities going forward.

In drafting this Implementation Plan, the original 15 Priorities with General Agreement in the Interim Plan were distilled, streamlined and repackaged into 10 priorities for inclusion in the Final Strategic Plan. Each of these 10 priorities either maps directly to one of the three Strategic Directions, or supports all of the Directions and is therefore foundational to the whole plan. High-level tactics associated with each of the 10 priorities were identified from the broad-base of input and recommendations from the task teams, focus groups, key stakeholder interviews and multiple meetings of the Network Leaders and Task Team Co-Chairs throughout the strategic planning process. The resulting draft Implementation Plan is a roadmap to inform a series of more detailed work plans which will need to be developed as the plan moves into execution and as resource development efforts begin in earnest.

At the end of June 2012, the Task Team Co-Chairs convened by phone to review and provide feedback on core documents in the draft Final Strategic Planning Report and to finalize the agenda for the upcoming meeting with the Network's Executive and Philanthropic Leaders in Chicago in July.

July 2012 - Executive Leaders Meeting in Chicago

Network leaders will convene for a day-long meeting in Chicago on July 18th to review and provide input on the Final Strategic Planning Report discuss prioritization, timing and sequencing issues to guide the Network's activities going forward. This meeting will bring closure to the Educare Learning Network's 2011-2012 Strategic Planning process and provide a jumping off point into the Plan's implementation phase.

Educare Learning Network 2012 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 the nation's education system.

Educare Learning Network

Vision



Strategic Directions

Vision – Key Components

Strategic Directions

1. Demonstrate that research-based early childhood education prevents the persistent achievement gap



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

2. All children, especially those at greatest risk, have access to effective early learning



2. Expand access to high quality early learning by:

- a. Extending best practices
- b. Promoting policy change and increased investments

3. The first five years have become an integral part of the nation's education system.



3. Build strong connections with K-12 education and influence broader education reform efforts

Educare Learning Network

Vision, Strategic Directions and Priorities



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.

Strategic Direction 1

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

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

Strategic Direction 2

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

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

Strategic Direction 3

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

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

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

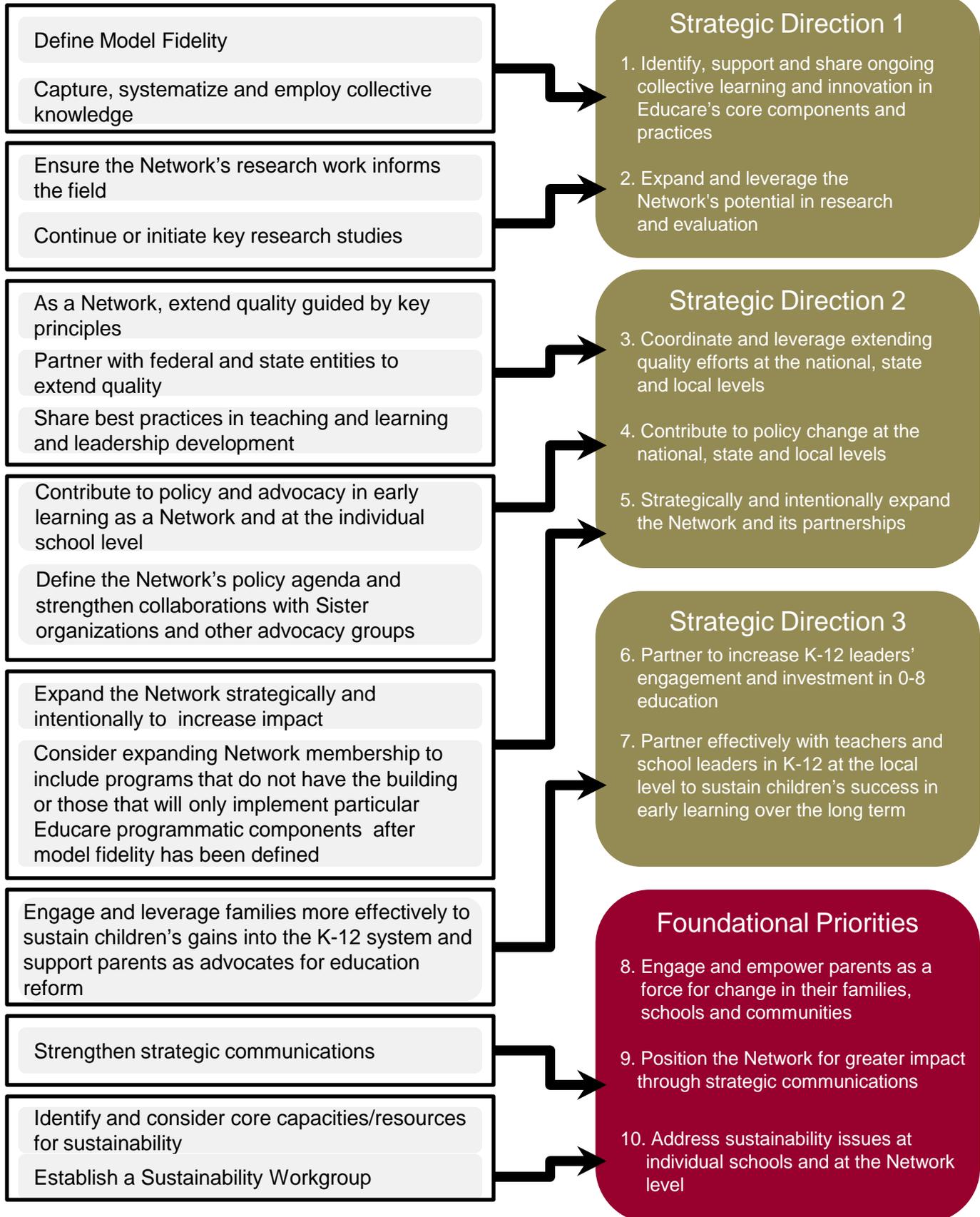
Note: Priority numbers do not indicate level of importance or rank

Strategic Priorities Map

15 interim priorities were distilled and condensed to 10 as illustrated below.

Interim Report Priorities

Final Priorities



Implementation Plan

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

Priority 1: Identify, support and share ongoing collective learning and innovation in Educare's core components and practices

The Network will act as a unique laboratory where effective early learning practices are identified, refined and eventually scaled to improve the educational achievement of large numbers of at-risk children across the country. Going forward, the Network will serve as a central resource for ongoing innovation in the field to help address key challenges facing parents, teachers and schools nationwide. By incorporating new research, harnessing the Network's collective expertise and learning, continually refining our model, and building new partnerships with education leaders and champions from diverse fields, we will improve our practices and contribute to broader education efforts over time.

Tactics

- 1.1 Establish a Model Fidelity Workgroup to examine and develop consensus on core components of Educare
- 1.2 Define and implement a process for regularly assessing model fidelity that allows the Educare model to evolve and supports ongoing innovation
- 1.3 Support the ongoing development of the Educare model based on research and experience
- 1.4 Use collective knowledge and innovations to inform and influence early childhood education and other fields
- 1.5 Fully harness and leverage human capital and expertise across the Network
- 1.6 Develop and fully leverage an interactive information system for circulating information across the Network and with the field
- 1.7 Develop an alternate framework for describing and communicating the Educare model to new audiences and fields
- 1.8 Explore becoming a national resource center for early childhood education and other fields

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

Priority 2: Expand and leverage the Network's potential in research and evaluation

The Network's research and evaluation initiatives will contribute to a national body of evidence on effective strategies for improving child and family outcomes while strengthening the case for increased investments in high-quality early childhood education. We will conduct new, field-building research through which we will pilot, evaluate and disseminate effective early learning approaches. Expanded partnerships and collaborations with a broad base of leading researchers will ensure the Network's ongoing work will be informed by the latest scientific research in early childhood education and adjacent fields.

Tactics

- 2.1 Establish a Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee to create a framework and processes to continue to develop and advance our research agenda as a Network
- 2.2 Initiate, continue and/or complete key research studies such as randomized control trials (RCT), the existing implementation study, and new and coordinated elementary school follow-up studies
- 2.3 Communicate and disseminate research findings to inform the field
- 2.4 Coordinate and leverage creative research partnerships within the Network and with new partners
- 2.5 Develop and implement a data dashboard to allow for real time data sharing across the Network

Strategic Direction 2: Expand access to high quality early learning by extending best practices and promoting policy change and increased investments

Priority 3: Coordinate and leverage extending quality efforts at the national, state and local levels

The Network will export Educare’s successful practices “beyond the walls” of our Schools to raise the quality and effectiveness of early childhood programs in our communities and across the country. Through new partnerships with programs that reach large numbers of young children (e.g., Head Start, local, state and federal education agencies, Child Care), we will extend the reach of Educare’s components that have proven effective in narrowing the achievement gap in diverse communities across our Network. Collaborative efforts to scale key Educare practices (e.g., the use of data to improve instruction, intensive professional development and strategies for engaging families as partners and change agents) will ensure that many more young children can participate in quality early learning programs that build a foundation for success in school.

Tactics

- 3.1 Document and map current efforts to extend quality practices at local Educare Schools and identify opportunities to expand and leverage successful local initiatives
- 3.2 Develop, coordinate and evaluate new extending quality efforts by groups of Schools across the Network
- 3.3 Explore and develop partnerships with public entities that reach large numbers of at-risk young children to help raise the quality of early learning programs on a broader scale

Strategic Direction 2: Expand access to high quality early learning by extending best practices and promoting policy change and increased investments

Priority 4: Contribute to policy change at the national, state and local levels

Over the next decade, the Network will define our role in the policy arena and, in collaboration with advocacy leaders, help to realize an exponential increase in the number of young, at-risk children who enter kindergarten well-prepared for success in school in the future. We will leverage the Network's collective voice, developing and disseminating the Network's positions on key national policy issues. By working with leading advocates at the local, state and federal levels, we will support Educare program leaders, parents, private sector champions and other partners in leveraging Educare Schools as compelling "showrooms for quality." Together, we will strengthen the case for increased investments in evidence-based early learning programs and improve program quality in existing initiatives.

Tactics

- 4.1 Establish an Educare Policy Workgroup to define and guide the Network's goals and approach to contributing to policy change at the local, state and federal levels
- 4.2 Build and leverage relationships with federal entities, specifically Head Start, Office of Child Care and the U.S. Department of Education
- 4.3 As individual Schools, connect and collaborate with advocacy and other relevant leaders at the local, state and national levels in ways that reflect each Educare School's unique political environment and opportunities
- 4.4 Partner to strengthen the capacity of individual Schools and the Network to engage in policy and advocacy work
- 4.5 Strengthen intentional collaboration with the First Five Years Fund, Birth to Five Policy Alliance and other advocacy groups

Strategic Direction 2: Expand access to high quality early learning by extending best practices and promoting policy change and increased investments

Priority 5: Strategically and intentionally expand the Network and its partnerships

The Network will support the development of new Educare Schools in key locations and contexts across the country. Through this strategic expansion, we will further build the Network's presence as a force for program and policy change over the long run. With at least 20 Educare Schools serving 3,100 children in 12 states and the District of Columbia, we will be well-positioned to deepen, broaden and diversify our relationships and collaborations with leading organizations and champions in the early childhood field and more broadly. New and stronger partnerships will allow us to share our effective approaches beyond the walls of our School buildings, contribute to policy and systems change, and support parents, community leaders and other champions in positively impacting the life trajectories of many more at-risk children nationwide.

