



# EDUCARE KANSAS CITY

## OUR PROGRESS, OUR GOALS

### ABOUT EDUCARE KANSAS CITY AND THE CCKC

Educare Kansas City (Educare KC) is part of a national network that operates 25 Educare schools. This network of schools collectively aims to prevent the persistent achievement gap among low-income children.

As a member of this early learning network, we implement the Educare model and its **four core features** known to result in strong student and family outcomes:

- Data Utilization
- High Quality Teaching Practices
- Embedded Professional Development
- Intensive Family Engagement

Each Educare school serves as an example of high-quality early education and family support.

Educare KC is managed by Project Eagle, a program of the University of Kansas Medical Center. Located at the Children's Campus of Kansas City (CCKC), Educare KC partners with the University of Kansas, Juniper Gardens Children's Project, for ongoing research and evaluation. The information gathered is used nationally across all Educare schools to evaluate the Educare model. Locally, evaluation data are used by our Educare teachers and administrators to individualize instruction, document children's growth, and to address the needs of the program, families, and children.



## THE NEED FOR QUALITY EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Research tells us that fewer than half of all children nationwide who live in poor or low-income families have the academic and social-emotional skills needed for success in school at age 5 compared to children from more affluent and middle-income households.

- Young children from low-income households are more likely to start school far behind their more advantaged peers in terms of vocabulary, pre-literacy, and numeracy skills.
- This achievement gap persists through school and is linked to social and economic problems later in life (illiteracy, teen pregnancy, high dropout rates and unemployment).
- We know from economic analyses that investment in early childhood education provides a return that exceeds the return on most public projects: \$8 for every \$1 invested.
- Investing in young children early is an investment in future productivity and success.

Educare KC provides comprehensive, full-day early education to children birth to five. The year-round program promotes the healthy development and school readiness of infants, toddlers, and preschoolers through high-quality, evidence-based teaching and classroom practices as well as intensive family engagement.

Beginning in 2010 when Educare KC opened, program outcomes along with child and family outcomes, have been evaluated to document gains, highlight areas of need, and provide data to Educare KC administrative and teaching staff. These data are used to inform our efforts to provide quality early learning experiences for children and families. Program assessments and observations focus on measuring skills necessary to succeed in school such as social/emotional and problem-solving skills, language, early literacy, early numeracy, program and classroom quality.

## STAFF AT EDUCARE KANSAS CITY



Our classrooms are staffed by an interdisciplinary team that includes a master teacher, a pair of co-teachers, a teaching assistant and a family support coordinator. A health coordinator, child development coordinator, and mental health consultant provide additional coaching and support as needed. All of our teachers participate in over 150 hours of professional development each year which includes individual and group reflective supervision, lesson study collaborative peer groups, data-focused team planning, individual and team classroom coaching, school level reflective practice, data dialogues, and peer led symposiums.

- The majority of co-teachers in our classrooms have a bachelor's degree or above.
- Educare KC teachers have an average of 8 years of experience teaching young children.
- Half of our teaching staff identifies as a racial/ethnic minority.
- In 2018-2019, staff presented at eight local, state, and national early childhood conferences and offered internship placements to more than 20 early childhood education students.

- All staff participated in ongoing research and evaluation projects that contributed to the development and testing of evidence-based practice in early childhood.
- We welcomed over 100 guests for tours of Educare KC to learn about early childhood education and the Educare Learning Network including state and local representatives.
- We participated in a community conversation sponsored by CCKC partners and Kansas Action for Children to address equity issues in early childhood education and bridging the word gap.

## WHAT'S NEXT?

- Educare KC will continue our practice of hiring well-qualified and diverse teachers and staff that utilize effective early education teaching practices known to produce the greatest outcomes.
- In 2020, our Educare KC staff will promote excellence in the field of early childhood education by expanding the number of Educare Best Practices trainings provided to other early education providers in the KC Metropolitan area.
- As a member of the Educare Learning Network, Educare KC will work with other Educare schools across the country to serve as a model of high-quality early childhood education, raise awareness and cultivate early childhood champions, inform policy and funding priorities, and engage in funding-advocacy activities.

