ABOUT EDUCARE OF OMAHA

Educare of Omaha was formed in 2002 as a private, non-profit collaborative effort of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Omaha Public Schools, and the local Head Start grantee. Educare of Omaha has two sites, buildings adjacent to Kellom Elementary in North Omaha, and Indian Hill Elementary in South Omaha.

In order to provide a high quality early childhood education and care program, Educare braids funds from numerous sources including:

- Office of Head Start,
- Nebraska Department of Education (including the USDA Child and Adult Care Food Program,
- Nebraska Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Development Block Grant,
- Omaha Public Schools (Education, State Aid, general fund),
- Buffett Early Childhood Fund,
- Sixpence grant funds, and
- Parent fees.

THE EDUCARE MODEL

Educare of Omaha is part of a larger, national network of Educare Schools. The Educare Model is described below; further information is available at www.educareschools.org. The Educare Model’s core features include data utilization, embedded professional development, high-quality teaching practices, and intensive family engagement. Through the coordinated implementation of these core features, Educare promotes high-quality early childhood programs that encourage strong family-school partnerships and parental support for children’s learning, helping to ensure that children grow up safe, healthy, and eager to learn. In turn, children are better prepared for kindergarten, increasing their chances for long-term academic and life success.

Students and families from low-income homes often face unique barriers in developing foundations for academic success. Educare’s program model is specifically designed to help these at-risk students and their families overcome such barriers. Educare’s mission is to ensure that these students receive the services they need to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and participate on par with their more economically advantaged peers.

Educare is:

- a program designed to give students in poverty an improved chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five;
- based on research from a variety of relevant disciplines (for example, early childhood development and social work);
- a program that emphasizes social-emotional development in all aspects of its program model through the development of healthy relationships; and
- used data from the ongoing evaluation to improve their program.
Data utilization encompasses research-based and data-driven practices

Embedded professional development emphasizes highly qualified staff, intensive staff development, and an interdisciplinary approach that encourages communication and collaboration, and reflective supervision.

High-quality teaching practices are integrated into full-day, full-year care and education for children, small class sizes with high staff-child ratios, and continuity of care to help students develop secure relationships. Moreover, it involves a research-based curriculum with an intentional and specific focus on the development of language and literacy, social-emotional development, early math concepts, problem solving and motor development, as well as using the arts to strengthen and support these skills.

Intensive family engagement supports strong parent-child relationships, family well-being, and ongoing learning and development by providing on-site family support services and emphasizing prenatal and birth-to-three services.
COACHING AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Research has consistently demonstrated the importance of professional development (PD) for improving outcomes of early childhood. Effective PD is associated with increases in teacher knowledge, student learning, and program quality (Christ & Wang, 2013; Powell, Diamond, & Cockburn, 2013). As a result, early childhood initiatives have become increasingly focused on professional development as a mechanism for increasing the effectiveness of early childhood programs and fostering children’s learning and development (Powell et al., 2013). Coaching is a form of professional development that takes place directly in the classroom and involves helping teachers acquire, improve, or refine specific evidence-based intervention practices or teaching behaviors, as well as offering ongoing support and individualized feedback (Hsieh et al., 2009; Wasik & Hindman, 2011). Research has found that coaching adds value to the classroom.

Coaching and intensive professional development are two primary strategies adopted to enhance teacher classroom practices. Master teachers at Educare incorporate coaching practices as part of their role. Coaching sessions are individualized for each teaching staff on both content and frequency. In addition, well-defined professional development is planned throughout the year. This year key content areas have been in supporting children’s social-emotional skills and using the Positive Behavior Intervention Supports framework (all age levels) and science (Pre-K). All staff participate in professional development activities.

PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

A comprehensive evaluation process using a utilization-focused evaluation design (Patton, 2012) was conducted to monitor the implementation of Educare of Omaha and assess progress towards identified program outcomes. Data was shared with programs throughout the year to support program improvement.

The evaluation employed multiple methods to describe and measure the quality of program implementation, the nature of programming, and to report outcomes. The evaluation report is structured to report in multiple areas: Implementation Strategies, Child and Family Demographics, Child Outcomes, Family Engagement Outcomes, and Quality Instructional Practices. The overarching evaluation questions were the following:

**Implementation:** What was the nature and quality of implementation? Who accessed and participated in the program?

**Quality Practices:** To what extent did instructional practices and/or professional development improve classroom practices?

**Child Outcomes:** What were the short and long term outcomes related to academic achievement?

**Family Outcomes:** Did family parenting skills improve? To what extent are parents engaged with their child’s program? Did their parenting stress decrease?