Tactics

- 5.1 Develop a business plan for Educare School expansion that includes criteria for new Schools, including possible Affiliates
- 5.2 Form and leverage strategic partnerships with essential organizations, leaders and champions to further the Network's impact
- 5.3 Establish an Educare National Advisory Board to increase recognition and prominence to the Network and the issue of early learning

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

Priority 6: Partner to increase K-12 leaders' engagement and investment in 0-8 education

The Network will expand our participation in discussions of how to improve the country's education system at the local, state and national levels, contributing to a growing movement to establish a seamless educational continuum from birth through college. We will strengthen our existing relationships with local school districts and state education agencies as core partners in Educare, expanding our connections and presence in the broader education arena. Through participation in new forums and conversations about 0-8 education, we will engage with like-minded K-12 leaders and participate in efforts to increase the education system's focus on and financial investment in effective early learning programs.

Tactics

- 6.1 Establish a 0-8 Advisory Committee, including Network representatives, other 0-5 leaders and experts from K-12, to identify and guide the Network's unique contribution to 0-8 education issues
- 6.2 Leverage and strategically position the Network and 0-5 education through proactive participation in K-12 conversations and forums
- 6.3 Build strategic partnerships and engage in collaborative projects with leading K-12 researchers, thought leaders, policy and advocacy leaders and practitioners at the national level
- 6.4 Contribute to advocacy efforts to increase the K-12 system's financial investment and overall involvement in 0-5 education practice and policy at the state and national level

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

Priority 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

The Network will explore and develop new collaborations with K-12 teachers and schools to share knowledge and best practices for promoting young children’s achievement and sustaining early gains as they progress into elementary school and beyond. We will support children, parents, teachers and Educare School leaders in local communities in building strong bridges to elementary schools, generating connections and joint efforts to ensure effective transitions and align and improve practices to maximize children’s achievement over the long run. New collaborations will enhance classroom instruction and assessment strategies, strengthen long-term parent engagement and identify lessons learned to inform the field.

Tactics

- 7.1 Map current strategies for building connections with K-12 at the local School and Network levels and identify opportunities to expand effective strategies
- 7.2 Strengthen relationships and collaborative work with K-12 constituencies in local Educare communities (e.g., Educare alumni parents, K-3 teachers, local superintendents, principals and school board members) to better connect 0-5 and K-12 and seed new innovations
- 7.3 Document and disseminate lessons learned to the 0-5 and K-12 fields

Foundational Priorities

Priority 8: Engage and empower parents as a force for change in their families, schools and communities

The Network will develop and refine strategies for engaging the Educare parents and other family members as a force for positive change in their families, schools and communities. Informed by the latest research, we will help parents build leadership and capacities to support their children's learning in the home, partner effectively with teachers, and develop essential social capital and skills to become change agents across the educational continuum. By empowering and harnessing the energy and experience of Educare parents, we will support their efforts to build strong families, schools and communities and help sustain and accelerate their children's achievement over the long run.

Tactics

- 8.1 Partner with Educare families to promote leadership, social capital and skill development; build strong relationships between parents within individual Educare Schools and across the Network; and establish collaborative and effective alliances between staff and families
- 8.2 Ensure continuous improvement and innovation in our family engagement work and package, communicate and disseminate best practices
- 8.3 Establish strategic partnerships with public and private sector leaders to influence and contribute to national initiatives around family engagement and empowerment
- 8.4 Partner with families in collective advocacy efforts; engage and leverage Educare families as spokespeople, champions and advocates for their children's educational success into K-12

Foundational Priorities

Priority 9: Position the Network for greater impact through strategic communications

The Network will more effectively capture and share Educare's collective story in promoting the educational success of at-risk young children. We are a group of exemplary Schools in rural, urban and suburban areas, and a diverse group of program, policy, private sector and research leaders that is uniquely positioned to communicate the critical importance of early learning. In the next decade, we will build our communications capacity and expertise, utilize innovative communication vehicles and expand and broaden our base of champions to take our message of the importance of early learning and the Educare approach to a broad audience.

Tactics

- 9.1 Strengthen internal communications across the Network and assist Schools in their efforts to develop communications capacity
- 9.2 Frame and communicate the power and potential of the Network as a force for broader program and policy change
- 9.3 Partner with like-minded leaders and organizations to change public will around early education

Foundational Priorities

Priority 10: Address sustainability issues at individual Schools and at the Network level

In the years ahead, the Network will focus on strengthening the programmatic and financial foundation needed to sustain our impact as individual Schools and as a collective Network. This foundation is essential to each School's ability to generate strong child outcomes and serve as a platform for broader program and policy change. The Network will identify opportunities to build the types of expertise, capacity, resources and supports needed at the individual School and Network level, develop strategies for sharing expertise in these areas and secure additional resources to address sustainability challenges in the future.

Tactics

- 10.1 Establish a Sustainability Work Group
- 10.2 Develop peer learning activities and offer consultation to Schools in their efforts to build core resources and capacities (e.g. human capital, leadership, funding, innovation) to leverage their work with Educare and solidify and expand their impact over time

Educare Learning Network Implementation Timeline

Priority 1: Identify, support and share ongoing collective learning and innovation in Educare's core components and practices				
Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
1.1	Establish a Model Fidelity Workgroup to examine and develop consensus on core components of Educare	▬		
1.2	Define and implement a process for regularly assessing model fidelity that allows the Educare model to evolve and supports ongoing innovation	▬		
1.3	Support the ongoing development of the Educare model based on research and experience	▬		
1.4	Use collective knowledge and innovations to inform and influence early childhood education and other fields	▬		
1.5	Fully harness and leverage human capital and expertise across the Network	▬		
1.6	Develop and fully leverage an interactive information system for circulating information across the Network and with the field	▬		
1.7	Develop an alternate framework for describing and communicating the Educare model to new audiences and fields	▬		
1.8	Explore becoming a national resource center for early childhood education and other fields	▬		

Priority 2: Expand and leverage the Network's potential in research and evaluation				
Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
2.1	Establish a Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee to create a framework and processes to continue to develop and advance our research agenda as a Network	▬		
2.2	Initiate, continue and/or complete key research studies such as randomized control trials (RCT), the existing implementation study, and new and coordinated elementary school follow-up studies	▬		
2.3	Communicate and disseminate research findings to inform the field	▬		
2.4	Coordinate and leverage creative research partnerships within the Network and with new partners	▬		
2.5	Develop and implement a data dashboard to allow for real time data sharing across the Network	▬		

Priority 3: Coordinate and leverage extending quality efforts at the national, state and local levels

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
3.1	Document and map current efforts to extend quality practices at local Educare Schools and identify opportunities to expand and leverage successful local initiatives			
3.2	Develop, coordinate and evaluate new extending quality efforts by groups of Schools across the Network			
3.3	Explore and develop partnerships with public entities that reach large numbers of at-risk young children to help raise the quality of early learning programs on a broader scale			

Priority 4: Contribute to policy change at the national, state and local levels

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
4.1	Establish an Educare Policy Workgroup to define and guide the Network's goals and approach to contributing to policy change at the local, state and federal levels			
4.2	Build and leverage relationships with federal entities, specifically Head Start, Office of Child Care and the U.S. Department of Education			
4.3	As individual Schools, connect and collaborate with advocacy and other relevant leaders at the local, state and national levels in ways that reflect each Educare School's unique political environment and opportunities			
4.4	Partner to strengthen the capacity of individual Schools and the Network to engage in policy and advocacy work			
4.5	Strengthen intentional collaboration with the First Five Years Fund, Birth to Five Policy Alliance and other advocacy groups			

Priority 5: Strategically and intentionally expand the Network and its partnerships

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
5.1	Develop a business plan for Educare School expansion that includes criteria for new Schools, including possible Affiliates			
5.2	Form and leverage strategic partnerships with essential organizations, leaders and champions to further the Network's impact			
5.3	Establish an Educare National Advisory Board to increase recognition and prominence to the Network and the issue of early learning			

Priority 6: Partner to increase K – 12 leaders' engagement and investments in 0 - 8

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
6.1	Establish a 0-8 Advisory Committee, including Network representatives, other 0-5 leaders and experts from K-12, to identify and guide the Network's unique contribution to 0-8 education issues	_____		
6.2	Leverage and strategically position the Network and 0-5 education through proactive participation in K-12 conversations and forums	_____		
6.3	Build strategic partnerships and engage in collaborative projects with leading K-12 researchers, thought leaders, policy and advocacy leaders and practitioners at the national level	_____		
6.4	Contribute to advocacy efforts to increase the K-12 system's financial investment and overall involvement in 0-5 education practice and policy at the state and national level	_____		

Priority 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

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
7.1	Map current strategies for building connections with K-12 at the local School and Network levels and identify opportunities to expand effective strategies	_____		
7.2	Strengthen relationships and collaborative work with K-12 constituencies in local Educare communities (e.g., Educare alumni parents, K-3 teachers, local superintendents, principals and school board members) to better connect 0-5 and K-12 and seed new innovations	_____		
7.3	Document and disseminate lessons learned to the 0-5 and K-12 fields	_____		

Priority 8: Engage and empower parents as a force for change in their families, schools and communities

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
8.1	Partner with Educare families to promote leadership, social capital and skill development; build strong relationships between parents within individual Educare Schools and across the Network; and establish collaborative and effective alliances between staff and families	_____		
8.2	Ensure continuous improvement and innovation in our family engagement work and package, communicate and disseminate best practices	_____		
8.3	Establish strategic partnerships with public and private sector leaders to influence and contribute to national initiatives around family engagement and empowerment	_____		
8.4	Partner with families in collective advocacy efforts; engage and leverage Educare families as spokespeople, champions and advocates for their children's educational success into K-12	_____		

Priority 9: Position the Network for greater impact through strategic communications

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
9.1	Strengthen internal communications across the Network and assist Schools in their efforts to develop communications capacity			
9.2	Frame and communicate the power and potential of the Network as a force for broader program and policy change			
9.3	Partner with like-minded leaders and organizations to change public will around early education			

Priority 10: Address sustainability issues at individual Schools and at the Network level

Tactics		Short Term (1 - 3 years)	Medium Term (4 - 6 years)	Long Term (7 - 10 years)
10.1	Establish a Sustainability Work Group			
10.2	Develop peer learning activities and offer consultation to Schools in their efforts to build core resources and capacities (e.g. human capital, leadership, funding, innovation) to leverage their work with Educare and solidify and expand their impact over time			

Collective Knowledge Task Team Report

Chair: Caren Calhoun, Educare of Tulsa at Hawthorne and Educare of Tulsa at Kendall-Whittier

Co-chair: Cynthia Stringfellow, Educare Learning Network

Phyllis Glink – The Irving Harris Foundation

Jenny Miller – Steve Nash Foundation

Theresa Hawley – Educare of West DuPage

Gladys Montes – Educare of Miami-Dade

Amy Herring – Educare of Kansas City

Julie Palmer-Blackwell – Educare Learning Network

Carol Howard – Educare of Washington, DC

Renee Welch – Educare Learning Network

Malana Means – Educare of Oklahoma City

Deb Winkelmann – Educare of Omaha at Indian Hill

Introduction

The Collective Knowledge Task Team convened to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by the Educare Learning Network related to collective knowledge and learning in order to make recommendations on how the Network can maximize our impact in the years ahead. The task team held two phone meetings to discuss strategic questions and develop recommendations related to the Network's collective knowledge efforts. During the first phone meeting the team reflected and provided feedback on the Network's preliminary 10-year vision statement and began to generate answers to the following strategic questions:

1. What unique contributions and innovations should we focus on capturing from within the Educare Learning Network to inform and enrich practices within our Network and across the ECE field?
2. What are the best and most resourceful ways to improve and systematize Collective Knowledge so that continuous improvement at individual schools and across the Network occurs over the next decade?
3. How can the Network position and share its current knowledge base to add value not only to the schools within the Network, but also the broader field?