***"It is wonderful to see that even though all different types of parents come into the program with different experiences, backgrounds, and methods for raising kids, they all want what is best for their children and have chosen us to help them with that goal."***

Educare KC Teacher

## CHILDREN AND FAMILIES SERVED BY EDUCARE KANSAS CITY

Since opening in 2010, more than 650 children have attended Educare KC. Over the course of the 2018-19 school year, we enrolled 141 children ages 6 weeks to five years across fourteen classrooms.

- Over 70% were infants and toddlers 6 weeks to 3 yrs.
- Over 10% of children received services for special needs.
- More than half of our families speak Spanish at home.
- Our families represent over 6 different countries.
- 64% Latinx, 28% Black, 12% Other
- 11% of the parents report attending school and close to 90% report being employed.
- Approximately 20% of families reported food insecurity at some point during the past year.



(Photo courtesy of Comic Relief US.)

At Educare KC, we emphasize parent involvement and encourage parent engagement in their child's education. Our highly skilled teachers and family support staff partner with parents to make progress on goals related to their child's learning and family well-being. Parents are provided with a variety of opportunities throughout the school year to engage in their child's classroom and program activities.

- 61% of parents reported reading to their children 3 or more times a week and 92% reported singing to their children at least 3 times a week. These percentages are higher than those reported the previous year showcasing how our parents value quality time with their child.
- Educare KC families have such high expectations for their children with almost 95% reporting that they expect their child to complete a college education or more.
- When asked about visiting places in the community over the last year, over 70% of families reported they have not been to a museum or exhibit and over 50% reported they have not visited a library.
- Our family support staff and teachers encourage families to participate in their community and regularly provide information to families on free events and other activities they can participate in with their child.
- Unfortunately, 40% of our parents reported that they have felt depressed or sad most days for 2 years or more. Parents and families experience so much stress and trauma, and while they try to overcome barriers, they can be overwhelming at times. Our Educare KC staff strive to support families in achieving positive mental health so they may feel empowered to overcome those barriers and break the poverty cycle.

## WHAT'S NEXT

The Educare Learning Network schools received generous funding from Comic Relief's Red Nose Day, to provide additional funding to support innovation in our schools. With this additional funding, and help from our parents, we are increasing our focus on family engagement by creating connections between families in the school. Our parents have told us how they wish to support and connect more



with one another and they participated in creating the idea of having a new space for such activities. In response, we are rejuvenating our family resource area to create a sanctuary for families. Their space will have a computer for family use, a refrigerator for healthy snacks and water, a coffee maker, and inviting seating to encourage families to spend time with one another. Additional family events will be offered. Our first event, Educare's Got Talent, had nearly 200 in attendance.

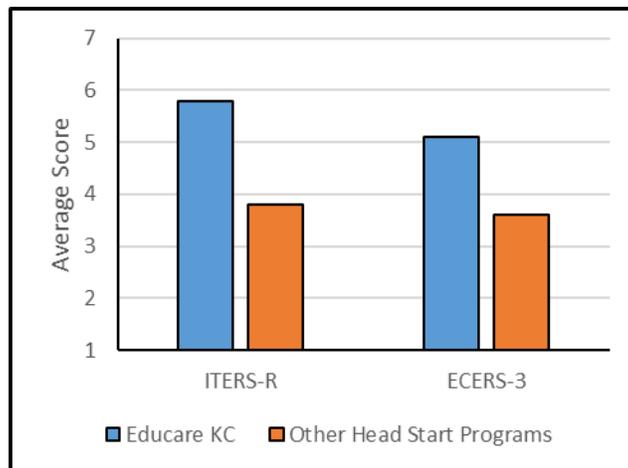
## CLASSROOM QUALITY

High quality learning environments support the healthy growth and development of young children. Educare KC focuses on positive teacher-child interactions; developmentally appropriate, evidence-based instructional practices; and adherence to the highest level of health and safety practices.

