

# 2024 Impact Report

Building Together



# What is Inside

---

Pg 3 Letter from Our President

---

Pg 4 Who We Are

---

Pg 6 Our Work

---

Pg 7 Elevating Family Leadership

---

Pg 8 Supporting Practitioners through Professional Learning

---

Pg 9 Addressing the Workforce Crisis

---

Pg 11 Amplifying Our Work in the Field

---

Pg 12 Practice, Research & Policy

---

Pg 14 Where We Are Headed

---

Pg 16 Our Partners & Supporters

---



# Letter from Our President



Dear Friends of Educare,

I am honored to serve as the inaugural President of the Educare Network, and both energized by the Network's accomplishments and excited for our collective work ahead.

The 2023-2024 school year was one of tremendous growth, innovation, and collaboration across Educare nationwide. As a Network, family leadership was elevated to enact meaningful change; professional learning opportunities were facilitated to support practitioners; steps were taken to address the ongoing early childhood workforce crisis; practices, innovations, research findings, and policy recommendations were shared with the field to foster stronger early childhood systems; and so much more.

This work was made possible by our Network members and our countless partners, whose dedication and commitment to the well-being and success of children and their families within and beyond the walls of Educare are invaluable. As we look to the road ahead, I am excited to work alongside this village of early childhood champions to build on our successes, leveraging the wisdom and strength of our Educare schools, families, and communities to continue advancing Educare's mission and vision of a future where every child thrives.

For now, I invite you to join me in celebrating the work that happened this past year across our vibrant and diverse Network, and hope you feel as inspired as I do.

In Partnership,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Kara H. Ahmed". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "K" and "A".

Kara H. Ahmed, Ed.D.  
President, Educare Network

# Who We Are

Educare is a national network of 25 comprehensive early learning and care programs, partnering with historically disinvested urban, suburban, rural and tribal communities to impact the lives of thousands of young children. From schools and training partners to major universities and research institutions, our Network is made up of early childhood champions at every level.



## Our Mission

To advance quality early learning through partnership and innovation around practice, policy and research so every child can thrive.

## Our Vision

To ensure every family has equitable access to quality early care and education in their community, promoting positive outcomes for generations to come.

## Our Commitment

As a Network of early childhood champions, diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging underpin our work on every level. We center the voices and perspectives of our families, communities and providers, which inform and guide our practices, [research](#) and [policy](#) efforts across the Network. [We're committed to cultivating an anti-bias, anti-racist Network](#) that amplifies families' cultural wealth, uplifts marginalized communities and leverages innovative best practices to advance early learning and care for all.

