



Educare Model Framework Description

Educare Learning Network Vision Statement

The Educare Learning Network will demonstrate that research-based early childhood education prevents the persistent achievement gaps 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.

Research-Based Model

The Educare program model is based on research from early childhood development, education, social work and other allied fields. Data from the Educare Learning Network and research from the field informed the development of the Educare program and contributes to additions or changes made to the model and to program practices.

Young children who experience the world as predictable and supportive develop strong emotional foundations essential for learning. The Educare model promotes consistent, high-quality, outcome-based classroom learning environments for children, along with intensive support for families. Educare schools are located in under-resourced communities, and serve families and their children (from 6 weeks to 5 years) who are at risk for academic failure; including children with disabilities and dual-language learners.

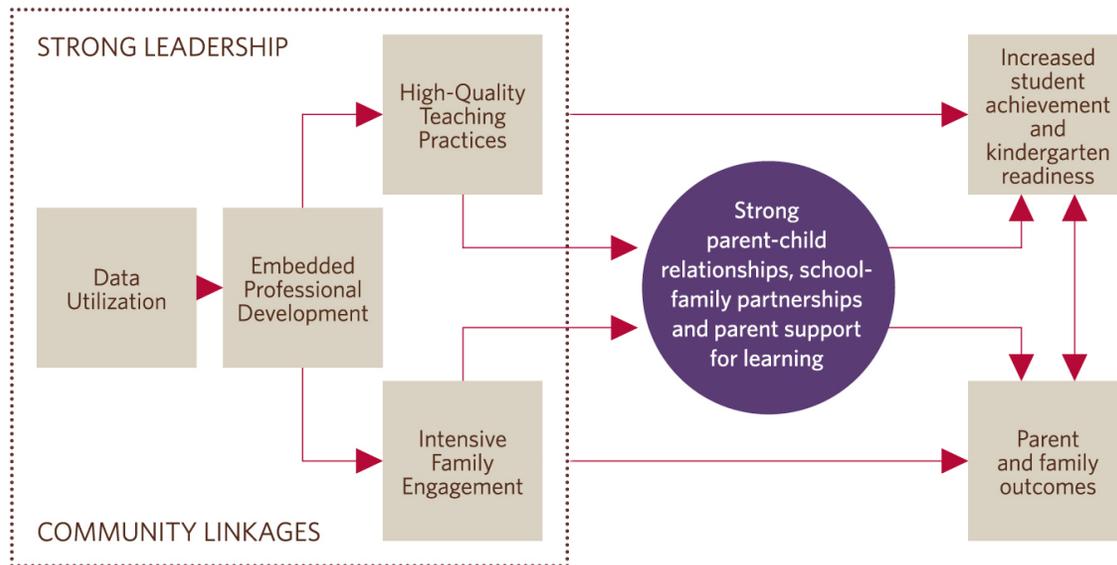
Educare Model Framework Theory of Change

Four core features compose Educare's theory of change: data utilization, embedded professional development, high-quality teaching practices and intensive family engagement. Strong leadership at Educare schools supports the implementation of the model and develops the culture for high-quality early childhood education and family support services. In addition, community linkages provide a myriad of community-based services that support access to resources for children, families and staff.

These four core features work together in a comprehensive and intentional way to achieve a high-quality early childhood program that helps children from birth to age 5 grow up safe, healthy and eager to learn. The Educare theory of change posits that the coordinated implementation of these components leads to strong family-school partnerships and parent support for children's learning, and that Educare prepares children for kindergarten and long-term academic and life success.

EDUCARE CORE FEATURES

CHILD AND FAMILY OUTCOMES



Educare Core Features

Data Utilization

Data utilization in Educare includes our use of internal and external research and evaluation to improve on program practices and to support policy development in state and national arenas.