INTERPRETING THE RESULTS

HOW DO YOU KNOW IF A STRATEGY IS MAKING A DIFFERENCE?

The answer to this question can be found by reviewing both the quantitative and qualitative data that are summarized in this report. Typically in this report the quantitative data will include scores between two groups (e.g., students who are English Language Learners compared to students whose native language is English) or scores of a group over time (e.g., students’ first language compared to their latest assessment). Statistical analyses will provide information to determine if
there were significant changes in the outcomes (p value) and if those significant values were meaningful (d value or effect size). The effect size is the most helpful in determining “how well did the intervention work” (Coe, 2002). Qualitative data from key informants’ perspectives will provide more detailed insight on how the program is working and resulting outcomes.

WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT INTERPRETING EFFECT SIZES?

Effect size can be affected by factors related to measurement error and duration of intervention. Both the type of assessment and the age of the child are critical factors that may contribute to measurement error. The following are examples of potential sources of measurement error that reduce the magnitude of the standardized effect size:

- **The age of the child influences the measurement error.** The infant measures often contain more measurement error because they have a smaller range of skills, which are more often influenced by external factors (e.g., fatigue) (Stipek, 1996).
- **Type of assessments influence measurement error.** It has been found that observations, surveys, and rating scales have more measurement error (Burchinal, 2008). More broad-based cognitive skills have smaller effect sizes than those that are more targeted (e.g., literacy and knowledge that can be mastered in a short time) (Barnett, 2008).
- **Developmental domain assessed influence measurement error.** Language, cognitive, and academic skills have less measurement error than those assessments that include rating social-emotional or behavioral skills.
- **The duration and intensity of the intervention affect the magnitude of the effect size.** The length and intensity of intervention can influence the magnitude of change.

HOW ARE EFFECT SIZES INTERPRETED IN THIS EVALUATION REPORT?

Research literature that matches the Educare work (e.g., based on population, measures, and target intervention) will help guide recommendations of benchmarks for interpreting effect size for each set of evaluation data. The three factors described above that influence measurement error will inform the establishment of the benchmarks for this report. Appendix B will provide the evidence that supports the established benchmark used in this report. If the benchmark is achieved, it will be reported as a substantial, meaningful change in the report. For areas that do not have research-based support for established benchmarks, Cohen’s recommendations will be adopted (minimal =.20, moderate =.50, and substantial =.80).

CHILD AND FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS

Educare served students primarily from the North and South Omaha areas. All students served by Educare met the eligibility requirements for Early Head Start or Head Start and were at 100% of poverty or below. Educare of Omaha operated 32 classrooms: 21 were infant or toddler classrooms and 11 were preschool classrooms. Students were served in one of three locations, Kellom, Indian Hill, or the Learning Community Center of North Omaha (LCCNO).

WHO WERE THE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES SERVED?

In 2016-2017, Educare of Omaha served 368 students. Demographic information was collected to help interpret the evaluation findings including: eligibility for free and reduced lunch, English Language Learners, and/or enrolled in special education services.
Families in poverty is the leading risk factor influencing success in school for students at Educare of Omaha.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low income</th>
<th>Kellom</th>
<th>Indian Hill</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low income</td>
<td>100%</td>
<td>100%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL 25%</td>
<td></td>
<td>ELL 61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE 6%</td>
<td>n=167</td>
<td>SE* 5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELL 0%</td>
<td></td>
<td>n=193</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SE* 0%</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Educare of Omaha served the same number of females (50%) as males (50%). There were slightly fewer children enrolled in Early Head Start (47%) than Head Start (53%). Students’ attendance for the year was 171 days on average with a range from 14 to 226. Demographics varied by site. Most notable were differences in the ethnic and racial make-up, with Kellom serving a majority of children who were African-American and Indian Hill students who were Hispanic and English Language Learners. Overall, there were 44% were English Language Learners and six percent of the students were eligible for early childhood special education services.
Most of students served at Educare represented ethnic or racial minorities.

**Kellom served large percentages of students who were African-American**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (AA)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-Racial</td>
<td>NA/NH*</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>56%</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (AA)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-Racial</td>
<td>NA/NH*</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Native American/Native Hawaiian

**Indian Hill served large percentages of students who were Hispanic**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>AA/NH*</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>89%</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-Racial</td>
<td>AA/NH*</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**LCCNO served large percentages of students who were African-American**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>White</th>
<th>Non-White</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (AA)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-Racial</td>
<td>NA/NH*</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-White</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>African-American (AA)</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bi-Racial</td>
<td>NA/NH*</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**What were the education levels of parents served at Educare?**

Equal amounts of parents had a high school diploma and some college. Few had a Bachelor’s or Associate’s Degree or participated in technical training. Only a small percentage had no high school diploma.