# By The Numbers

25 

Educare Schools

4,000+ 

infants, toddlers and preschoolers directly reached

15 

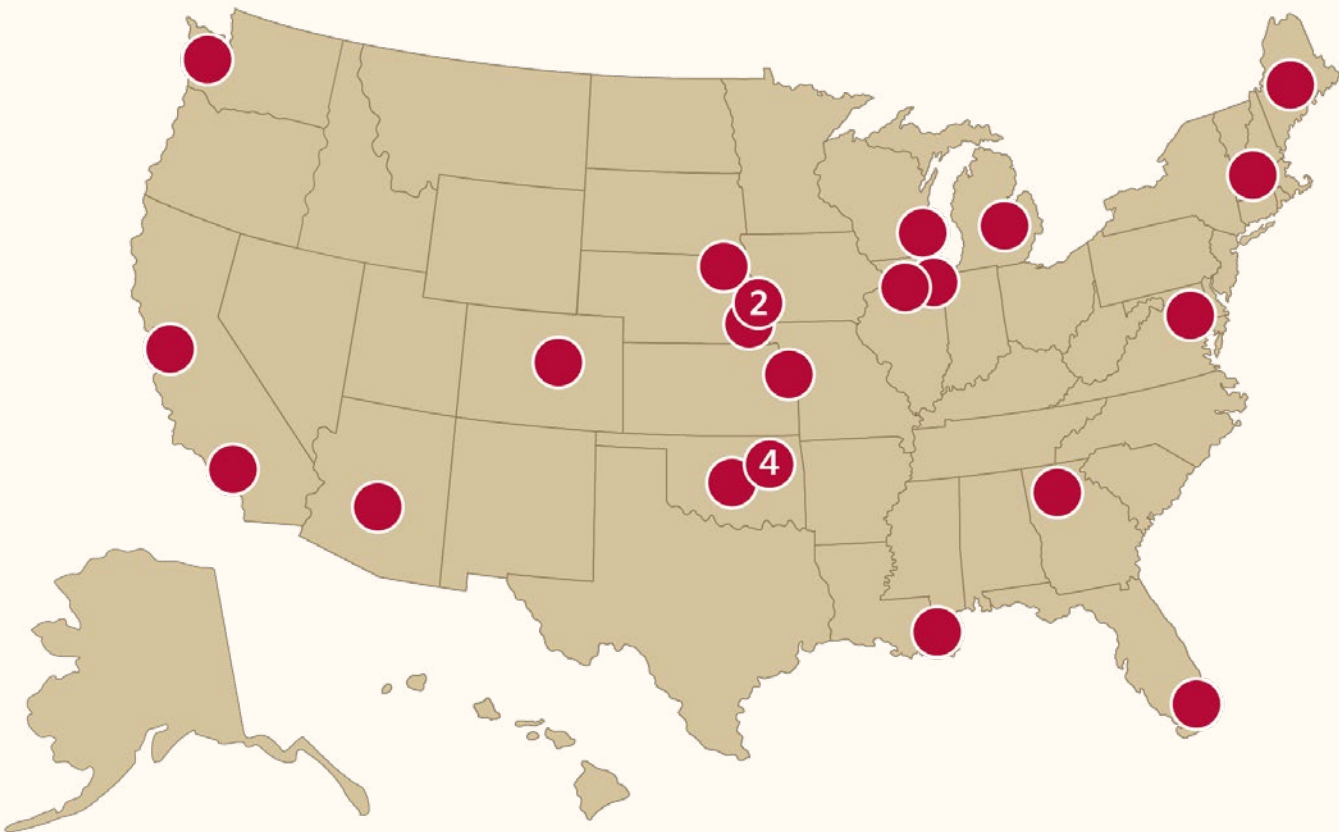
States\*

16,000+ 

Children reached through Educare partner organizations

*\* in addition to the District of Columbia, and the Winnebago Reservation of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska*

## Our Reach



# Our Work

Our work towards a future where every child can thrive begins in the classroom and reaches beyond Educare schools, positively impacting our communities, the broader early childhood field, and our society as a whole. Here's how the Educare Network is shaping early childhood systems.



# Elevating Family Leadership

This year, Educare parents, staff, researchers and community partners jointly developed a [comprehensive national strategy](#) to strengthen family leadership efforts for the entire Network, reinforcing Educare as a driver of change and an advocate for legislation that benefits children, families and communities. Additionally, 13 Educare schools received funding to start or grow their individual family leadership programs and went on to launch Network-wide training and peer-to-peer mentorship opportunities.

As a result, 15 family leaders from 10 Educare schools shared their voices and lived experiences to advocate for relevant, meaningful policies that impact their children and families, standing out as speakers and facilitators on a national scale at the 2023 National Head Start Association Parent and Family Engagement Conference, the 2024 Educare Network Meeting, and the 2024 National Anti-Hunger Policy Conference. Family leaders were also featured in national media outlets including the [New York Times](#), [NBC News](#), and [USA Today](#).

To further elevate family leadership, we also welcomed Office of Head Start Director Khari Garvin to the 2024 Network Meeting, where he met with parents from Educare Winnebago and discussed how Educare is positioned to influence policy and advocacy at the local, state and federal levels.



*“When you walk through the doors of any Educare school, you become part of the Educare family. It goes beyond the walls, and encompasses the entire community, wherever it’s located.”*

– Mary-Gene, Educare Parent



# Supporting Practitioners through Professional Learning

This year, the Educare National Office provided consultation, professional development and peer learning opportunities to all 25 operating Educare schools, as well as ongoing guidance to new Educare schools in development. These experiences resulted in more than **7,700 hours of support** for nearly **600 Network members** across all areas of our work together.

One of our biggest professional learning events, the [annual Network Meeting](#), was hosted in 2024 by Educare Winnebago in Sioux City, Iowa. Guests were welcomed by the tribal council of the Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska, and joined sessions focused on an incredible breadth of topics, from elevating family voice to building school culture, Native American and Tribal influences on early childhood education to trauma-informed care, healing-centered engagement and more. [Watch our celebration of this community event and the power of the Educare Network!](#)

At the Network Meeting, as well as various additional trainings and meetings throughout the school year, we were able to provide Continuing Education Credits (CEUs) to nearly **100 providers**.





