



EDUCARE®
Year in Review
2021-2022



A Letter from Our Executive Director

Dear Colleagues,

Looking back at the 2021-2022 school year, I am once again awed by the Educare Network's ability to effect change, inspire communities, and weather both new and ongoing challenges. This year, the Network navigated the early childhood education workforce crisis and responded to the continued impacts of racial injustices and the COVID-19 pandemic. We advanced our vision of a future where all children have access to effective early learning through collaborative innovation and research, policy and program endeavors. We succeeded at some things, failed at others, and persevered through every turn in the road — and we did all of this together, as a Network of early childhood champions and partners, parents and teachers, leaders and visionaries.

In the pages ahead you'll find highlights of our work together this year, from groundbreaking research to collaborative initiatives that further infuse diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging into our work, and more.

Our work this year, as well as our plans for the future, reflect our ambitious and innovative approaches to provide and expand access to quality early education and care in diverse communities, partner with parents and families, build the early childhood workforce, advance policy change, advocate for early learning and care, and share best practices and learnings.

Working alongside a plethora of partners and generous supporters, our Network has the leadership and expertise to drive towards solutions to problems facing the early childhood education field.

We're excited for you to join us as we deepen our efforts, expand our Network, and move ever onwards!

Today, we go forward with a renewed sense of purpose and a refreshed commitment to our mission. We're proud to partner with you and thrilled to share a look at what we've done together over the past fiscal year.

With gratitude,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Cynthia D. Jackson".

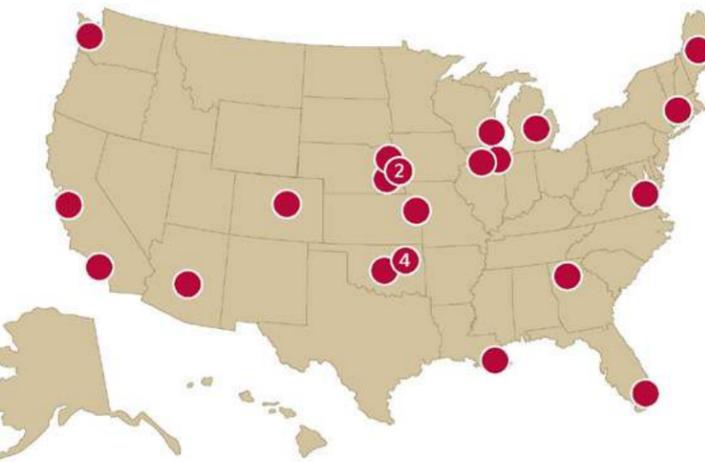
Cynthia D. Jackson
Executive Director, Educare Network



WHO WE ARE: Educare Network

We are a network of learning hubs that innovate, evaluate and share best practices to transform the lives of young children in disinvested communities and positively impact the broader early childhood field.

We provide early learning and care at 25 independent nonprofit birth-to-five schools nationwide. Nearly 4,000 infant, toddler and preschool children attend our comprehensive center-based early care and education programs in urban, suburban, rural and tribal communities.



OUR IMPACT: Stories from the Field

Educare schools are creating positive change for children across the country, from public policy advancements to new family support initiatives and more.

We're meeting early childhood educators where they are and working to address the workforce crisis. We're making change and driving innovation in how we join

alongside families in the face of challenges like food insecurity. We're helping children build social emotional skills, pushing for investments in early learning and care, and partnering with early childhood champions across the country to model systems change.

Learn more about Educare's work in communities nationwide.



OUR EXPERTISE: Leaders in the Field

We are active participants in the early childhood education field, contributing data and expertise to ongoing research, policy and practice work.

Educare leaders joined countless partnerships and collaborations this year, notably with the National Head Start Association, Zero to Three, and the National Association for the Education of the Young Child. Together with these likeminded partners, we addressed challenges faced by early childhood centers, ongoing racial equity and social justice issues, and more.

Learn more about how Educare leaders are making a difference in the early childhood education field.



NETWORK LEADERSHIP: Educare Governance Council

The Educare Governance Council (EGC) helps advance our work as a generative, peer-led Network. This shared governance structure includes Network-led workgroups, driving our efforts around policy, practice, research and sustainability.

Led by co-chairs Ginger Ward and Shawn Gerth, the EGC has brought

energy and commitment to drive the work of the Network forward and help us remain focused, despite the pressing concerns of an ongoing pandemic. Notably, this past year, the EGC led the development of a new Strategic Direction to guide the work of the Educare Network.

Learn more about the EGC.