The Collective Knowledge Task Team came together for a second phone meeting to refine the ideas that emerged in the first meeting and generate additional recommendations. Over the course of these two discussions, the team organized their thinking about collective knowledge by separating the recommendations into two lists: those that could be achieved in the short-term and those that were more appropriate for the long-term. After the second meeting, the team prioritized their recommendations through an online survey that used A, B, C rankings (described on the following page) within a short-term list and a long-term list.

The following report outlines the Collective Knowledge Task Team's recommended strategies and systems for the Educare Learning Network to advance collective knowledge and learning across the Network, and to engage in information sharing with the broader early childhood field.

Recommendations

Explanation of Prioritization Ratings

“A” Rated Recommendations:

Our most urgent and compelling priorities. These should have been addressed yesterday!

“B” Rated Recommendations:

Very important priorities that don't rise to the same level of urgency as our “A” priorities.

“C” Rated Recommendations:

Our dream list – the “wouldn't it be great if...” list!

Short-term Recommendations:

“A” Rated Recommendations:

1. Create a communication system for ongoing updates, announcements, resources, and information sharing by using the renovated Network intranet. **(10 votes out of 11)**
2. Create an electronic Resource Guide with information about each Educare school, including the unique features of each school and the core features, best practices, and innovations that each school does exceptionally well. **(7 votes out of 11)**
3. Develop mini-fellowships or an exchange program for Educare staff to visit other schools to share ideas and practices for enhancing professional development. **(6 votes out of 11)**
4. Embed time and funding for Educare staff to participate in Collective Knowledge sharing activities, such as fellowships and conferences. **(6 votes out of 11)**
5. Create an online School Dashboard with basic data from each Educare school (e.g. average daily attendance, enrollment, staff turnover, etc.) to help schools monitor and problem-solve common challenges. **(6 votes out of 11)**
6. Identify best practices in the broader early childhood field that we want to ensure we share across the Network to enhance Educare schools. **(6 votes out of 11)**

“B” Rated Recommendations:

7. Determine ways to disseminate the identified best practices throughout the early childhood field. **(7 votes out of 11)**
8. Develop mini-conferences or study groups on topics of interest to share ideas and practices for enhancing professional development. **(6 votes out of 11)**
9. Create an online document for external audiences that describes the unique qualities and characteristics of each Educare school. **(6 votes out of 11)**

Long-term Recommendations:

“A” Rated Recommendations:

10. The Educare Learning Network will be a national resource center for early childhood programs and other entities in the areas of partnership building, program design and governance, sustainability, family engagement, workforce development, policy and advocacy. **(8 votes out of 11)**
11. Educare schools will be model “lab schools” for higher education institutions and drive the agenda for teacher preparation by serving as placements for student internships and practicums. **(8 votes out of 11)**
12. Create and facilitate a culture for Collective Knowledge and Learning throughout the Network that supports sharing knowledge across the Network, as well as with the broader early childhood field. **(8 votes out of 11)**

“B” Rated Recommendations:

13. Create an Educare Parent Alumni Group that is connected across the Network to share experiences as parents of children 0-5, to share lessons learned about how to sustain children’s educational gains into the K-12 school system, and to act as advocates for high quality early childhood education. **(6 votes out of 11)**
14. Partner with other stakeholders to increase our Collective Knowledge sharing around health and mental health outcomes for children and families. **(Tied between A & B priority at 5 votes each out of 11)**

Extending Quality Task Team Report

Chair: Gladys Haynes, Educare of Omaha at Kellom and Educare of Omaha at Indian Hill

Co-chair: Portia Kennel, Educare Learning Network

Ray Bitsche – Educare of Oklahoma City

Gladys Montes – Educare of Miami-Dade

Donna Bryant – FPG Child Development Institute

Paula Moujalli – Educare of Miami-Dade

Maribel Centeno – Educare Learning Network

Sarah Mudd – Educare Learning Network

Claire Dunham – Educare of Chicago

Jessie Rasmussen – Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Tracye Fortin – Educare Central Maine

Ginger Ward – Educare Arizona

Rafel Hart – Educare of Seattle

Nick Wechsler – Educare Learning Network

Cathy McCarty – Educare of Denver

Noreen Yazejian – FPG Child Development Institute

Introduction

Over the last two months, the Extending Quality Task Team convened twice to consider ways that the Educare Learning Network can be more deliberate and intentional about maximizing its efforts to extend the reach of Educare’s evidence based practices beyond the walls of our Educare schools. Over the course of two phone meetings, Extending Quality Task Team members considered the following questions:

1. What are the best practices or core components of Educare that the Network should focus on extending?
2. What types of programs (i.e. EHS/HS, child care centers, public school preschools, etc.) should be the target of the Network’s quality extension efforts? What other criteria should we focus on in selecting programs with which to work?
3. What strategic partnerships should the Network consider establishing to accomplish our goals in this area?

As an outgrowth of those two discussions, an Educare Learning Network Extending Quality survey was circulated to the task team to help prioritize and refine the task team’s recommendations. The report that follows details the key components and strategies that the task team recommends the Educare Learning Network undertake in order to advance an extending quality effort to the communities and systems that encompass our Network of Educare schools.

Recommendations

The Educare Learning Network has unique expertise to offer the early childhood field through developing a professional development training and TA model to extend quality practices.

1. Based on an agreed definition of fidelity across the Educare Learning Network, the Network will begin to extend quality through professional development, training, and technical assistance.
2. The Educare Learning Network will use a “good to great” approach to guide the selection of programs with which to work in its extending quality effort.
3. The Educare Learning Network should establish an Extending Quality Workgroup to guide the Network’s collective efforts to extend quality. The Extending Quality Workgroup will draw Educare leaders from CEO/Exec. Directors, Educare school management staff, Educare Learning Network staff, and anchor philanthropic partners and will invite external partners as appropriate.
4. The Educare Learning Network is uniquely positioned to share the following Teaching and Learning Practices through its extending quality effort (in order of priority):
 - a. Continuous Improvement and Data Collection/Analysis/Utilization
 - b. Implementation/Sustainment of Master Teacher Professional Development, and
 - c. Implementation of Primary Caregiving/Continuity of Care.
5. The Educare Learning Network is uniquely positioned to share the following Leadership Development Practices through its extending quality effort (in order of priority):
 - a. Systems for High Quality Teaching and Family Support Work
 - b. Reflective Practice
 - c. Implementing Research-Program Partnerships
6. The Educare Learning Network has the potential to make the greatest contribution to the early childhood field by focusing its extending quality efforts on programs that serve and support at-risk children from the prenatal period to age five.
7. The Educare Learning Network will identify and define criteria for establishing baseline levels of resources, infrastructure, and readiness for change to use in selecting programs for its extending quality efforts.
8. The Educare Learning Network’s extending quality efforts should include improving quality within government entities and institutions that reach large numbers of children, such as (in order of priority):
 - a. Federal Early Head Start and Head Start (possibly by collaborating with the Office of Head Start directly or with the National Training Centers)
 - b. Local Public Schools and School Districts (particularly those adjacent to Educare Schools)
 - c. State Departments of Child Care
 - d. State Departments of Education

Policy and Communications Task Team Report

Chair: Dana Jones, Educare of Washington DC **Co-chair:** Jessie Rasmussen, Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Charlotte Brantley – Educare of Denver

Kathy Colfer – Educare Central Maine

Harriet Dichter – Ounce of Prevention Fund

Hanke Gratteau – Ounce of Prevention Fund

Claudia Grillo – Educare of Miami-Dade

Bob Harbison – Inasmuch Foundation

Ann Kirwan – Ounce of Prevention Fund

Vanessa Maanao-French – Educare of Seattle

Meera Mani – David & Lucile Packard Foundation

Cynthia Stringfellow – Educare Learning Network

Ginger Ward – Educare Arizona

Introduction

While there is agreement that a core role of the Educare Learning Network and Educare schools is to function as a “platform for policy change,” this role had yet to be defined. As part of the Network’s strategic planning process, the Policy and Communications Task Team was charged with making recommendations about future roles and activities of the Network and individual Educare schools in policy, advocacy, and communications that respect the unique circumstances of each Educare school and capitalize on current strengths and progress to date.

The task team explored the following strategic questions:

Policy

1. What should Educare’s role in policy be at the local, state, and federal levels (i.e. what is the Network’s “to do?” What is the role for an individual school?). How can we use the Network to contribute to progress at each level?)
2. What should the policy agenda of the Educare Learning Network include? What are our priorities across various policy areas?
3. How should the Educare Learning Network partner with other organizations to contribute to policy change?

Communications

1. What do Educare schools need to more effectively communicate the message and impact of Educare to a variety of audiences?
2. What role should the Network play to help communicate and educate the public more broadly about the need for early learning investments?
3. As Educare’s external visibility continues to grow, how should we address issues related to consistent messaging and branding across the Network?

The Policy and Communications Task Team’s recommendations are designed to:

1. Strengthen the capacity of Educare schools (both individually and collectively) to help inform effective public policies for young children in poverty;

2. Leverage Educare as a platform of change to raise the quality of early education services in communities and states, while partnering with local advocates and other leaders and respecting the context of local and federal opportunities, and
3. Effectively communicate the message and impact of Educare to a variety of audiences to increase early learning investments.