**High percentages of parents had a high school education or less.**

- **High School**: 30%
- **Some College**: 30%
- **No HS**: 17%
- **AA**: 9%
- **BA**: 7%
- **Technical Training**: 7%
STAFF CREDENTIALS

Educare has worked to fill positions with high-quality staff. As of May 2017, 100% of their lead teachers had a Bachelor’s degree and 84% held a license or an endorsement. Degrees were in the areas of early childhood, education, or early childhood special education. Lead teachers on average had worked in the field for 8.4 years and worked at Educare for 3.0 years.

Eighty-three percent of the teacher associates had a Child Development Associate’s degree or a Bachelor’s degree. Degrees were in early childhood or education. Associate’s teachers had worked in the field for 11.4 years and worked at Educare for 4.8 years.

Master teachers and family support staff also played a vital role in supporting children, families, and teachers at Educare of Omaha. Typically, one master teacher was assigned to three to four classrooms and was responsible for coaching and reflective supervision. Reflective supervision is based on three building blocks: reflection, collaboration, and regularity (Gilkerson, 2004). Family engagement specialists work directly with families and through interdisciplinary practice, with classroom teaching teams. All Master Teachers have their Master’s degree. Degrees were in the area of human development, early childhood, education, and other. Master teachers had worked in the field for 12.3 years and worked at Educare for 7.5 years.

Family support staff have either a Bachelor’s degree (33%) or a Master’s degree (67%). Degrees were in the areas of psychology, early childhood, health-related, human development, or other. Master teachers worked in the field for 12.7 years and worked at Educare for 8.4 years.

QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OUTCOMES

WHAT WAS THE QUALITY OF CENTER-BASED SERVICES?

Need for quality classrooms. Quality early childhood programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term, positive academic performance (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta, & Mashburn, 2010; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000; Ramey & Ramey, 1998). Classroom settings themselves are associated with both positive and negative effects on young students’ motivation (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Although the relationship between classroom environment and motivation is complex and requires further study, current research suggests that, “…students in classrooms characterized by minimal pressure to perform, ample child choice in activities, encouragement of collaboration, and more nurturing teacher-child interactions show more engagement when working on achievement tasks (Shonkoff & Phillips, pg. 158, 2000).”

Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

Method. Two tools were chosen to evaluate the quality of Educare of Omaha classrooms: the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) and the Environment Rating Scales (ERS). For each of these assessment tools, the Infant, Toddler, or Pre-K version was used for the observation based on the ages of children in the classroom.
According to its authors, the CLASS “is a rating tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning.” CLASS ratings were completed through video recording of classroom activities across staff members throughout a morning period. These four cycles of 15-20 minute increments were rated by reliable raters. Scoring is based on a 7-point scale with 7 indicating highest quality. The Pre-K CLASS has three dimensions. Dimensions include emotional, organizational, and instructional supports. Nationally, instructional support tends to be the domain with the most opportunity for improvement as it challenges teachers to effectively extend language, to model advanced language, and to promote higher-order thinking skills. Research on the CLASS indicates ratings of 5 or higher within the domains of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, and 3.25 or higher within the domain of Instructional Support, are the minimum threshold necessary to have impacts on student achievement (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta & Mashburn, 2010).

CLASS Results

**Pre-K.** Ten Pre-K classrooms were evaluated. The overall results found that strengths were in the areas of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization, and exceeded the program goal of a 5 or higher. Ratings were lower in Instructional Support but increased from 2.30 in 2015-2016 to 3.68 in 2016-2017.

During the 2015-2016 program year, the Office of Head Start (OHS) used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS®) Pre-K Teacher-Child Observation Instrument during its on-site reviews of grantees. Data from this report, (https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/data/class-reports/class-data-2015.html), was compared to the results of the Intensive Early Childhood program data. Intensive Childhood program teachers demonstrated classroom practices that were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start classrooms nationally (e.g., Instructional Supports (3.5), Classroom Organization (6.2) and Emotional Support (6.4)).