Programs & Practice

In FY22, the Educare backbone team at Start Early provided strong infrastructure and support, including professional development and facilitation of collective learning to our 25 Educare schools. We convened and connected with school leaders, staff and partners through quality consultation, training, communities of practice and other peer learning opportunities. This comprehensive set of experiences resulted in nearly 7,000 hours of support across all areas of work.

A focus on Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) runs through all of this year's programmatic work. As part of efforts to implement virtual learning experiences that are relevant and user-friendly, we

focused on revising our training experiences to be more accessible and DEIB-centered. We brought a DEIB and anti-racist, anti-bias (ABAR) lens to revisions of the Essential Practices of Educare trainings, with plans to improve the design of all other Network offerings so that our trainings resonate with and are relevant to early childhood staff and the communities we serve, both within and beyond the Network. Educare leaders across the country also developed a discussion guide to use as a starting point to identify additional opportunities for the Network to deepen our DEIB efforts.

[Learn about more of our ongoing efforts to approach programs and practice work through a DEIB lens.](#)



Philanthropy & Outreach

This was a foundational year for advancing a collaborative approach to sustainability and fundraising for the Network. We established a framework for joint fundraising, and later had opportunities with prospective funders to test this new collaborative fundraising structure, which leverages the leadership and expertise of fundraising staff across the Network.

In effort to expand the Network's field impact, for the fourth consecutive year we partnered with Comic Relief USA for Red Nose Day. During the campaign, we collaborated with three Educare schools - Atlanta, Chicago and West DuPage - on [teacher spotlights to highlight outstanding educators](#) and the work happening

in the classroom. One teacher spotlight was featured on this year's [Red Nose Day episode of The Kelly Clarkson Show](#).



We continue to be grateful for our partnership, and appreciative of the important role the Educare Learning Network plays at multiple levels of the early childhood education sector."

- Comic Relief US

Policy & Advocacy

Last year, the Educare Network launched our first-ever public policy agenda, [The Educare Five](#): five priorities that inform our work and guide our policy and advocacy efforts.

Our five public policy priorities are:

1. Universal child care and early learning
2. Stable and supported families
3. Thriving early childhood workforce
4. Healthy and supported children
5. Strong early childhood systems in every community

Over the past year, we have focused our efforts on advancing the Educare Five and amplifying our policy

objectives. We've shared our stories as early childhood educators and parents with federal policymakers, and urged Congress to pass spending bills that would invest in early childhood. We've expanded collaboration amongst and between our schools to strengthen policy and advocacy efforts. We've witnessed a rising interest in growing parent leadership opportunities, deepened efforts of Parent Ambassador programs across the Network, and doubled down on the importance of addressing the workforce crisis.

[Learn more about the progress we've generated and how together we are making a powerful difference for children, families and communities across the country.](#)

Research & Evaluation

Our collective research and evaluation efforts have been many and varied, with a goal of analyzing, translating, communicating and disseminating Educare research findings, innovations, and lessons learned to both Network members and others in the early learning field.

To this end, we developed two new [Educare Insights](#) briefs on timely topics for the field:

1. Children's social-emotional development and self-regulation
2. Evaluation findings from efforts to support programs' intensive family engagement efforts

Educare practitioners and national experts came together

to share evidence, strategies and lessons learned via [a public webinar on recruitment, enrollment and attendance of young children](#), which provided connections and partnerships with additional thought leaders in the early learning and adjacent fields.

As a Network, we made considerable progress on establishing a research agenda focused on racial equity, with more work still to come. We facilitated data dialogues on the social-emotional well-being of children and staff before and during the pandemic, deepened research practice partnership efforts at individual schools, and sought to amplify knowledge generated through our Network's endeavors to diverse audiences.





Thank You to Our Supporters

The Educare Network is generously funded by Buffett Early Childhood Fund and further supported by partnerships and contributions from a variety of foundations, organizations and individuals.

Partner Organizations

Atlanta Public Schools
Balsz School District
Bayou District Foundation
Catholic Charities
Clayton Early Learning
District of Columbia Public Schools
Flint Early Childhood Collaborative
Franklin-McKinley School District
Genesee Intermediate School District
Holyoke Chicopee Springfield Head Start
Kennebec Valley Community Action Program
Kingsley House
Lincoln Public Schools
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Omaha Public Schools
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We chose to donate because we appreciate and fully support the idea of education beginning in the preschool years. We value the Educare approach to educating the whole child with parents and communities and the support you provide beyond the classroom. Thanks for the work you do.”

- Susan Huurman, Bagley Foundation



Educare Learning Network

33 West Monroe Street, Suite 1200, Chicago, IL 60603

www.educareschools.org