# Addressing the Workforce Crisis

The Educare Network is committed to developing a comprehensive recruitment and retention strategy that ensures Educare schools and beyond have highly educated early childhood professionals in every classroom. As part of that commitment, we created a task force comprised of school and National Office staff and research partners to inform the Network's workforce efforts.

During the 2023-2024 school year, this task force conducted a landscape scan to compile and analyze wide-ranging benefits and current recruitment and retention strategies at Educare schools.

## ***Solutions to Early Childhood Workforce Challenges***



Educare schools in Atlanta and the Chicago suburbs are [addressing workforce challenges](#) through hiring practices and continuing education.

From the landscape scan, the task force plans to launch a research study in the 2024-2025 school year to more fully identify the practices, policies, necessary resources and costs that can help make a positive difference in this critical area of our work within and beyond the Network.





*“There is so much need in the community for programs like Educare. I’m excited to share with other parents how much effort and care goes into teaching our children, and where we can support those supporting our children by showing up and participating.”*

- Educare Parent



# Amplifying Our Work in the Field

Educare leaders and staff shared innovations, key learnings, and best practices within and beyond the walls of Educare, contributing data, expertise, and recommendations for practice, research and policy to the broader early childhood field. Through this work, the Network invited more early childhood champions to join our mission and inspired change across the country.



## Amplifying Our Work in the Field

### Practice

We brought our experience with professional development, empowering leaders, and building inclusive and equitable training skills to **7 practice-based presentations at conferences** from coast to coast, including BUILD, Zero to Three and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC)'s Annual Conference.

We continued to scale proprietary best practices for early education programs nationwide that power program, policy and systems change at every level. Through the [Essential Practices of Educare training series](#), our experts provided training to **27 organizations across 15 states**.

# 7

Conference Presentations



# 27

Organizations Impacted



## Research

Research and evaluation partners affiliated with the Network also amplified Educare research findings, data and innovation to drive field impact, leading **15+ conference presentations** at local and national levels, publishing **5 peer-reviewed articles** in the most premier early care and education journals, and speaking about Educare’s model, priorities and findings in various partner webinar and panel discussions. We shared key learnings on topics such as [parent-staff relationships](#); teacher retention and turnover; program/classroom quality; well-being and early care and education experiences among Black and [Hispanic/Latine children and families](#), dual language learners, and children and families experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity; [social-emotional and language development](#); and so much more. Network researchers and practitioners also partnered on and received funding for topics covering:

- The Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES)
- Investigating the frequency of critical race theory bans and what they mean for early childhood systems and the workforce
- The growth and evaluation of developmentally appropriate STEM lessons

## Policy

As advocates for families and the early childhood workforce across the country, the Network signed on to **15 letters to Congress** advocating for SNAP benefits, child tax credit reinstatement, government action to avoid a shutdown, and funding for emergency childcare, child nutrition and the early childhood field. We [submitted comments in reaction to the notice of proposed rulemaking](#) from the Administration for Children and Families about changes to the Head Start Performance Standards and made **4 legislative endorsements** for policies supporting children, families and communities.

# 15

Conference Presentations



# 5

Peer-reviewed Articles



**Attendance Matters: Chronic Absence in Early Childhood Education**



Check out [this recent example](#) of the Network’s collaborative research efforts around patterns of attendance and absenteeism for Educare children before and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

# 15

Letters to Congress



# 4

Legislative Endorsements



# Where We Are Headed

During the 2024-2025 school year, we will deepen the work that helps actualize Educare's mission and vision by continuing to elevate the voices of families and providers, uplift the innovations happening at our Educare schools nationwide, use our learnings to inform the broader early childhood system, and more.



## **Inaugural National Board**

Seating the inaugural National Educare Board, comprised of key leaders and experts from across the country.



## **Family Leadership Institute**

Convening family leaders from across the country in Washington, D.C. to advocate for strong early childhood systems.



## **Expanding the Educare Footprint**

Breaking ground on two new Educare schools in San Antonio, Texas and Lake County, Illinois.



## **2025 Network Meeting**

Hosted this year by Educare Flint, providing an in-person opportunity for Educare leaders, staff, partners and families to share, problem-solve, find support, and discuss critical issues facing the early childhood field.