Pre-K classrooms demonstrated scores that were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start programs nationally.
Infant/Toddler. Similar to the Pre-K version of the CLASS, both the Infant and Toddler CLASS rate teacher-child relationships based on social-emotional supports. Scoring is the same; however, domains for the Infant and Toddler versions vary slightly from the Pre-K version as well as from each other. The Infant CLASS has only one domain: Responsive Caregiving (made up of four dimensions). The Toddler CLASS has an additional domain, Engaged Support for Learning, to measure how teachers engage the children in discovery, promote critical thinking, and provide rich language experiences. The CLASS results for 19 classrooms (14 toddler classrooms and 5 infant rooms) are presented below.

Educare Infant and Toddler center-based teachers consistently created emotionally supportive and caring environments in their classrooms. Engaged Support for Learning was of moderate quality.
Both infant and toddler classrooms were in the high-quality range for Responsive Caregiving and Emotional/Behavioral Support. The strength of the infant classrooms was in the dimension of relational climate. Toddler room strengths were in positive climate, behavior guidance, and teacher sensitivity. Lower rated areas were in quality feedback and language modeling, although as is the case in the Pre-K version, these dimensions challenge teachers at a higher level and often require additional coaching. These scores were consistent with the previous years. In the area of Engaged Support for Learning, there was a 12% rating increase from last year.

For all age groups continued support of teachers is to support learning and instructional practices.

**Environment Ratings Scales (ERS)**

**Method.** Both the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales, 3rd Edition (ECERS-3) and Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale Revised (ITERS-R) are based on three-hour, in-person observations done by reliable raters. Scoring is based on a 7-point scale with 7 indicating highest quality.

**ERS Results**

**ECERS-3.** Twelve preschool and toddler classrooms were observed and rated using the ECERS-3. The following chart illustrates the resulting classroom observation ratings, both by domain and overall score across both schools.

**ECERS-3 scores were, on average, in the moderate range of quality.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain</th>
<th>Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>4.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space &amp; Furnishings</td>
<td>4.26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Routines</td>
<td>4.48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning Activities</td>
<td>4.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Structure</td>
<td>4.86</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>5.17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language &amp; Literacy</td>
<td>5.32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Classrooms consistently averaged in the moderate range. An overall score of five is the benchmark of quality. Classrooms scored slightly below this benchmark overall. Strengths were in ratings related to language and literacy and interactions. Areas that could be targeted for improvement are space and furnishings, and personal care routines.
ITERS-R. The following graph shows ITERS-R subscale and overall averages of the classrooms across both schools. Eighteen infant and toddler classrooms were observed and rated across both schools.

**ITERS-R scores were, on average, in the moderate to high range of quality.**

*Program met the program goal for quality.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Subscale</th>
<th>Average Score</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>OVERALL</td>
<td>5.57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Program Structure</td>
<td>4.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personal Care Routines</td>
<td>4.35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Space &amp; Furnishings</td>
<td>5.47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Activities</td>
<td>6.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction</td>
<td>6.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Language</td>
<td>6.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Overall, ratings met the authors’ benchmark for quality. Educare of Omaha classrooms consistently scored in the moderate to high range on ITERS-R. The overall score increased 20% over the overall score (5.03) in 2015-2016. Strengths were in the areas of language, interactions, and activities. Areas that could be targeted for improvement are program structure and personal care routines.

All classrooms provided children with rich language and literacy experiences.
CHILD OUTCOMES

Multiple assessments were used to explore students’ development in a variety of areas. The result is a snapshot of the development of students enrolled in Educare as compared to a norming sample (by tool) representative of the general population and changes in students’ development over time.

WHAT ARE THE STUDENT VOCABULARY OUTCOMES?

Method. The vocabulary of students is an important factor to explore when considering how students may fare as they progress through school. Students who have limited vocabularies at a very young age are likely to continue to fall behind their peers in this area over time. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test–IV (PPVT-IV), a direct child assessment measuring vocabulary, was given in the fall and spring for preschool children and at age three for children in Early Head Start.

Vocabulary Results

Toddlers. Data for the toddlers was analyzed in two ways: 1) to determine at age three if time in program influenced scores and 2) to find the percentage of children that met the program goal of meeting the national mid-point of average (a standard score of 100 or above).

Infants and toddlers demonstrated higher vocabulary scores the longer they were in the program, however, the differences were not statistically significant.

35% of the English speaking infants and toddlers and 18% of Spanish speaking peers met the vocabulary program goal of scoring at the mid-point of average (100) or above.