To develop its recommendations, the Policy and Communications Task Team convened three meetings and distributed a survey to 48 Educare Anchor Funders, Program Administrators/School Directors, Executive Directors, and Network senior staff to solicit input on a set of detailed policy and communications recommendations and strategies. The survey had close to an 80% response rate.

Several overarching themes emerged from the survey and task team discussions. Every recommendation in the survey received significant positive support (81% and above). It also became clear that the recommendations should be sequenced, beginning with activities that might be tackled first, given that other recommendations may take additional financial resources to implement.

There was strong consensus about the role of the collective Network in policy and communications work going forward, such as establishing Network-wide frameworks for work in these areas, the need to define more clearly and intentionally how the Network, the First Five Years Fund and the Birth to Five Policy Alliance can effectively partner, and to facilitate information-sharing among schools.

There was also support for branding guidelines for every school to follow, and for providing guidelines on how individual schools could customize communications materials given local contexts and needs.

Although there was a shared understanding of the value of Educare schools engaging in public policy and communications work, there were differences about whether this work should be “voluntary” or “required” at the individual school level. Concerns were voiced about the capacity in terms of staff, time, and resources that each school might need to implement the policy and communications recommendations. There were questions about accountability for achieving policy impact since each state’s policy landscape poses unique challenges. Participants emphasized that the specific role of each Educare school in the policy arena will vary depending on ongoing advocacy efforts by other groups, the political context, and other issues in their states. In general, team members agreed that Educare schools should identify how they can best contribute to advocacy and policy change efforts through partnerships with existing advocacy leaders and organizations, rather than working in isolation or as a “driver” of policy change.

With these factors in mind, there was support for communicating a strong expectation that all Educare schools, in partnership with advocates and other leaders, intentionally engage in policy and communications efforts in their communities and their states and at the federal level.

Recommendations

Policy

1. Create an Educare Policy Workgroup to define and advance the Network's public policy priorities and approach.
2. Outline the principles, goals, and areas of focus for the Network's collective efforts in policy. This framework will be a resource to Educare schools as they contribute to policy change based on the opportunities and context in their own communities and states.
3. Engage in public policy and advocacy efforts at the federal level.
4. Improve, maintain, and leverage productive relationships with Head Start administrators at the federal and regional levels.
5. Strengthen collaboration with the First Five Years Fund and Birth to Five Policy Alliance.
6. Support each Educare school in developing an individualized plan to guide its involvement in policy and advocacy efforts in its own state.
7. Support the capacity of individual Educare schools to contribute to policy change at the state and local levels, in collaboration with advocacy leaders in their respective states.
8. Provide access to a range of opportunities for Educare leaders to increase their knowledge and share information, resources, and strategies related to policy and advocacy work.

Communications

1. Develop shared branding guidelines that establish a common understanding of the use of the Educare logo, taglines, etc.
2. Outline the principals, goals, and areas of focus to deliver compelling, highly accessible information to a variety of audiences about Educare's ongoing efforts and results. This framework will be a guide and a resource for Educare schools to inform their communications and messaging work in their own states.
3. Support the capacity of individual Educare schools to communicate Educare's key messages and results and to develop their own customized communications plan.
4. Provide access to a range of opportunities for Educare leaders to increase the effectiveness of their communications activities.

5. Create resources and a set of common tools to be used collectively by the Network and Educare schools. Assist Educare schools in customizing tools to reach a variety of audiences at local and state levels. These resources and tools should include:
 - a. Highly accessible ways to communicate Educare Implementation Study results, e.g. produce a slide show that summarizes evaluation findings that is updated annually.
 - b. Materials that use Educare data to address what standards of quality and practices yield the best return for the investment.
 - c. Materials that individual schools could co-brand locally to help tell their “story” consistently.
 - d. A short video making a compelling case for investing in high quality early childhood education by focusing on Educare programming and outcomes.
 - e. Training on strategic communications to Educare leaders.
 - f. Templates for fundraising and public policy advocacy that could be customized by individual schools.
 - g. Materials that reinforce the power of the Network by aggregating information on policy, program, research, and partnerships across the Network.
 - h. A crisis communications plan customized for each school to ensure consistent information sharing and response across the Network.
 - i. Website design assistance for individual schools.

Research and Evaluation Task Team Report

Chair: Theresa Hawley, Educare of West DuPage **Co-chair: Diana Rauner**, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Karla Bohl – Educare of Omaha at Kellom

Carol Howard – Educare of Washington, DC

Donna Bryant – FPG Child Development Institute

Carol Keintz – Educare of Milwaukee

Karen Carradine – Educare of West DuPage

Debra Pacchiano – Ounce of Prevention Fund

BillieENZ – Educare Arizona

Tony Raden – Ounce of Prevention Fund

Karen Freel – Ounce of Prevention Fund

Vicki Wolfe – Educare of Tulsa at Kendall-Whittier

Bob Harbison – Inasmuch Foundation

Noreen Yazejian – FPG Child Development Institute

Introduction

The Research and Evaluation Task Team convened twice via conference call to discuss existing and future needs and opportunities as they relate to research and evaluation to inform the Educare Learning Network's 10-year Vision. The task team explored the following strategic questions:

1. Why does the Educare Learning Network engage in research?
2. What research and evaluation is needed to achieve the Network's strategic vision?
3. In what ways should our research work inform the field? How can we help answer questions the field is asking about early learning, education, or other issues?
4. What questions about Educare and the Network do we want to investigate? How do we prioritize?
5. What should the Network's research and evaluation agenda be for the next decade?

Following two in-depth discussions, the group prioritized recommendations via an online survey.

In the course of our two discussions, the group discussed the need for a framework to guide the Network's research and evaluation agenda going forward. The group drafted and discussed four key domains that are critical influencers of the development of at-risk children and their families – child, family, school, and community. The group then identified potential areas of inquiry and potential research questions within these domains. This document is appended to this report.

Recommendations

Explanation of Prioritization Ratings

“A” Rated Recommendations:

Our most urgent and compelling priorities. These should have been addressed yesterday!

“B” Rated Recommendations:

Very important priorities that don't rise to the same level of urgency as our “A” priorities.

“C” Rated Recommendations:

Our dream list – the “wouldn't it be great if...” list!

“A” Rated Recommendations:

1. Establish a **Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee (82% – 9 Votes)**
2. Continuation and Transformation of the **Implementation Study (82% – 9 Votes)**, to include:
 - **A: Revisions of the current battery of assessments (to streamline while still ensuring accountability and data to drive instruction) – (73% – 8 Votes)**
 - **A: More in-depth documentation of the implementation of systems and practices of the Educare model and variation across the Network – (63% – 7 Votes)**
 - **A: Revisions to the parent survey – (54% – 6 Votes)**
 - **A - B: A review of the study's objectives and whether there are additional technologies or methodologies that could fuel continuous improvement. – (45.5% A, 45% B, 10 votes)**
 - **B: New analysis of subpopulations of children and families (DLL, special needs, etc.) (63% – 7 Votes)**
3. The implementation of the **Randomized Control Trial** to understand the progress of Educare children and when compared to their peers. **(63% – 7 Votes)**
4. A coordinated **follow-up study** across the network or in several schools to track the progress of Educare children and their families after they leave Educare. **(54% – 6 Votes)**

“B” Rated Recommendations:

5. Use **Educare as a platform for wider inquiry and research** to inform the field writ large (e.g., health, developmental science, social capital research, etc.) **(63% – 7 Votes)**
6. Use **Educare as a laboratory to test innovative new practices** and approaches for children and families (new technologies, PD, 0-3 assessments, instructional strategies, curricula, etc.). **(45% – 5 Votes)**

Educare Learning Network Strategic Planning *DRAFT Research and Evaluation Domains*

The Educare Learning Network is uniquely positioned to act as a laboratory and platform for new, field-building research that not only fuels continuous program improvement of the Educare model, but also contributes to a national body of evidence that strengthens the imperative for investments in high-quality early childhood education interventions beginning at birth and their linkages to K-3.

Research Domains

The Educare Learning Network's research and evaluation agenda should address four key domains that are critical influencers of the development of at-risk young children and their families: *child, family, school, and community*. This document identifies areas of inquiry within each of these domains; all research that the Network collectively engages in should address one or more of the areas of inquiry.

Child

- How do children progress while at Educare?
- How do children progress after graduating from Educare?
- How do Educare children progress when compared to their peers not enrolled in Educare?

Family

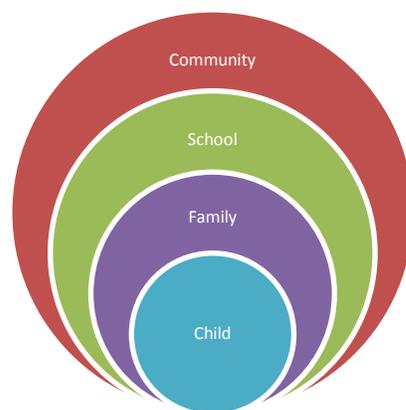
- How do families progress while at Educare?
- How do families progress after leaving Educare?
- How should we develop and sustain parent engagement in a child's education?
- What supports do parents need beyond those connected to their child's education (PSE, social capital, etc.) and for which parents?

Classroom/School

- How is the Educare model and the processes related to the core features (teacher collaboration, research-program partnership, parent engagement) implemented, how does it vary across the Network, and what are the implications of that variation?
- What are the other elements of quality at Educare and how are they implemented (leadership, partnership-building, staff development, etc.)?
- How do Educare schools connect and align to K-3 systems?
- What types of leadership, processes, structures, and systems need to be in place to support the transformation to high-quality early childhood education in settings beyond Educare?

Community

- How do Educare schools influence the communities in which they operate (partnership-building, facilities, policy, training, extending quality)?
- How do communities influence Educare child and family trajectories (ecological factors, social capital, churches, violence, etc.)?
- How does Educare connect to other community systems (such K-12, health, youth development, etc.)?



School Expansion Task Team Report

Chair: Martha Staker, Educare of Kansas City

Co-chair: Mike Burke, Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Caren Calhoun – Educare of Tulsa at Kendall-Whittier and Educare of Tulsa at Hawthorne

Carol Keintz – Educare of Milwaukee

Mary Jane Chainski – Educare Learning Network

Charmaine Lewis – Educare of Denver

Anita Harvey-Dixon – Educare of Chicago

Diana Rauner – Ounce of Prevention Fund

Gladys Haynes – Educare of Omaha at Kellom and Educare of Omaha at Indian Hill

Jeff Schoenberg – J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation

Dana Jones – Educare of Washington, DC

Introduction

The School Expansion Task Team met twice by conference call to discuss how to proactively and intentionally define when and where to establish new Educare schools, yet remain nimble and responsive to emergent opportunities of strategic importance. As the group considered the challenges and opportunities presented by becoming more intentional in our growth and expansion, they explored the following questions:

1. What experiences and conversations have task team members had locally about potential Educare expansion?
2. How can the Network expand most strategically and intentionally in the next decade? What priorities should drive the expansion?
3. What should be our expansion goal, and how do we phase this?
4. How can the Network consider expanding its membership to include:
 - Educare programs that do not have the building; and/or
 - Programs that can only implement particular components of the Educare model?