Research-Based and Data-Driven Practices

The Educare Learning Network continuously reviews the most current knowledge about children and families, examines how new knowledge impacts our belief of what constitutes high-quality early childhood programming, and then analyzes how changes to programming impact child and family outcomes. By understanding the research principles behind child development, early childhood education, social-emotional development, poverty and trauma, the Educare Learning Network is equipped to directly link research to practice.

Upon entrance into the Network, each Educare school agrees to establish a research program partnership (RPP) with a qualified local evaluation partner (LEP) to assist in ongoing local program evaluation and the national, longitudinal Educare Implementation Study. Data collected by the schools contribute to and support continuous program improvement, monitor progress toward outcomes, and lead to policy development and initiatives at both the state and national levels.

Programs engage in a regular cycle of reciprocal data feedback and utilization for continuous program improvement and individualized planning for children, families and staff. This cycle includes not only collecting and sharing data but also regular engagement in dialogues that identify strategies and interventions, based on the data, for improvement of program and teaching practices.

All quality improvements—in the classroom, in individual work with families, for program policies and systems, and for professional development—are informed by data collected under the structure and system of data utilization established by each Educare School as part of its RPP. Teams at Educare Schools engage in deep data dialogues in order to understand, discuss, and interpret data to set goals and develop corresponding action plans to drive exemplary practice.

The Educare schools' RPP includes the LEP, Educare leaders, program staff and parents. The LEP plays an integral role in the RPP, striving to make the data understandable and useable by the school. Educare leaders create a culture of data utilization at the school, leading the program-driven practices. Educare program staff participate in interdisciplinary data meetings to ensure that everyone uses data to inform their practices and interactions with children and parents. Parents are engaged in ongoing communication concerning their child's screenings and assessments, and are provided with activities designed to enhance their child's development based on their child's assessment results.

Data and Policy Development

Data collected by the Educare Learning Network support policy development and initiatives at both the state and national levels. Educare's high-quality early childhood programming can be used as a place-based strategy to advance policy priorities. State advocates and Educare leaders work together to effectively communicate Educare's outcome data to policymakers and business leaders, in collaboration with the Ounce of Prevention Fund national policy team and the First Five Years Fund.

Embedded Professional Development

Embedded professional development happens every day and is ongoing, defined by what Educare leaders and staff are doing to enhance their work and grow as practitioners. Embedded professional development opportunities are built into the program structure to occur routinely and are grounded in teachers' and family support staff's day-to-day practice. They are designed to enhance teachers' inquiry and learning about content-specific interactions and instructional practices with the intent of improving children's kindergarten readiness and the learning development of children and families.. This core feature begins with a well-qualified staff and increases their competence through intensive staff development using an interdisciplinary approach with reflective practice and supervision.

High Staff Qualifications

The quality of our program is enhanced through the advanced training of our staff. Educare staff are required to have the following minimal credentials:

Teaching staff

- Master teacher: master's degree in early childhood education and special training in infant and toddler development for birth-to-3 classrooms
- Lead teacher: bachelor's degree in early childhood education or related degree with 18 credits in early childhood education
- Assistant teacher: associate's degree in early childhood education
- Teacher aide: high school diploma or GED and a credential in early childhood development or training in infant and toddler development

Family support staff

- Family support supervisor: master's degree in social work or a related field
- Family support specialist: bachelor's degree in social work, health or a related field

School directors

- School Director: master's degree in early childhood education

Intensive Staff Development

Educare's professional development model and offerings focus on increasing the quality of teaching and the leadership and organizational supports that create the conditions for effective teaching. These supports are necessary as we strive to improve outcomes in underserved communities serving families with multiple stressors and at-risk children, including children with disabilities and dual-language learners.

Network Implementation Assistance

The Educare Learning Network implementation assistance and training team provides tailored consultation, implementation assistance and training to Educare schools. The team capitalizes on each school's strengths in order to bridge gaps, overcome challenges, collaboratively problem-solve, and develop activities and resources for reaching full implementation of the Educare model.