The results of an analysis of variance (ANOVA), found that scores were similar for children whether they had participated in Educare for more or less than 18 months. There were no significant differences between the two groups. One-third (35%) of the English speaking students met the program goal (a score of 100 or higher) and 18% of the Spanish speaking students. Most students (80%) scored within the average range.
Preschool. Data for the preschool students was analyzed in three ways: 1) to determine if time in program influenced scores; 2) to find the percentage of children that met the program goal of meeting the national mid-point of average (a standard score of 100 or above); and 3) if there were changes over time (first and last assessment). Similar percentages of students met the program goal whether they were English or Spanish speaking. The majority (70%) scored within the average range.

25% of the English speaking preschool students and 27% Spanish speaking peers met the vocabulary program goal of scoring in the mid-point of average (100) or above.

The results of the paired t-test found that Pre-K students’ language significantly improved ($p<.001$; $d=0.329$) over time from their first to last assessment. The findings suggest that there was substantial meaningful change. Separate analyses were completed for children who were ELL and the English-speaking peers. English speaking students ($p<.021$; $d=0.250$) and their ELL peers ($p<.001$; $d=0.418$) both made significant improvements. The results found that both groups made significant gains that represent moderate to substantial meaningful change.

Similar percentages of English speaking (25%) and Spanish speaking students (27%) were meeting the program goal (a score of 100 or higher). The majority (70%) of the students scored within the average range.

Time in program makes a difference in vocabulary development in Pre-K students.

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed to determine if time in program affected vocabulary scores. The results found that scores were significantly higher if the student was in the program for 18 months or more ($F=5.711$; $p<.018$). These results suggest that students who participate longer in the program benefit more in the area of vocabulary development than those in the program for less time.
**WHAT WERE THE STUDENTS AUDITORY COMPREHENSION SKILLS?**

**Method.** Toddler and preschool students’ English (and for English Language Learner, both English and Spanish) language development skills were assessed using the Preschool Language Scales-Fifth Edition (PLS-V). This tool was used to measure students’ progress with auditory language comprehension. Students were assessed in English, Spanish, and Conceptual (assessed in Spanish and English).

**English and Spanish Auditory Comprehension Results**

**Results.** A paired t-test was completed to determine the extent that students progressed over time. The results for students assessed in English found that there were no significant differences over time for all groups except for those students who spoke both English and Spanish. Students who were Spanish and English speaking demonstrated significant changes in auditory comprehension when assessed in both their home language and English ($p<.006; d=0.412$). These results suggest moderate meaningful change. Infants and toddlers demonstrated a decline in skills [fall (100) and spring (96)]. By spring, 25% of the Spanish-speaking students met the auditory comprehension program goal of scoring at the mid-point of average (100) or above. 25% of the Spanish speaking students and 24% of the English speaking students met the auditory comprehension program goal of scoring at the mid-point of average (100) or above.

Pre-K students demonstrated significantly higher vocabulary scores if they were in Educare for 18 months or longer.
The extent that time in program impacted children's auditory comprehension was evaluated. The results of an ANOVA found that there were no differences in language skills of children who were in the program for more than 18 months and those in the program for less time.

**WHAT WERE THE SCHOOL READINESS OUTCOMES?**

**Method.** Many factors contribute to a young child’s skills that support their success in grade school, commonly labeled as school readiness. For this report, two areas were assessed: concept development and executive functioning. The importance of concept development, particularly for students from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, has been demonstrated in numerous research studies (Neuman, 2006; Panter and Bracken, 2009). Some researchers have found that basic concepts are a better means of predicting both reading and mathematics than are traditional vocabulary tests such as the PPVT-IV (Larrabee, 2007). One of the norm-referenced assessments selected to measure Kindergarten student's academic school readiness is the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA). The BSRA was used to measure the academic readiness skills of young students in the areas of colors, letters, numbers/counting, sizes, comparisons, and shapes.

**School Readiness Results**

**Pre-K.** A paired-samples t-test was completed to determine if students’ skills improved over time for all three and four year olds. The results found that students did improve, but significance was not found. Small percentages (27%) of the students met the program goal (a score of 100 or higher); however, most (63%) scored within the average range.
WHAT WERE THE STUDENT EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING OUTCOMES?

In recent years, the important contributions of executive functioning to school readiness have been highlighted (Blair & Razza, 2007). Executive functioning captures a student’s ability to control impulses that then enable them to plan, initiate, and complete activities needed for learning. Researchers have found a relationship between preschool children’s executive functioning and their ability to learn in the classroom (Benson, et al., 2013).