Following their meetings, they prioritized recommendations in a follow-up survey.

Recommendations

Explanation of Prioritization Ratings

“A” Rated Recommendations:

Our most urgent and compelling priorities. These should have been addressed yesterday!

“B” Rated Recommendations:

Very important priorities that don't rise to the same level of urgency as our “A” priorities.

“C” Rated Recommendations:

Our dream list – the “wouldn't it be great if...” list!

Short-term Recommendations:

1. Meet with the Office of Head Start, the Head Start Association, and the Child Care Bureau to establish a national partnership to improve quality across the country. **(A-priority: 7 votes)**
2. In the interest of helping us determine where we will focus our attention in the coming years, we should better define the criteria for “full bricks-and-mortar Educare replication.” Suggested criteria include (but may not be limited to): policy opportunity; programmatic opportunity; philanthropic opportunity; opportunity to reach specific populations (e.g., Native American, etc.); geographic opportunity; self-identification/local desire and commitment. **(A-priority: 5 votes)**
3. Improve the Educare development process to better assess a school's local enthusiasm and capacity to expand quality services to children and families in poverty. **(A-priority: 4 votes)**
4. Continue to serve as a beacon of quality and partner with other programs dedicated to improving – and evaluating – their services. (This can be done through community trainings/ advocacy groups, etc. Sharing our school research findings has also proven to be successful. Several local funders are very impressed with the measures/assessments we are using and how staff can use them to plan and intentionally offer individualized services.) **(A/B-priority: 4 votes each)**
5. Market Educare within the early childhood field (in particular by developing a proactive plan for conference presentations, journal articles, new materials, etc.) and more broadly to the general public. **(A/B-priority: 3 votes each)**

Long-term Recommendations:

6. Study and analyze Educare model fidelity across schools for 2-3 years before developing an “affiliate” status (some kind of local partnership that is not fully implementing the Educare model, but may be on a path to do so as a member of the Network). A precondition of defining this status is that the Network will have developed a better description and definition of the full model. **(A-priority: 7 votes)**
7. Expand the Network’s reach through a “big-tent” approach by collaborating with others who share our values, embrace data, and offer strong leadership. **(B-priority: 5 votes)**
8. Convene a conference (or webinar) to explain the Educare model/core features to those interested in developing or learning more about Educare Schools. This would include the opportunities and the challenges, as well as the collective research and training. **(B/C-priority: 3 votes each)**

Vision Statement Recommendations:

9. Revise the vision statement to: (1) include Head Start (e.g., Head Start is Educare’s foundation, Educare represents the best of/ is a model within the Head Start community), perhaps noting that Head Start is a core partner along with K-12 education; and (2) note our work with families. **(A-priority: 6 votes)**
10. Shorten the vision statement to a succinct, memorable, bold (and, ideally, one-sentence) statement. **(A-priority: 4 votes)**

Sustainability Task Team Report

Chair: Charlotte Brantley, Educare of Denver **Co-chair:** Sarah Bradley, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Luba Bezborodnikova – Educare of Seattle
Ray Bitsche – Educare of Oklahoma City
Mike Burke – Buffett Early Childhood Fund
Karen Carradine – Educare of West DuPage
Kathy Colfer – Educare Central Maine
Claudia Grillo – Educare of Miami
Rhonda Kaiser – Educare Central Maine

Portia Kennel – Educare Learning Network
Jenny Miller – Steve Nash Foundation
Jessie Rasmussen – Buffett Early Childhood Fund
Diana Rauner – Educare of Chicago
Jeff Schoenberg – J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation
Annie Van Hanen – George Kaiser Family Foundation

Introduction

The Sustainability Task Team convened to discuss the challenges and opportunities faced by Educare schools related to sustainability and to make recommendations on how individual schools and the Network as a whole can address them in order to leverage our shared strength and impact in the years ahead. The task team held three phone meetings to discuss strategic questions and develop recommendations related to the Network’s sustainability efforts. During the first phone meeting, the team reflected and provided feedback on the preliminary ten-year vision statement for the Educare Learning Network and began to generate answers to the following strategic questions:

1. What resources, expertise and capacities does an Educare school need in order to fully implement the Educare model, achieve excellent child outcomes, and leverage Educare as a broader platform for change for all children?
2. What ongoing challenges and gaps are Educare schools facing related to the resources, expertise, and capacities identified above and more specifically related to: funding (public and private), implementation assistance and learning/knowledge/training that supports implementation of the model, research/evaluation, and policy/advocacy/communications?
3. How can individual schools build their resources, expertise, and capacity to address sustainability gaps and challenges? How can the Network members work together to help each school do that?
4. What process should we engage in to develop a shared understanding and approach to model fidelity going forward?

Following the first call, the task team collected information related to sustainability from executive directors at all Network schools through a survey. The task team used the second and third phone meetings to review the information from the survey, to refine the ideas that emerged in the first meeting, and to generate additional recommendations. After the third meeting, the team prioritized their recommendations through a second online survey. The report that follows details the recommendations the task team has made to help the Educare Learning Network advance its sustainability priorities in the coming years.

Explanation of Prioritization Ratings

“A” Rated Recommendations:

Our most urgent and compelling priorities. These should have been addressed yesterday!

“B” Rated Recommendations:

Very important priorities that don't rise to the same level of urgency as our “A” priorities.

“C” Rated Recommendations:

Our dream list – the “wouldn't it be great if...” list!

“A” Rated Recommendations:

1. The Network should determine, based on research and experience implementing the model, exactly what it is that we are sustaining across program, policy, and other capacities (see model fidelity recommendations). **(A-priority: 9 votes out of 9)**
2. The Network should form a Sustainability Workgroup including leaders from across the collective Network to engage in peer learning and provide guidance to Educare schools on sustainability issues. **(A-priority: 7 votes out of 9)**
3. The Network should develop clear imperatives for new schools on exactly what local initial and sustained capacity, in addition to program expertise and commitment, is needed to develop and sustain an Educare. Prior to accepting new sites as Educare schools, the Network should assess, using clear qualifying criteria, their capacity and plan to address sustainability in all of the areas below. **(A-priority: 7 votes out of 9)**
 - Resource Development and Fundraising for Private Sector Funds
 - Accessing and Managing Public Sector Funds
 - Policy and Advocacy
 - Research and Evaluation
 - Leadership Capacity to Connect Program, Policy, and Research
 - Communications and Marketing
 - Program Expertise and Staff Development
4. The Network's policy work and priorities should address the need to maintain and substantially increase the availability of public funding streams for high quality programs, including Educare. **(A-priority: 7 votes out of 9)**
5. The collective Network should develop and implement a process through which existing schools agree on what in the Educare model is non-negotiable. This would include reviewing the results of our research and evaluation efforts to date, and a scan of the most current research in the field. This process will focus on answering the question of what the immutable requirements of the Network are and whether all of the core features of the model are equally important. This process should address the following questions/ideas: **(A-priority: 7 votes out of 9)**

- a. Should the Network develop three levels of fidelity - fully implemented, partially implemented, and not yet implemented? The Implementation Checklist could be used to measure these levels. The Network could provide direction/guidance on acceptable options for individual Educare schools when major public funding streams are flat-funded or reduced. Network executive leaders, in conjunction with Network T/IA Training and Implementation Assistance (T/IA) Team and FPG, would review and provide guidance on acceptable options.
- b. Should the Network develop and implement a process for determining the level of fidelity of implementation of the model for each Educare school using a standardized tool? If so, who should complete this process – internal representatives from the Network or someone outside the Network and the Network T/IA Team? This could include leveraging existing tools that the Network has developed such as the Implementation Checklist.
- c. Should the Network develop a system for credentialing that substantiates adherence to the model?
- d. Should the Network develop a system of "pilots" to study the implementation and results of implementation of varying combinations of the core features that involve different "costs per child?" This would potentially allow us to understand the effects of these combinations on children's outcomes.

"B" Rated Recommendations:

6. The Network should develop recommendations related to succession planning and leadership transitions at Educare schools. **(B-priority: 6 votes out of 9)**
7. The Network should develop a framework for and guidelines/policies for identification and coordination of fundraising opportunities within the Network. **(B-priority: 5 votes out of 9)**
8. The Network should connect individual schools with fundraising expertise, which could include training, technical assistance, and consultation on fundraising planning, strategies, and capacity building. This should involve facilitating peer learning and knowledge sharing about successful approaches. **(B-priority: 5 votes out of 9)**
9. The Network T/IA Team should assist individual Educare schools in developing their capacity to maintain, increase, and maximize public funding streams available at the local, state, and federal levels. This should involve facilitating peer learning and knowledge sharing about successful approaches. **(B-priority: 4 votes out of 9)**
10. The Network's policy work and priorities should include addressing work force development issues across the field that threaten the availability of qualified staff for high quality programs including Educare. **(B-priority: 4 votes out of 9)**

Focus Group Summary

Educare Families

Major Themes

1) High-level themes about the experience of families and children in the Educare School:

- Focus group parents and family members feel that both they and their children are valued and their successes are acknowledged. These feelings lead to satisfaction with their participation in the program.
- Participants value the education their children receive at Educare. Family members value the support that they themselves receive as Educare participants, including both the parental and the personal support they find in the warm and caring relationships they enjoy with staff, the longer hours of care available to their children, and the opportunities to form supportive relationships with other families.
- Families want their children to remain in Educare until they transition to kindergarten. They are concerned that when families become more self-sufficient, they may become ineligible for the program due to funding requirements. With this in mind, families recommended that Educare schools should work to ensure that children and families can remain enrolled in the program even when they get a better job and their income rises. Educare Schools should secure the necessary funding to make this continued enrollment possible.
- Families recognize the value of the experience they and their child have had at Educare and the fact that their transition to elementary school will bring many changes. They wish that the benefits of Educare's approach, supports and sense of community could continue on once their child transitions into kindergarten. Some suggested that Educare should extend its work into the elementary grades.

2) Feedback from families on the Network's draft Vision Statement: High-level themes

- Families liked the Network's draft vision statement, often stating that it aligned with what was important to them.
- They felt that the statement was effective in communicating the critical areas of work to be done.
- In addition, the statement provided key information that some parents were not aware of, including:
 - The 'national' character and focus of Educare
 - The Research/Evaluation work of Educare and its connection to data-driven practice
 - The importance of advocacy, including parents' role in advocacy
- Parents reported they would like increased access to and sharing of the Network's Research data, including:
 - The data that substantiates the Educare model, and
 - Cross-site data to better understand the similarities and differences that contribute to Educare's success across different communities

Notable Quotes

“I hear and see the difference Educare is making in my child’s development. I can also see which kids in the community have had Educare and which haven’t—and I really see a difference with kids who have disabilities.”