## **Influencing the National Conversation**

Leveraging the intersections of practice, research and policy to mobilize change in early learning and care across the country.



*“The biggest strength of this Network is that there’s power in the voices of all the Educare programs. What’s happening across the country and in the communities where Educare schools are [is that] we’re able to use those best practices and raise them to the national level, and say, ‘Look what’s happening.’ We are exemplars.”*

– Blythe Keeler Robinson, President & CEO of Sheltering Arms, home to Educare Atlanta



# Our Partners & Supporters

The Educare Network is generously funded by Buffett Early Childhood Fund, our largest and longest-time donor, and further supported by foundations, corporations, community partners and individual early childhood champions.

Over the course of the 2023-2024 school year, we achieved significant new partnerships and multi-year commitments, including nearly \$3 million dollars brought directly to Educare schools through collaborative fundraising. These investments ensure the sustainability of our Network and bolster our focus on advocacy, policy and systems change, family leadership, and addressing the early childhood education workforce crisis.

We are immensely grateful to all those who help make our work possible. Together, we are building a future where every child thrives.

## Foundations, Organizations & Corporations

Buffett Early Childhood Fund  
CME Group Foundation  
Comic Relief US  
General Motors  
J.W. Bagley Foundation  
Kini Fund  
Richard W. Goldman Family Foundation  
Schreiber Philanthropy  
Share Our Strength - No Kid Hungry  
Trust for Learning  
UBS Optimus Foundation





## School Partners

Atlanta Public Schools  
Balsz School District  
Bayou District Foundation  
Catholic Charities  
Clayton Early Learning  
Clover  
District of Columbia Public Schools  
Flint Early Childhood Collaborative  
Franklin-McKinley School District  
Genessee Intermediate School District  
Kennebec Valley Community Action Program  
Lincoln Public Schools  
Long Beach Unified School District  
Next Door Foundation  
Oklahoma City Public Schools  
Project EAGLE (University of Kansas  
Medical Center)  
Puget Sound Educational Services District  
Santa Clara County Office of Education  
Sheltering Arms  
Southwest Human Development  
Start Early  
Sunbeam Family Services  
Tulsa Public Schools  
Unite LA  
United Way of Miami  
Waterville Public Schools  
West Chicago Elementary School District 33  
Winnebago Public Schools  
Winnebago Tribe of Nebraska

## Research & Evaluation Partners

American Institutes for Research  
Applied Survey Research  
Arizona State University  
Blackstone Evaluation  
Bowie State University  
Clayton Early Learning Institute  
Columbia University  
Georgia State University  
Harmony Research  
High Scope  
Long Beach Unified School District  
Next Door Milwaukee  
OER Associates LLC  
Puget Sound Educational Services District  
San Jose State University  
Start Early  
Sunbeam Family Services  
Towson University  
Tulane University  
University of Connecticut  
University of Kansas  
University of Maine Orono  
University of Maryland  
University of Miami  
University of Nebraska Lincoln  
University of Nebraska Medical Center  
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill Frank  
Porter Graham Child Development Institute  
University of Oklahoma Tulsa  
University of Wisconsin Milwaukee



## Thank You to Our Former Executive Director

We are grateful to Cynthia D. Jackson for her many contributions to the Educare Network. As Executive Director for the last seven years and part of the Network for 14 years, Cynthia's leadership, commitment to excellence and support of children and families paved the way for the Network's continued growth and success. During her tenure, Cynthia oversaw the expansion of the Network from 8 schools to 25, pioneered the refined research-based logic model and theory of change strategies, led the development and activation of the Educare Research and Educare Five Policy Agendas, and expanded funding for the Network at both the national and local levels.







*"[Educare] is this whole network of people that has been built and cultivated to share your passions and your dreams ... Educare has a huge impact in my community. It gives parents a place to bring their children where they know they are safe [and] support to help raise those children."*

- Colleen Walling, Lead Teacher at Tulsa Educare MacArthur



# Stay Connected to the Educare Network

Join us in building a future  
where every child thrives.

-  [educareschools.org](https://educareschools.org)
-  [youtube.com/educareschools](https://youtube.com/educareschools)
-  [facebook.com/educarenetwork](https://facebook.com/educarenetwork)
-  [x.com/educareschools](https://x.com/educareschools)



[educareschools.org](https://educareschools.org)