**Method.** Minnesota Executive Functioning Scale (MEFS) was administered to students who were two and older. The MEFS is a computerized assessment designed to measure behaviors that are associated with executive functioning in students and youth age two through adulthood.

**Executive Functioning Results**

A total of 280 students ages two through 5 were administered the MEFS in the fall and spring. Descriptive analyses were completed to determine the percent of students that met the program goal (the mid-point of average). The results found that nine percent more students met the program goal in the fall. A paired t-test was completed to determine if there was a significant change from fall to spring (t=2.036; p=.04; d=0.134). The results found that there was significant improvement in scores overtime, which represent small meaningful change.

**By spring, 9% more students scored at the program goal or higher on executive functioning skills.**
WHAT WERE THE STUDENTS’ SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL OUTCOMES?

Method. The social and emotional development of infant, toddler, and preschool students was assessed using both the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) and the Devereaux Early Childhood Assessment for Infants and Toddlers (DECA-IT). These questionnaires assess young students’ social-emotional development by identifying social-emotional protective factors overall and in the areas of initiative, self-control, attachment, and behavior. A total of 357 students were rated by their teachers at two points of time (infants, toddlers, and preschoolers).

Social-Emotional Results

Infant/Toddler. Students (156) in EHS demonstrated improvement in all areas, but no significance was found. The majority (96%) of the children scored within the average range with 70% meeting the program goal of a 100 standard score or above.

EHS students were on target for social-emotional competencies.

*Students demonstrated a decrease in self-regulation skills over time.*

![Diagram showing social-emotional results](image)
The majority of infant/toddler students demonstrated social-emotional skills within the average range.

70% of infant/toddlers were at or above the mid-point of the national average (100) in social-emotional skills.

Pre-K. A paired t-test was completed to determine if there were significant changes over time. Preschool students (n=186) significantly improved in teacher ratings from first to their last assessment comparisons in four areas: Total Protective Factors ($p<.001$, $d=0.429$); Initiative ($p<.001$, $d=0.449$); Self-Regulation ($p=.003$, $d=0.259$); and Attachment ($p=.001$, $d=0.434$). These results suggest a range from minimal to moderate to substantial meaningful change. Thirteen percent of the preschool students scored within the ‘concern’ area for behavior concerns with 87% in the typical range. Fifty-seven percent of the preschool students met the program goal of at or above the mid-point of the national average (100).

HS Students were on target for social-emotional competencies. *Children showed significant improvement over time in all areas except for Behavior Concerns.*
An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was completed to determine if time in program affected social-emotional scores. The results found that scores were significantly higher if the student was in the program for 18 months or more (F=4.865; \( p<.028 \)). These results suggest that students who participate longer in the program benefit more in the area of social-emotional development.

**FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES**

Parenting is predictive of long-term academic achievement (St. Clair & Jackson, 2006). Targeted supports to families can yield long-term academic benefits (St. Clair, Jackson & Zweiback, 2012). Parenting quality is more predictive of long-term academic achievement of students and their social and behavioral progress in school than high quality early childhood education (Belsky et al, 2007).

Educare used a variety of strategies to engage families. These strategies included parenting education activities, activities focusing on developing healthy nutritional and well-being lifestyles; individualized planning to address family needs, and promoting leadership.

**Method.** Educare supports families in four key areas: Family as Lifelong Nurturer and Educator; Family Connections to Peers, School, and Community; Family as Lifelong Advocate and Leader; and Family Well-being and Development. Family Engagement Specialists used the Family Matrix assessment to help identify family strengths and needs. As part of the Educare Network evaluation, they also complete parent interview each fall. Two hundred and ninety-eight (298) surveys were collected this year for an 81% return rate. A number of different areas of parent outcomes were measured in this survey. These specific measures will be identified under each area.

**HOW DID PARENTS SUPPORT THEIR CHILD’S LEARNING AT HOME?**

**Method.** Two measures were used to evaluate this area, the Family Matrix ratings and results of the parent interview on the extent that parents read to their children. This area of the Family Matrix evaluated parent-child relationships, the degree parents supported their child’s learning and school readiness.
Family Nurturer and Educator Results

Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Family and Lifelong Nurturer and Educator scale found that parents capacity improved. This area was a strength for families.

By spring, parents were rated higher in the area of lifelong nurturer and educator. Parents’ capacity to nurture and educate was their strength.

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Higher percentages of parents read to their children (three or more times a week) if enrolled in Educare for one or more years.