“This vision statement captures the feelings of gratitude that I feel for my child’s experience at Educare. I believe this vision statement is motivational to the parents and the individuals in the community. It captures the importance of early childhood education. I believe the community must understand a child’s development and how we all can support children to be successful in school.”

“Since they have been at Educare, now [my] children talk about their feelings and are much happier. It helps us as caregivers/parents to also be happier parents. Our family is learning developmental strategies to help both children emotionally and educationally.”

“It is important to see the program continue to evaluate its performance, the needs of the population it serves and to continue to evolve, rather than become stagnant in its vision. It’s also important that the program’s mission aims to have a long term effect by preparing children and families for K-12 education services and parents becoming advocates for future quality services.”

Focus Group Summary

Educare Master Teachers and Family Support Supervisors

Major Themes

1) The benefits of belonging to the Network identified by focus group participants included:

- Support from and opportunities to collaborate with other Educare staff across the Network who are doing the same work, including: Communities of Practice (Master Teacher Learning Group and Family Support Learning Group), Network Meetings, webinars, and EducareConnect. The Network brings practitioners together to share ideas, learn new strategies, and problem-solve challenges in order to improve the effectiveness of Educare practices.
- Support from the Educare Learning Network team through advisor visits and trainings.
- Connections to thought leaders in the field to learn how to apply theory to practice.

2) Suggestions for how the Network can strengthen and improve its work going forward:

- Expand modes of collaboration and learning through the following suggestions:
 - Video examples of best practices or unique approaches at various Educare schools.
 - An exchange program for peer learning between Educare schools.
 - Assign “Network Buddies” for information sharing and relationship building.
- Content areas and challenges for the Network to provide more support:
 - Problem-solving for daily logistical and structural challenges.
 - Interdisciplinary work
 - Interpreting the ICL
 - Empowering parents as leaders at Educare and helping them understand and participate in the Network, e.g., Network-wide parent trainings or a Network Meeting for parents
 - Defining the Master Teacher role
 - Continued support for “older” Educare schools as they delve deeper into the model, including implementation assistance for continuous improvement and practical problem-solving support, such as scheduling
 - Finding time for teaching teams to engage in reflection, planning and training together
 - Hiring qualified staff and offering training tools from the Network or holding trainings more often so that new staff can receive training early in their Educare careers and be more prepared for their role

3) “Wish List” for the Educare Learning Network:

- Build more Educare schools and/or expand Educare practices into local communities so that all children and families can benefit from the high quality experiences.
- Provide more opportunities for line staff (classroom teachers and family support specialists) to participate in trainings and Network events so they can collaborate across the Network and enhance their practices.
- Build stronger connections with elementary schools in order to make smoother transitions and sustain the gains for children and families.
- Develop strategies to reduce stress for children, families and staff. This will help increase retention of qualified staff.

4) Recommendations regarding model fidelity:

- The participants discussed which components of the Educare model they believe are critical, including the following:
 - Reflective practices
 - Continuity of care
 - Low caseloads
 - The Master teacher role in coaching for teachers
 - Professional development opportunities provided by the Network
 - Research-based practices
 - Interdisciplinary work
- The participants suggested that the process to determine how to address the issue of model fidelity should include input from Network members including Master Teachers and Family Support Supervisors.

5) Responses to the Network's draft Vision Statement:

- The participants agreed that it's important to have a uniform vision statement to guide the work of all Educare schools across the country. The participants expressed wanting more information about the vision behind particular initiatives in the Network in order to better integrate the various components of Educare with the model as a whole.
- Themes in the vision statement that resonated most with the participants included engaging families as advocates in their children's education and strengthening our connection with K-12 systems.

Notable Quotes

From a 30-year veteran in the early childhood field: "This is the way it should be."

"One of ways in which the Network is supportive is by providing opportunities, such as the Master Teacher Training, to come together with professionals from other Educare programs to explore in a safe and supportive learning environment the issues that are central to the work we all do."

Focus Group Summary

Educare Development, Training and Implementation Assistance Staff

Major Themes

1) The Network's long term goal is equality of educational opportunity

The Educare Learning Network offers a shared vision for who we are as a country. The Network is working together to ensure that all children receive a quality early education experience that prepares them for success in school and in life. We are committed to equality of educational opportunity for all children, regardless of social class, racial/ethnic background or any other characteristic.

2) Research and evaluation efforts are essential

The Network should continue and further strengthen its commitment to program evaluation going forward. Research is essential to achieving our long term vision. Local schools face challenges funding Educare's rigorous evaluation activities.

3) Continue, expand and better communicate Educare's work with families

The Network should continue to partner with families to promote children's learning. At the same time, we must expand efforts to help families become effective advocates and partners with teachers and school leaders while at Educare and when children transition to K-12. Educare's vision and work focuses not just on child development but also on parent development. In the future, our communications and messaging about our work should emphasize both aspects.

4) Educare schools must be part of broader education reform and alignment efforts

The Educare Network is engaged in education reform. The Network's impact should extend into the K-12 system. While we have begun this work, there is much more for the Network to do in this area.

5) The Network has key opportunities to interface and collaborate with K-12 going forward, including Educare's:

- Research/Program Partnership model – researchers as integrated partners with teachers, school leaders and parents
- Systems for using assessment data to inform classroom practice, individualization and parent engagement
- Approach to family engagement and partnerships
- Shared interest in aligning assessments across 0-8 and strengthening transitions to kindergarten to sustain children's gains and promote further progress in elementary school

6) Leadership is essential to each School's ability to implement the Educare model with fidelity

Effectively supporting new program leaders as they become oriented to Educare and to the inherent challenges in implementing both the program and platform for change components of the model will be essential to achieving our new vision as a Network. As we move forward, the Network should include discussions of leadership transitions in the context of its work on model fidelity.

7) Responses to the draft Vision Statement

- The Vision Statement should present a strong and aspirational vision for expanding the Network's impact in the next decade.
- It should articulate our emphasis on research and evaluation that has brought the Network this far and will be equally important in the future.
- It should indicate the need for the Network to explore and capitalize on opportunities to better connect with K-12 going forward.
- The Network's focus on family engagement should be strengthened in the current draft. The term "families" should be used rather than "parents" in the statement given that there are a wide variety of adults involved in caring for and promoting the early learning of children in Educare programs.
- The Vision Statement could be strengthened to speak to the importance of promoting and leveraging collective knowledge, learning and leadership across the Network, which will be essential to achieving our goals.

Notable Quotes

"Our work is grounded in individual partners coming together to create a greater whole."

"Educare helps families understand the role of education in their lives."

"The Network is ready to share what we're learning with other programs nationwide."

"Our research evidence will bring big change to education in our country."

"We need to harness the collective knowledge and experience of Schools across the Network to enhance our work and to strengthen the early education field."

Focus Group Summary

Local Evaluation Partners (LEP)

Major Themes

1) Major themes from the LEP responses to the questions about research priorities included:

- Advisory Committee: The advisory committee is an excellent idea (both permanent and ad hoc), and great attention should be paid to developing the plan for the group, its membership, and the critical issues and areas that need representation (language development, PD, other fields, etc.)
- Follow-Up Study: A follow-up study is necessary if we are to prove our worth and if we are to ensure the success of students in the long-term. A follow up study can be a part of larger strategic partnerships with school districts and help build relationships with K-12.
- Implementation Study: We need more in-depth documentation of the systems and practices of Educare, in particular, how data is used to inform practice. We are not yet measuring some of the essential elements of Educare. (Fidelity is integral to an RCT. We must also understand variation and each element of Educare.)

2) Major themes from the LEP responses about the Network's Vision Statement included:

- More emphasis is needed to highlight the Network's role in defining and producing cutting edge practice in teaching, learning, assessment, family engagement and professional development. We should consider using Educare as a lab for innovation.
- A paragraph should be devoted to our work with families. Parents are critical to Educare and engaging families must be a key focus of our work going forward.
- More emphasis is needed on ensuring concrete connections to K-12 as an integral strategy in sustaining parent and child gains through elementary school. Our partnerships with K-12 must be reciprocal, well-defined and robust.

Notable Quotes

"Providing a solid foundation of research evidence and closing the achievement gap are truly aspirational goals for the Network."

"Research is a natural area for partnership with K-12. School districts are interested in school improvement and have a shared interest in child progress."

"Educare's use of data to inform practice must be documented, understood, and shared with the field. This could be a huge contribution to the field."

Focus Group Summary State Advocacy Partners

Major Themes

- 1) **Educare can partner with state advocates to advance policies and increase funding by developing policy advocacy capacity and skills, and using them in many ways:**
 - Conducting tours to show what good programming looks like on the ground.
 - Broadly communicating how Educare best practices and lessons learned can improve all early childhood programs, including within the context of state Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS) to help other early childhood programs meet higher standards
 - Sharing research findings about Educare.
 - Using Educare as an example of how public policies and public funding streams impact practice.
 - Serving as hubs to extend best practices to a range of other providers in surrounding communities and statewide to help drive change.
 - Engaging in broader school reform efforts by using Educare data and practices to inform K-12/P-20 conversations.
 - Actively and cooperatively participating in state early childhood coalitions, serving in key leadership roles (e.g., participation on advisory committees, etc.).

- 2) **To be effective, Educare Schools need policy advocacy capacity and skills:**
 - ELN should communicate minimum expectations for Educare schools for policy advocacy; use intermediaries to facilitate sit-down meetings in states between advocates and Educare leaders to develop shared expectations and plans that leverage each other's assets; and use state advocates, ELN staff, and peer-to-peer mentoring strategies to enhance Educare leaders' policy advocacy capacity and expertise across the Network.
 - Each Educare school would ideally identify one "go-to person" on policy advocacy who has the time, communication skills and expertise to participate in advocacy efforts, and who is skilled at leveraging others (e.g. helping an Anchor Funder develop talking points, preparing parents to testify at hearings).
 - The gulf between Educare and other early childhood programs in many states may be large. Educare needs to articulate a fair and reasonable approach for how and what it will take for public policy to realistically reach Educare levels. Participants stressed that Educare must be seen as helping lots of programs, not as a competitor with other early childhood programs.

- 3) **State advocates can help to advance Educare's vision** by helping diverse constituencies better understand Educare - what it is, how it works, how its funded, what are its results, why it's important, how practice translates into policy and policy influences practice – to promote access to better quality for all children statewide. Advocates can help link Educare leaders to statewide policy priorities and advocacy efforts, such as those generated by Early Childhood Advisory Councils, and can promote ways to positively link Educare core components with QRIS standards to help other programs understand how to achieve higher levels of quality.

Notable Quotes

“Educare can serve as an example to policymakers that if you invest in quality, you get real results for children and families.”

“Educare has a role to play in broader school reform conversations about how early childhood programs can work effectively with schools and what outcomes can be achieved through focused collaborative efforts.”