Communities of Practice

At the Network level, Educare professionals with common responsibilities in content areas come together twice a year. These peer-learning events include focused time to share challenges and lessons learned, participate in targeted training and learn from national experts in the field. Learning is facilitated through face-to-face and web-based meetings and trainings, as well as through the Network's online platform.

School-Level Professional Development

At the school level, leaders ensure that there are structures and systems in place to support ongoing embedded professional development of school staff. This includes reflective practice groups, reflective supervision of staff and dedicated staff development days.

Interdisciplinary Approach

To serve the complex needs of children and families, the Educare model is committed to an interdisciplinary approach that encourages communication and collaboration among all the professionals who touch the life of a child. Interdisciplinary work occurs when a group of professionals from different disciplines and cultures come together to contribute their professional information and insights to the team to coordinate and enrich the planning for children and families. For example, education and family support staff meet regularly to discuss and understand the child in the context of his or her family and conduct family and child reviews for each child a minimum of three times a year. Similarly, parent conferences include teachers, family support and other appropriate staff. In addition, all Educare staff members receive consultation from professionals with specialized information and expertise to enrich their own knowledge and provide additional perspectives.

Other Staff and Consultants

Mental health staff and consultants are part of the Educare team that works toward the social-emotional health and wellness of children and works to support parents to actively and appropriately access services for their families. Auxiliary staff members (floaters and permanent substitutes) are also available to maintain classroom ratios and support staff's participation in professional development activities.

Reflective Practice and Supervision

The process of reflective supervision, and the supervisory relationships that result, creates an overall environment for continuous learning about one's professional self in relation to work with children, parents and colleagues in Educare schools. Because work with families engages both the intellectual and emotional sides of staff and supervisors, high-quality, ongoing supervision is critical to support their professional growth. Reflective supervision provides time for each individual to pause and reflect about his or her experiences, which in turn supports quality care for families and their children.

Reflective Supervision

Supervisors meet a minimum of twice a month with each staff member. Intensive coaching, mentoring and support results in excellent classroom practice, engagement of parents and staff retention as measured through appropriate assessments, staff surveys and reports. All staff participate in an annual performance appraisal and develop individual plans for professional development with their supervisors.

High-Quality Teaching Practices

This core feature of Educare includes the ingredients that we believe comprise a high-quality early learning environment for infants, toddlers and preschoolers. Both structural and process aspects are important to provide the best care and early education for all children, especially those from challenging family environments.

Provide Full-Day, Full-Year Services

Operational hours of an Educare school are determined based on the feedback from each school's community needs assessment along with parents' work and school schedules. Full-day programming is designed to support parents who are working and need full-day, full-year care and education for their children. Children attend Educare schools for a minimum of 6 hours per school day.

Maintain High Staff-Child Ratios and Small Class Sizes

Each classroom has three staff assigned. Staff shifts are scheduled based on child attendance and outside-the-classroom responsibilities.

- Infant-toddler classrooms: three adults are assigned to a classroom of eight children
- Preschool classrooms: three adults are assigned to a classroom of 17 children

Provide Continuity of Care

Within the continuity of care model, children stay with the same teaching team and cohort of children from entry into the program until transition to Head Start at age 3, and then with a second team until they transition to kindergarten at age 5. Within each teaching team, every child has a primary caregiver who is assigned no more than four infants and toddlers or nine preschoolers, which allows caregivers to develop a close rapport with each child and family. Stable, nurturing and responsive relationships and interactions, such as those facilitated by primary caregivers, promote secure attachments and enhance children's social-emotional and cognitive development.

Curriculum

The Educare Learning Network does not subscribe to any one early childhood curriculum program, but instead promotes a research-based curriculum approach focused on the development of skills as they relate specifically to language and literacy, social-emotional development, early math concepts, problem-solving and motor development. Educare schools use the arts to strengthen and support the development of these skills.