Reading to Students at Home Results

Educare continued its monthly classroom parent meetings as well as monthly Read & Play activities, which offered parents and other adult caregivers meaningful ways to positively interact with their students. Speech language pathologists at Educare would identify books and developmentally appropriate activities related to the stories for Read & Play activities. Students who participated received a free book as well as materials for the home activity. This helped result in a high level of parent participation. Most families participate in Read and Play activities, which are typically offered in the morning and at parent pick up times to suit parents’ schedules.

What were the Family Connections to Peers, School, and Community?

The Family Matrix assessment was used to assess family connections. This area evaluated parents’ social capital and their support systems, connections with their community and their partnerships with the school and staff.
Family Connection Results

Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Family Connections scale found that parents’ capacity improved in this area.

By spring, parents were rated higher in the area of connections to peers, school, and community.

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<td>3.5</td>
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What were the Family as Lifelong Advocate and Leader Outcomes?

This area evaluated parents’ leadership and advocacy skills, their ability to advocate for high-quality early learning in their community, and make informed decisions.

Lifelong Advocate and Leader Results

Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Family Advocate and Leader scale found that parents capacity improved in this area.

By spring, parents were rated higher in the area of advocate and leader.

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What were the Family Well-Being and Development Outcomes?

This area was assessed using the Family Matrix assessment and information from the parent interview. Family well-being area evaluated parents’ level of stress, resilience, social-emotional mental and physical health, and economic and financial stability. Everyday stressors, particularly when significant in number, can affect one’s ability to parent (Peterson and Hawley, 1998). If sufficient in number and frequency, these stressors can serve as barriers to improving parenting. The Parent Stress Index Short Form (Abidin, 1995) was completed by parents. Data was analyzed for parents who were in the program for over 18 months. Specifically, stress related to parent-child dysfunctional (PCD) interaction was evaluated.
Family Well-Being Results

Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Family Well-Being scale found that parents’ capacity improved in this area.

By spring, parents were rated higher in the area of family well-being.

![Graph showing improvements in family well-being](image)

Parent Stress and Depression Results

The results of the ANOVA found that there was no statistical difference based on time in program. Those parents who were in the program had slightly fewer scores in the high stress range (9%) than those parents in the program for less time (11%). Eleven percent of the parents screened positive for depression.

Parents experienced low levels of stress related to parenting their child.

Stress Related to Access to Resources Results

Many families at Educare are faced with stress related to a lack of access to concrete supports. More parents were concerned about food insecurities, than being homeless. Parents did experience going without food and were homeless.

Parents who were in Educare worry about food insecurity and homelessness.

![Bar chart showing percentages of concerns](image)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concern</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Were Homeless</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about Homelessness</td>
<td>23%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Went without Food</td>
<td>16%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worried about Food</td>
<td>31%</td>
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</table>

n=298
**How engaged were families with their kindergarten teacher and elementary school?**

**Method.** Follow-up surveys were conducted with parents of students whose children graduated from Educare the prior year. Those parents were surveyed by phone in the fall following their first scheduled parent teacher conference. Responses were collected from 83 parents. The purpose of this survey was to evaluate parental perception of the impact Educare had on a child’s kindergarten preparation and how engaged they were with their student’s new school. The FES that had previously worked with each family was the person who surveyed the parents. The survey included information about their child’s school, questions regarding the child’s strengths, achievements, and level of preparedness for kindergarten, as well as parental communication and interaction with the school. Both quantitative and qualitative data were gathered.

**Engagement Results**

Parents of kindergarten students felt engaged with their student’s teacher.

- **I am comfortable talking with my child’s teacher**

- **If I felt changes were needed I would be comfortable sharing**

- **I talk to my child’s teacher at least weekly**

- **I have participated in other events at my child’s school**

Most parents believed that their child was fully prepared for kindergarten (87%). The majority of parents (85%) attended their child’s fall parent teacher conferences. A total of 88% of parents attended events at their child’s new school. The remaining 12% noted scheduling conflicts as the major reason for not attending. The majority of parents felt comfortable talking with their child’s teacher (96). Parents reported they talked with teachers at pick-up and drop-off times as well as by telephone or email. The results of the survey found that Educare of Omaha was not only preparing children for kindergarten, but the program was also preparing families to advocate for their child’s education even after they’ve left the program.

87% of parents reported that their child was “ready” for kindergarten.
PROGRAM OUTCOMES

HOW SATISFIED WERE THE FAMILIES WITH EDUCARE?

Method. Parents (69) were interviewed as they exited Educare in the spring. The purpose was to assess what they valued in their experience with Educare and to their experience to date at their child’s grade school.