Key Stakeholder Interviews Summary

Leaders at the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and the Ounce of Prevention Fund and Leo Latz (consultant) conducted one-on-one interviews with a range of core national investors, anchor philanthropists at local Educare schools, researchers, policy experts and leaders from K-12 education and other fields. The goal of the interviews was to collect additional input for the Strategic Planning process. Interviewees shared their perspectives and analyses of issues facing the field of early childhood education, identified key opportunities and challenges for the Educare Learning Network and suggested potential solutions (see Appendix for a list of interviewees).

Interview questions were tailored and responded to each stakeholder's existing interest and level of involvement with the Network and early childhood education. The following questions served as an initial guide for these discussions:

- What are the most important issues facing the early childhood and/or the broader education field today?
- What existing or emerging opportunities should Educare be exploring?
- Who should we talk to or be learning from in order to increase Educare's impact?
- What challenges or critical issues does Educare need to address to be successful?
- How can Educare best have impact beyond its own walls?
- What is your biggest wish for Educare going forward?

The draft Final Strategic Plan reflects information and guidance provided through interviews with 15 key stakeholders. Additional interviews will be conducted on an ongoing basis as the Network implements the new Strategic Plan. Information gained will assist in monitoring progress, making any necessary course corrections and continuing to engage leading practitioners, policy makers, researchers, and public and private sector champions going forward.

Interviews generated rich discussion and substantial input to inform the future direction and focus of the Network. While a number of consistent themes run through many of these discussions, in other cases, individual stakeholders also raised distinct and valuable points based on their unique perspective or position.

Key points from the interviews are summarized as follows:

- The Educare Learning Network has considerable collective power and untapped potential. It is positioned for broader impact on a national scale.

- The Network must connect more directly and intentionally with the K-12 system to ensure that Educare's substantial investment in birth to five education can be sustained when children continue into elementary school.
- Educare's program and policy work should have a line of sight to high school graduation and college readiness.
- The Network has great potential and capacity to contribute conversations around birth to age eight education alignment at the local, state and national levels. In particular, the Network has a valuable perspective and lessons learned on birth to age three and brings a clear vision and strong agenda on birth to age five.
- Early learning in this country suffers due to the lack of a comprehensive system for education from birth to age five. Education leaders and policy makers have not prioritized investments in early learning and the vital connection between early learning and educational success in elementary and beyond. The Educare Learning Network can contribute to this essential task.
- The Network has the potential to expand and extend the reach of its program and policy efforts for birth to age three through new partnerships at the local, state and federal levels.
- The Network facilitates and demonstrates the power of connecting practice, research, and policy in early childhood education.
- Educare is an expensive model. The Network should increase its use of data to make a stronger case for the return on this investment. Longitudinal follow up of Educare children, demonstrating successful outcomes, will justify early investment.
- The Network should continue data collection to grow its evidence base and increase Educare's credibility and impact.
- Educare is a recognized brand and a proof point for birth to five investments. The brand is an asset and can be used to leverage greater impact.
- Educare needs to strengthen its focus on the role of families in children's learning, which research shows plays a critical role alongside effective early childhood programs. This is particularly important in the birth to three years.
- The Network should focus on developing effective strategies for ensuring that families continue to be assets to their children's learning throughout the educational continuum.
- Educare shows "what is possible." In the future, the focus must be on "how can we scale this, particularly without major capital investment in new facilities?"

- Educare needs to better and more clearly define its role in the local, state and federal policy arena.
- The Network provides an environment for professional development and training that can inform efforts to raise the quality of early learning programs more broadly.
- As the Network continues to expand its reach, there is a need to ensure the strength and financial sustainability of Educare Schools.
- Developing effective leaders will be essential for maximizing the Network's impact in the future.

Final Report

Appendix Index

1	Strategic Planning Core Commitments
2	Process Timeline
3	Focus Group Participation
4	Key Stakeholder Interview Participation
5	Priorities with General Agreement (Interim Report)
6	2011-12 Meeting Agendas

Strategic Planning Core Commitments

1. We will continue to start with most at-risk children and families.
2. Our span of services is 0-5; our sphere of influence is 0-8.
3. Expansion of Educare will continue – the key questions are where and how.
4. We will use research/evidence to drive our practice.
5. Educare will include a “Beyond the Walls” component both by extending best practice and impacting public policies.



Educare Learning Network
 Strategic Planning Process Timeline
 2011-2012

<u>October</u>	<u>November</u>	<u>December</u>	<u>January</u>	<u>February</u>	<u>March</u>	<u>April</u>	<u>May</u>	<u>June</u>	<u>July</u>
Kick-Off Meeting	Task Team Meetings & Surveys			Interviews					
			Focus Groups						
				Task Team Co-Chairs Meeting					
				Synthesize Input & Draft Interim Report					
					Review Interim Report at Network Meeting			Task Team Co-Chairs Call	
					Draft Final Report				
									Present Plan at Executive Leaders Meeting

Focus Group Participation *January – March 2012*

Educare Families

Arizona Educare

Facilitator: Nina Williams

Facilitator: Mindy Zapata

Anabel Alvarado

Ixsaney Camacho

Shatari Griffin

Angela Hernandez

Maria Juerrero

Cynthia Liner

Karen Lopez

Darrel Mohr

Maria Najera

Ismeth Ochoa

Alondro Osorio

Ivette Ruiz

Karla Vega

Educare of Central Maine

Facilitator: Nena Cunningham

Facilitator: Jennifer Hickey

Sam Bromberg

Alyza Burwood

Erica Colon

Stacey Green

Sarah Lavallee

Joni Sprague

Jessica Ward

Educare of Chicago

Facilitator: Leo Latz

Facilitator: Bela Moté

Donald Everhart

Tiffany Everhart

Uzma Khalid

Anthony Marshall

Bernice Norvill

Takesha Williams

Tierra Washington

Educare of Denver

Facilitator: Taina Sakagawa

Maria Azpeitia

Tanae Dabney

Katrina Haselgren

Sherida Johnson

Princess Mack

Eleanor Turner

Educare of Miami-Dade

Facilitator: Karen Aguilar

Wendy Arancivia

Catherine Cathers

Xenia Cotarelo

Luis Cruz

Kaya Freeman

Julio Gabriel

Jill May

Amado Medina

Claudia Porras

Antonio Salgado

Dwight Tate

Jessica Wendolf

Educare of Milwaukee

Facilitator: Angela Lampkin

Facilitator: Amanda Treptow

Marva Burton

Jolena Kirkendoll

Blaire McPike

Kimber Watson

Stephanie Williams

Educare of Oklahoma City

Facilitator: Ana Martinez
Facilitator: Melissa Richard
Recorder: Sandra Moreno
Keyona Arkeketa
SanJuana Chavez
Latoya Harvey
Gloria Hernandez
Marisol Jackson
Luz Lugo
Cristela Luna
Mayra Martinez
Maria Rodarte
Wendy Villalobos
Susana Zaldivar

Educare of Omaha-Indian Hill

Facilitator: Jolynn Emery
Facilitator: Deb Winkelmann
Macani HorAde
Katie Larsen
Amber Leifeld
Audrea Malwn
Kate Martin
Tella Maxwell
Laura Sanchez
Matt Thomas

Educare of Omaha-Kellom

Facilitator: Dontel McNeil
Facilitator: Kathy Paradies
Facilitator: Alicia Youngblood
Indra Faison
Pam Floyd
Ataya Frederiksen
Jeona Jensen
Shea Jensen
Chris Parker
Briana Smith
Tawaina Swift
Theresa Union
LaKasha Walker
Makayla Walker

Educare of Tulsa-Kendall-Whittier

Facilitator: Leslie Haughey
Facilitator: Elizabeth Miranda
T. Cowan
F. Diaz
J. Hernandez
N. Ibarra
M. Maurico
C. Remache
D. Rodriguez
M. Villegas

Master Teachers and Family Support Supervisors

Facilitator: Leo Latz, Strategic Planning Consultant
Facilitator: Portia Kennel, Educare Learning Network

Educare Central Maine

Murielle DiBiase, Master Teacher
Val Rodrigue, Master Teacher
Kristen Slefinger, Family Support
Kara Woodbrey, Master Teacher

Educare of Chicago

Melinda Berry, Family Support
Amy Durkalski, Master Teacher
Danielle James, Master Teacher
Julia Paloma, Master Teacher

Educare of Denver

Kelsey Petersen-Hardie, Master Teacher

Educare of Kansas City

Jessica Garate, Family Support
Beth Nichols, Site Director
Pat Webb, Master Teacher

Educare of Miami-Dade

Teresa Correa, Master Teacher
Vivyan De Huelbes, Master Teacher
Alina Vega, Family Support

Educare of Milwaukee

Sandy Gadzichowski, Master Teacher
Martina Stevens, Master Teacher
Myranda Syrjanen, Master Teacher
Jill Udell, Master Teacher

Educare of Oklahoma City

Nicole Boyce, Master Teacher
Lakecia Day, Family Support
Sara Jane DelMonte, Master Teacher
Jennifer Nelson, Master Teacher
Linda Smith, Master Teacher
Natasha Williams, Master Teacher

Educare of Omaha - Indian Hill

Liz Renna, Master Teacher
Eva Rivera, Family Support

Educare of Omaha - Kellom

Kelly Jones, Master Teacher
Kathy Paradies, Master Teacher

Educare of Tulsa - Hawthorne

Cindee Bergren, Master Teacher
Jennifer Ladner, Master Teacher
Shalisha Ogoko, Master Teacher

Educare of Tulsa – Kendall-Whittier

Mary Sue Hale, Master Teacher
Becky Mason, Master Teacher
Kim McAllister, Master Teacher
Elizabeth Miranda, Family Support

Educare of Washington, D.C.