Classroom Instruction

Instruction in Educare school classrooms is primarily child-initiated, not teacher-directed. Educare incorporates high-quality teaching practices across all developmental domains. These practices include:

- Intentionally planned activities based on curriculum goals
- Activities individualized based on each child's developmental profile
- Individual, small group and large group activities
- Supportive classroom environment and materials
- Analysis of age-appropriate assessment data to determine children's progress toward curriculum goals

- Engagement of families to reinforce instruction
- Secure attachment and relationships between children and teachers

To help support high-quality teaching and learning, the Educare Learning Network uses the Focused Teaching Cycle framework. This helps teachers conceptualize, organize and connect important components to meaningful planning and implementation of children’s learning explorations, with an intentional focus on teacher-child interactions.

Positive Relationships

Some of the longest-lasting positive outcomes associated with early childhood education result from the development of healthy relationships and positive social-emotional skills. The Educare environment and staff emphasize the centrality of relationships. Social-emotional developmental theory informs all aspects of the Educare model, including our work with children, families and staff. The development of relationships is central to all facets of the model including family engagement work, teacher supervision and program operations. All staff are trained to foster their engagement with children and families with attention to verbal, non-verbal and written communications, conflict resolution as well as cultural contexts. Transition planning for all moves into, within and from the program begins at least six months in advance and involves parents and multi-disciplinary staff teams.

Intensive Family Engagement

Family engagement in Educare schools is defined as partnering with families to build mutually respectful, goal-oriented relationships that support strong parent-child relationships, family well-being, and ongoing learning and development for both parents and children. To achieve positive outcomes, the Educare model is based on the principle that practitioners can only address a child’s needs within the context of the entire family.

As Head Start programs, Educare schools work to generate all of the family outcomes as identified by the Office of Head Start. The Parent, Family and Community Engagement Framework (PFCE Framework) recognizes the following family outcomes:

- family well-being
- positive parent-child relationships
- families as lifelong educators
- families as learners
- family engagement in transitions
- family connections to peers and communities
- families as advocates and leaders

In Educare schools, we use the PFCE Framework with a primary focus on three guiding principles:

- promoting the parent-child relationship;
- promoting the parents’ critical role in the emotional and cognitive development of their child
- promoting the parent as an effective advocate on behalf of their child’s education

Through systematic approaches, the entire staff works collaboratively with parents across home, school and community to support children’s participation, health, learning and development, and to build strong family ties with elementary schools, community resources and social networks among families.

Families collaborate with staff to assess their child’s developmental progress in each of the curriculum skill areas through regular contacts and interactions. Families partner with staff to engage their child in

activities in their home, neighborhood and community, to facilitate and extend children's growth and development both in and outside of Educare schools.

Offer On-Site Family Support Services

Family support specialists support families in meeting the PFCE Framework outcomes as identified above. The number of families assigned to a family support specialist varies depending on the roles and responsibilities they fulfill at each school. Support services include timely and sensitive responses to parent needs and focus on promoting and supporting positive parent-child relationships, involvement in their child's education and improving parents' ability to advocate for their child. Staff members also develop strong relationships with community organizations to facilitate referrals for services not available on-site, such as mental health services.

Start Early, With an Emphasis on Prenatal Services and Birth-to-Three

To promote maternal and child health and well-being, Educare schools or community partners provide Early Head Start services to pregnant women and newborns. Programs enroll infants as early as families require. Some programs provide doula services (prenatal and childbirth assistance) to build relationships with families and between parent and child as early as possible.

Educare Core Features

Data Utilization

- Research-Based Approach
- Data-Driven Practices

Embedded Professional Development

- High Staff Qualifications
- Intensive Staff Development
- Interdisciplinary Approach
- Reflective Practice and Supervision

High-Quality Teaching Practices

- Provide Full-Day, Full-Year Services
- Maintain High Staff-Child Ratios and Small Class Sizes
- Provide Continuity of Care
- Curriculum (with intentional and specific focus on language and literacy, social-emotional development, problem-solving and numeracy, motor development and the arts)

Intensive Family Engagement

- Offer On-Site Family Support Services
- Start Early (with an emphasis on prenatal services and birth-to-3)