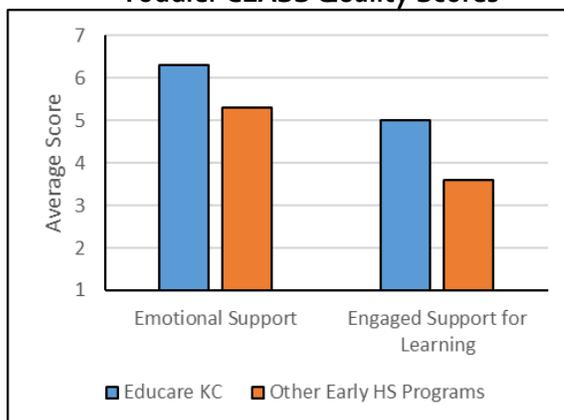
To measure classroom quality, Educare KC uses two well-known measures of quality in educational and child care programs. Since Educare KC opened in 2010, classroom ratings have averaged between **good-to-excellent**. Classrooms have been especially strong in teacher-child interactions, peer interaction and program organization related to instruction. Educare staff use these data to enhance program quality through targeted professional development.

As shown below, in recent years, we met goals for high quality across the Infant/Toddler and Preschool classrooms on combined indicators of quality. Our scores are well above those reported in large-scale studies of Head Start classrooms across the nation.

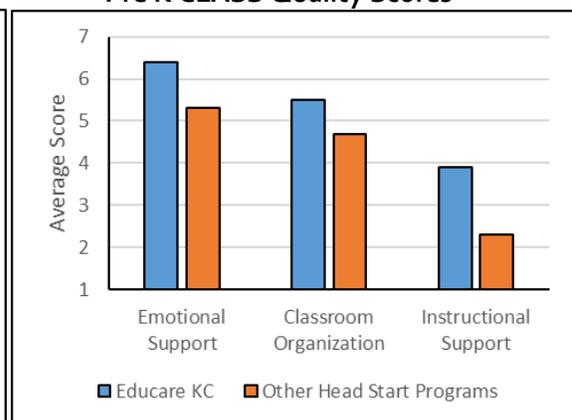
Overall ITERS and ECERS Scores



Toddler CLASS Quality Scores



Pre K CLASS Quality Scores



## LANGUAGE AND EARLY LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

Early language and literacy skills are fundamental to later social and academic success as well as reading ability. Since 2010, 65% of children attending our school have demonstrated English vocabulary scores within or above the typical range for their age group. On a measure of early language development administered annually to both English and Spanish speakers, 84% of the children have scored within, or above, the typical range for their age.

During the 2018-19 school year:

- Over 83% of infants and toddlers, and 73% of preschoolers showed early language development skills within, or above, the typical range for their age.
- Almost 90% of preschool-aged children demonstrated fall to spring gains in language skills.

Recognizing that language skills are highly predictive of academic success, Educare KC and researchers at the Juniper Gardens Children's Project, partner to address the implementation of evidence-based language intervention strategies (Promoting Communication Tools for Advancing Language in Kids; PC TALK) to increase and enhance the language learning opportunities of infants and young children provided by teachers to bridge the word gap. This ongoing work exemplifies the culture of continuous improvement emphasized at Educare KC <https://vimeo.com/252896066>.



Educare KC is also collaborating with Juniper Gardens in an evidence-based intervention designed to boost the literacy focus of teachers, the Literacy 3D project. Literacy 3D offers schools a pathway to strengthen instruction thereby leading to improved early literacy outcomes for preschoolers through data driven decisions. In addition, it employs procedures that support classroom literacy implementation, including professional development and practice-based teacher coaching.