Crystal Powell, Family Support

**Educare Development, Training and
Implementation Assistance Staff**

Facilitator: Leo Latz, Strategic Planning Consultant

Alexis Aguilu
Jeffrey Broom
Angela Campion
Maribel Centeno
Mary Jane Chainski
Catie Chretien
Sarah Mudd
Sharon Mueller
Michael-John Myette
Julie Palmer-Blackwell
Sara Rolan
April Rush
Nick Wechsler
Renee Welch

Local Evaluation Partners

Facilitator: Theresa Hawley, Educare of West DuPage

Facilitator: Karen Freel, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Educare of Denver

Brenda Cobb, Clayton Early Learning Institute

Educare of Kansas City

Dale Walker, Project EAGLE Community Programs, Educare of Kansas City

Educare of Maine

Gretchen Greenberg, University of Southern Maine

Educare of Miami-Dade

Darryl Greenfield, University of Miami

Educare of Oklahoma City

Mary Sweetwater, Anselm Center for Consultation and Evaluation

Educare of Omaha

Megan Bore, University of Nebraska Medical Center: Munroe-Meyer Institute

Lisa St. Clair, University of Nebraska Medical Center: Munroe-Meyer Institute

Educare of Seattle

Susan Spieker, University of Washington

Educare of Tulsa

Diane Horm, University of Oklahoma-Tulsa

Lisa Monroe, University of Oklahoma-Tulsa

Advocates

Facilitator: Harriet Dichter, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Facilitator: Margie Wallen, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Debra Anderson, Smart Start Oklahoma

Dave Edie, Wisconsin Council on Children and Families

Shannon Cotsoradis, Kansas Action for Children

Leslie Dozono, Children's Alliance (WA)

Ireta Gasner, Ounce of Prevention Fund

Jennifer Landrum, Colorado Children's Campaign

Judy Reidt-Parker, Maine Children's Alliance

Becky Veak, First Five Nebraska

Key Stakeholder Interview Participation *January – July 2012*

- Jon-Paul Bianchi, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- David Bley, Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation
- Susie Buffett, Buffett Early Childhood Fund
- John Fischer, KIPP Board of Directors
- Phyllis Glink, Irving Harris Foundation
- George Kaiser, George Kaiser Family Foundation
- Wendy Kopp, Teach for America National Board of Directors
- Meera Mani, David and Lucile Packard Foundation
- Kris Perry, First 5 California
- Helen Raikes, University of Nebraska
- Bob Ross, Inasmuch Foundation
- Jeff Schoenberg, J.B. & M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation*
- Sterling Speirn, W.K. Kellogg Foundation
- Sandra Treacy, W. Clement and Jessie V. Stone Foundation
- Alandra Washington, W.K. Kellogg Foundation

**Interview scheduled for July 2012*

**Network Strategic Planning
Priorities with General Agreement**

Fifteen priorities with general agreement emerged from the planning process at its mid-point and were included in the Interim Report. This document, which was reviewed by the Network's Executive and Philanthropic Leaders on March 1, 2012 in Kansas City, lists the 15 interim priorities and connects them to the draft Three Strategic Directions.

Please note: for the Final Report, these 15 interim priorities have been distilled and condensed to 10 as illustrated in the Strategic Priorities Map (Tab 9).

- 1 STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1 - Model best practices, generate strong evidence for high quality early learning, and communicate it to the broader field;
- 2 STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2 - Expand access to high quality early learning through extending best practices and promoting policy change and increased investments;
- 3 STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3 - Build strong connections with K-12 education and influence broader education reform efforts.

1 2 3 1. **The Network should define Educare model fidelity.** This is essential for achieving the Network's vision and strategic priorities in the next decade.

1 2 3 2. **The Network should take into consideration the core capacities and resources needed by an Educare school at different stages of development** to fully implement the Educare model, achieve excellent child outcomes, and leverage Educare as a broader platform for change. These capacities are:

- Resource development/private sector fundraising
- Accessing and managing public sector funds
- Policy and advocacy
- Research and evaluation
- Leadership capacity to connect program policy and research
- Communications and marketing
- Program expertise and staff development

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 - 3 3. **The Network will establish a Sustainability Workgroup to provide guidance to schools and assistance in addressing ongoing challenges around sustainability.** Key responsibilities of the workgroup will include:
 - Increase fundraising at school and Network level
 - Help schools maximize public funding streams
 - Develop recommendations for succession planning and leadership transitions
 - Address workforce development issues through policy and practice

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 - 3 4. **To ensure that our research work informs the field, the Network will:**
 - Establish a Research and Evaluation Advisory Committee to inform and guide the Network's research agenda
 - Use Educare as a platform for wider inquiry and research
 - Use Educare as a laboratory to test innovative practices
 - Communicate our results more broadly to leaders in early learning and in other fields

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 - 3 5. **Key research studies needed to achieve the Network's strategic vision include:**
 - Continuation and evolution of the network-wide Implementation Study
 - Randomized Control Trial through age 5 and beyond
 - Coordinated Follow-Up Studies into elementary school

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 - 3 6. **The Network will capture, systematize, and employ collective knowledge** to promote continuous improvement at individual sites, the Network, and the broader field in the following ways:
 - Fully develop and leverage an interactive information system across the Network
 - Dedicate time and funding for Educare collective knowledge sharing
 - Disseminate knowledge and innovations from the field to Network schools
 - Become a national resource center for early childhood programs and other entities
 - Develop a training and implementation assistance model to share knowledge and best practices with the field

- 2 7. **The Network’s collective efforts to extend quality will be guided by these principles:**
- Take a “good to great” approach
 - Use defined criteria in selecting program partners
 - Work with programs serving children prenatal to age five (not only prenatal to three)
 - Extend components of Educare that are well-implemented and make a unique contribution to the field
- 2 8. **The Network will partner with federal and state entities to extend quality to large numbers of children.**
- 2 9. **The best practices or key components of Educare to extend to other providers are:**
- Teaching and Learning Practices – Specifically: continuous improvement and data collection/analysis/utilization; master teacher model; primary care giving/continuity of care
 - Leadership Development Practices – Specifically: systems for high-quality training and family support work; reflective practices; implementing research-program partnerships
- 1 2 3 10. **The Network will engage and leverage families more effectively to children’s educational gains into the K-12 school system and to support them as advocates for education reform.**
- 2 11. **The Network and individual Educare schools will have specific roles in public policy and advocacy.** Specifically:
- The Network will:
- Contribute to policy change at the federal level
 - Assist individual schools in building their capacity for involvement in policy work
 - Build and leverage relationships with Head Start at the federal level
 - Strengthen intentional collaboration with the First Five Years Fund, Birth to Five Policy Alliance, and other advocacy groups
- Individual Educare schools will:
- Contribute to policy change and connect with advocacy leaders at the local and state levels in ways that reflect the unique political environment and opportunities in their states
 - Partner with the Network to strengthen their capacity for local and state policy work
 - Build and leverage relationships with Head Start at the regional and federal levels

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12. To define its policy agenda, the Network will:

- Create an Educare Policy Workgroup to define and guide the Network's policy goals and approach
- Strengthen collaboration with the First Five Years Fund, Birth to Five Policy Alliance, and other advocacy groups

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13. To strengthen communications to increase its impact, the Network will:

- Establish mandatory branding guidelines for Educare schools
- Develop communications guidelines, resources, and tools for the Network and Educare schools
- Assist individual schools in their efforts to build communications capacity

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14. The Network will expand strategically and intentionally in the next decade by following these principles:

- Take a "Big Tent" approach to collaborating with like-minded leaders
- Define criteria for new Educare schools, e.g., strong local commitment to implementing and sustaining Educare; programmatic, policy and philanthropic capacity; geographic location and demographic opportunities

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15. Until Educare model fidelity is defined, the Network will not expand its membership to include programs that do not have the building or those that will only implement particular components of Educare.

**Bounce Learning Network Strategic Planning Meeting
October 4-5, 2011**

Agenda

Day One: Tuesday, October 4th
Working Dinner from 5:00 – 8:00pm
Grand Lux Café, 600 N. Michigan Avenue

5:00-5:30pm	Reception
5:30-6:00pm	Official welcome
6:00pm	Dinner

Day Two: Wednesday, October 5th
Strategic Planning Meeting from 8:00am – 3:00pm
Allerton Hotel, 701 N. Michigan Avenue

7:30-8:00am	Breakfast/Coffee
8:00-8:30am	Welcome and Meeting Purpose
8:30-9:30am	Introductions and Discussion of Current Vision and Emerging Priorities
9:30-10:45am	“Bold Steps” Breakout Groups & Report Back
10:45-11:45am	Discussion of Emerging Strategic Areas and Key Questions
11:45-12:15pm	Lunch
12:15-2:15pm	Continue Discussion of Remaining Strategic Areas and Questions
2:15-2:30pm	Break
2:30-3:00pm	Wrap Up/Next Steps

Educare Learning Network Strategic Planning Task Team Chairs & Co-Chairs Meeting

Tuesday, February 7, 2012

9:30am – 1:30pm CST

Ounce of Prevention Fund Offices, 33 West Monroe Street, 5th Floor

-PARTICIPANTS-

Task Teams

Collective Knowledge

Caren Calhoun, Chair
Cynthia Stringfellow, Co-Chair

Extending Quality

Gladys Haynes, Chair
Portia Kennel, Co-Chair

Policy and Communications

Dana Jones, Chair
Jessie Rasmussen, Co-Chair

Research and Evaluation

Diana Rauner, Co-Chair

School Expansion

Martha Staker, Chair
Mike Burke, Co-Chair

Sustainability

Charlotte Brantley, Chair
Sarah Bradley, Co-Chair

Strategic Planning Support

Bela Moté
Amy Lusk
Ann Kirwan

Facilitator

Leo Latz, Consultant

-AGENDA-

9:00-9:30am	Breakfast/Coffee
9:30-9:40am	Welcome and Meeting Purpose
9:40-10:00am	Resulting Network Vision
10:00-11:45am	Task Team Presentations and Discussion <i>Presentations will be in alpha order per task team list above</i>
11:45am-12:15pm	Lunch and Break
12:15-1:15pm	Prioritize Task Team Recommendations
1:15-1:30pm	ELN Meeting and Next Steps

ELN Executive Leadership Session Agenda

Thursday, March 1, 2012

12:30pm to 4:00pm

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|---------------------------|---|
| 12:30 pm – 12:40pm | Welcome and Acknowledgements
(C. Brantley, J. Rasmussen, D. Rauner) |
| 12:40pm – 12:50pm | Educare Network Strategic Planning Process and Vision
(L. Latz) |
| 12:50pm – 1:05pm | Report on Task Team Process
(C. Brantley) |
| 1:05pm – 1:30pm | Draft Strategic Directions and the Work Ahead
(J. Rasmussen and D. Rauner) |
| 1:30pm – 2:45pm | Questions for Further Discussion—Small Groups
(Task Team Co-Chairs Facilitate Small Groups) |
| 2:45pm – 3:00pm | Break |
| 3:00pm – 3:45pm | Large Group Report Out and Discussion |
| 3:45pm – 4:00pm | Next Steps
(J. Rasmussen and D. Rauner) |



**Educare Learning Network
Final Strategic Planning Meeting**

Wednesday, July 18, 2012
10:00 a.m. – 2:00 p.m. CDT

Ounce of Prevention Fund Offices, 33 West Monroe Street, 5th Floor, Chicago, IL

AGENDA

9:30 – 10:00	Light Breakfast
10:00 – 10:15	Welcome & Meeting Purpose
10:15 – 11:15	Overview of Draft Strategic Plan <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Vision Statement• 3 Strategic Directions• Strategic Priorities Map• Vision, Strategic Directions, and Priorities• Discussion of 10 Priorities
11:15 – 11:30	Short Break
11:30 – 12:15	Working Lunch – Large Group Discussion of 10 Priorities
12:15 – 1:30	Small Group Breakout & Report Back on Tactics
1:30 – 2:00	Moving Forward