Parent Satisfaction Results

Parents reported their teachers were of high quality. Open communication with the teachers contributed to the positive relationships with their student’s teacher. Parents indicated that they had committed family engagement specialists who understood and respected them.

Parents exiting Educare rated the quality of staff and family support workers highly.

![Graph showing satisfaction rates for various aspects]

**CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS**

Program Description: Educare of Omaha is a research-based program designed to give students in poverty an improved chance for success in school and in life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five. This year there were three sites: Kellom, Indian Hill, and the Learning Community Center of North Omaha. Educare of Omaha operated 32 classrooms: 21 were infant or toddler classrooms and 11 were preschool classrooms. The credentials of the staff suggest they are highly qualified.

A total of 368 children and families were served. The majority of children served were in poverty and represented minority populations. A total of 44% of the children were English Language Learners and 6% of the children were eligible for early childhood special education services.
**Program Outcomes:** Two assessments were used to monitor the quality of the classrooms: Environmental Rating Scales (ERS) or Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS). Overall, the teachers’ performance on the CLASS suggested that teachers consistently created emotionally supportive and caring classrooms. Their use of effective strategies to engage the children in learning received a moderate rating. On the ERS, the infant/toddler classrooms scored in the moderate to high range of quality. The preschool classrooms scored in the moderate range of quality.

**Next Steps:** Consider ways to build teacher skills in engaging children in learning through the adoption of evidence-based instructional practices.

**Child Outcomes:** Several dimensions of child outcomes were evaluated including communication, school readiness, executive functioning, and social-emotional skills.

**Communication.** Preschool children made substantial gains in their vocabulary scores over time. Children who were in the program for two or more years did better in vocabulary scores than those in the program for less time. Preschool children who speak both English and Spanish demonstrated moderate meaningful gains in their auditory comprehension skills. English speaking infants’, toddlers’, and preschoolers’ auditory comprehension scores were stable across time with no significant increase or decrease.

**School Readiness.** Preschool children’s school readiness scores were stable across time.

**Executive Functioning.** By spring, more children met the program goal in executive functioning skills.

**Social-Emotional.** Infants’ and toddlers’ social-emotional skills were stable across time in the majority of areas. There was a decrease in students’ skills in self-regulation. Preschool students made moderate to substantial meaningful change from intake to spring in Total Protective Factors, Initiative, Attachment, and Self-Regulation. The majority of students across the age range scored at the mid-point of the average range.

**Next Steps.** Although in most areas important gains in development were noted, continued identification and support of Educare staff to implement strategies to strengthen students’ communication and school readiness skills is recommended.

**Family Outcomes.** A new assessment was completed this year, Family Matrix, which was based on the Educare logic model for family outcomes. The results of the assessment indicated that families improved ratings over time. In addition, families who had been in the program longer than a year read more to their children and demonstrated slightly less stress related to parenting stress. Although many families are faced with issues around food insecurities and potential homelessness, overall they demonstrated low stress related to parenting.

**Next Steps.** Continue implement the Family Matrix process that supports the development of individualized plans to build on families’ strengths and support their needs.

**Program Outcomes.** As parents and children exit Educare, they were interviewed regarding their experiences. Parents felt that their teachers were of high quality and they were able to engage in open communication with their teachers. Parents indicated that they had committed family engagement specialists who understood and respected them.
REFERENCES


# ASSESSMENT TOOLS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Tool</th>
<th>Author</th>
<th>Purpose</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)</td>
<td>LaParo, Hamre, &amp; Pianta, 2012.</td>
<td>CLASS “is a rating tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Educare Surveys: Parenting; Kindergarten; and Exit Surveys</td>
<td>Educare Network</td>
<td>The purpose of these surveys is to gather a range of demographic, family outcome and program data. Within the Parent Survey are a number of validated assessment tools.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Preschool Language Scale-5</td>
<td>Pearson, Inc. 2011</td>
<td>PLS is a language tool that evaluates children’s auditory comprehension and expressive communication skills.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Tool</td>
<td>Effect Sizes</td>
<td>Supporting Documentation</td>
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<tr>
<td>Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)</td>
<td>Cohens</td>
<td>No research with grade school population examining change over time.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Preschool Language Scale, 5th Edition</td>
<td>Cohens</td>
<td>No research found with similar populations.</td>
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Funding for this external program evaluation was provided through the Sherwood Foundation.

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Evaluation Report prepared by Barbara Jackson, Ph.D., Abbey Siebler, M.A.

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