### WHAT'S NEXT

Leadership staff at Educare Kansas City including the director, master teachers, and the lead family support coordinator, will be trained in the Practice Based Coaching Model. Using this coaching model, the master teachers will utilize the strategies from PC TALK to provide data-based coaching to increase teachers' use of these strategies. The master teachers will also be trained to use an app to document teacher use of the PC TALK strategies and corresponding child communication during classroom activities. Data collected by master teachers will then be used to coach teachers around their use of the PC TALK strategies with the children in their classroom using the Practice Based Coaching Model. The teachers will be working on including these strategies in their lesson plans and encouraging families to use these techniques with their child(ren) at home as well.

## SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL SKILLS

Another important outcome area addressed in Educare schools is social and emotional skill development. Social and emotional skills are important for children as they learn to interact with others and to regulate their own behavior. Since we opened in 2010, enrolled children have had significant fall to spring improvements in social/emotional skills including, taking initiative and adult-child attachment.

- In the spring of 2018-19, more than 80% of children scored at or above national norms on a measure of social/emotional development.
- Approximately 85% of children entering kindergarten made gains in their social/emotional behavior.
- On average, children with and without disabilities made fall to spring gains in their social-emotional development.

When families were asked about handling stressors in their lives:

- 41% of families said it takes a long time to recover from a stressful event compared to 36% of families at other Educare schools.
- 13 % of families felt unable to control important things in their lives compared to 7% of families in the Network.

## WHAT'S NEXT

Because many of our families and children have experienced trauma, we are working to become a more trauma-informed school. We are focusing on training staff in Conscious Discipline and embedding this work within reflective practice. Parents at Educare KC are also completing the Conscious Discipline parenting curriculum at monthly family fun night where new skills are taught and practiced. By utilizing this dual approach of teaching Conscious Discipline skills to parents and teachers, we are working to increase our students' self-regulation skills - which can make a life-long difference in their social-emotional development.



## SCHOOL READINESS

By the spring before children enter kindergarten, scores on a standardized measure of school readiness have averaged well within the national norms for children transitioning into elementary school. The majority of kindergarten-bound children who have attended Educare KC scored within or above the typical range for their age on measures of language skills and social-emotional skills.



During the 2018-19 school year, preschool-aged children attending Educare KC made fall to spring gains in behavior and language skills that are fundamental for future success in kindergarten and throughout early elementary school.

- Approximately 65% of children made gains in overall language skills.
- The majority of children (92%) showed gains in skills important for kindergarten readiness including colors, letters, shapes, and numbers.
- In the spring before entering kindergarten, preschoolers scored within or above standard levels for school readiness.

## FOLLOWING EDUCARE KC GRADUATES INTO SCHOOL

Educare KC and Juniper Gardens Children's Project are collaborating with the Kansas City Kansas (KCK) Public School District in a national follow-up study of Educare graduates. We are documenting the progress of 60 graduates from Kindergarten through the third grade from 21 KCK elementary schools.

Preliminary findings suggest that:

- Educare KC graduates are demonstrating proficiency across language, early literacy, executive functioning, and math skills in Kindergarten through early elementary school.
- At Kindergarten entry, over 90% of Educare KC graduates scored within age range or demonstrated strengths on a teacher report measure of social-emotional competence and maintained these skills throughout elementary school.
- Children with disabilities who attended Educare KC for two or more years, scored higher than classroom peers in language and print concepts, early numeracy and applied problems as measured on standardized assessments.

## WHAT'S NEXT AT EDUCARE KANSAS CITY?

In August 2020, we will send 20 children to kindergarten and, like the class before them, most of these children started at Educare as infants or young toddlers. We continue to learn from the evaluation effort and the outcomes generated, from our community partners, and from the children and families we serve. We will continue to focus on providing the highest quality learning environment for children here at Educare of Kansas City and contributing to the collective work of the national Educare Learning Network.

***"Knowing that my child is happy and safe when I go to work – I am at peace."***  
Educare KC Parent