

# Educare Omaha

2019- 2020 Evaluation Report | December 2020



**Collaborate. Evaluate. Improve.**

Interdisciplinary Center for Program Evaluation

# EDUCARE OMAHA

## 2019-2020 Annual Report

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## ABOUT EDUCARE OMAHA

Educare 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 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
- Parent fees



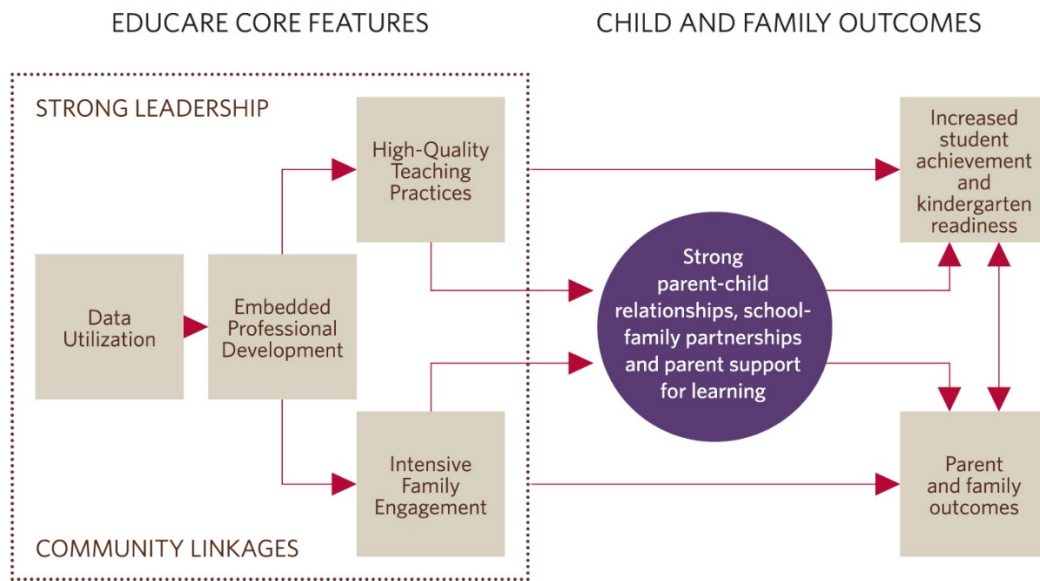
## THE EDUCARE MODEL

Educare 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](http://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.

Children 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 children and their families overcome such barriers. Educare's mission is to ensure that children 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 children 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

*Data utilization encompasses research-based and data-driven practices.*

#### Embedded Professional Development

*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

*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 children 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

*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-five services.*

## SPECIAL INITIATIVES

Educare has participated in a number of special initiatives to enhance the services they provide for children and families. These were implemented in partnership with Acceleration grants that were funded through the Buffett Early Childhood Fund and other agency partners' initiatives.

**Reflective Practice.** Educare participated in the Mindfulness and Mastery Acceleration grant in partnership with Munroe-Meyer Institute. Many Educare leadership staff at Educare participated in training and ongoing mentoring on reflective practice. Reflective practice is a way of studying staff's own experiences to improve the way they work. Participants learn to reflect and talk through recent experiences and contemplate with others on their reactions to different situations. They have an opportunity to talk about whether it was the best and most appropriate reaction and how to better handle the situation in the future. This method is increasingly being adopted in child protection and childcare arenas where retention rates are low and work-related stress is high. Reflective practice is an important tool in practice-based professional learning as a method of bringing together formal learning or theory and practice.

**Science.** Educare participated in the Science Acceleration grant in partnership with the University of Miami. This project provided training to staff on an Early Science Framework that focused on integrating science with the classroom activities. The framework supported staff in understanding the foundation of core science ideas: physical science, life science, earth and space science and engineering, technology, and the application of science. They were provided tools that helped them use interactional strategies to help children expand their scientific knowledge.

**Mindfulness and Mastery.** Educare Omaha has adopted the Pyramid Model as their foundation for promoting social-emotional skills. The Mindfulness and Mastery Acceleration grant built on this foundation to help staff and parents have a better understanding of trauma and how that impacts children and families and strategies to support young children's executive functioning skills. Staff received a training on mindfulness techniques and were provided the materials needed to implement the techniques in their classrooms.

**Family Engagement Breakthrough Project.** The Family Engagement Breakthrough Initiative articulates a core set of evidence-based family engagement practices that were implemented within an embedded professional development coaching model. The Family Engagement Breakthrough Initiative creates an opportunity for Educare leaders, program staff, researchers and other national thought leaders to identify, implement and assess the impact of family engagement practices and coaching model with diverse families in different contexts and across a variety of organizational, program, and community settings.

**ReadyRosie.** ReadyRosie is an *evidence-informed* and *research-based* family engagement and early learning resource. ReadyRosie builds parents capacity to support their children's learning through viewing modeled videos. Teachers can individualize the videos that are available to parents to match their children's classroom curriculum.

## PURPOSE OF EVALUATION

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

This year due to COVID-19, Kellom and Indian Hill Educare closed on March 20, 2019 to in-person learning for students. Focus groups were conducted as part of the Mindfulness and Mastery (M&M) Acceleration grant. The results of the focus group not only talk about the outcomes of the M&M grant but also gives detail about the services that were offered during the COVID-19 shutdown.

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? What was the level of parental well-being?

**Influence of COVID-19 on Services, Children and Families:** How did COVID-19 change the services that were provided? In what ways did COVID-19 impact children and families?

## 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., children who are English Language Learners compared to children whose native language is English), scores change over time (e.g., children's first language assessment compared to their latest assessment), and if the child's length of time in the program is related to outcomes. 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). Qualitative data from key informants' perspectives will provide more detailed insight on how the program is working and resulting outcomes.

## CHILD AND FAMILY DEMOGRAPHICS

Educare served children primarily from the North and South Omaha areas. All children served by Educare met the eligibility requirements for Early Head Start or Head Start and were at 100% of poverty or below. Educare Omaha operated 31 classrooms: 20 were infant or toddler classrooms and 11 were preschool classrooms. Children were served in one of two locations, Kellom or Indian Hill.

### Who were the children and families served?

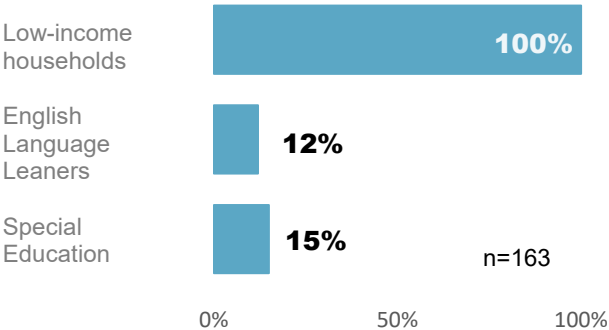
In 2019-2020, Educare Omaha served 360 children, 164 in Early Head Start and 196 in Head Start. Demographic information was collected to describe the population served and to help interpret the evaluation findings including: eligibility for free and reduced lunch, English Language Learners, and/or enrolled in special education services. Slightly more girls (51%) were served at Indian Hills, and at Kellom there were equal

numbers of girls and boys. In the fall, children’s average length of time in the program was 2.1 years. This excludes those children who were newly enrolled iin the fall.

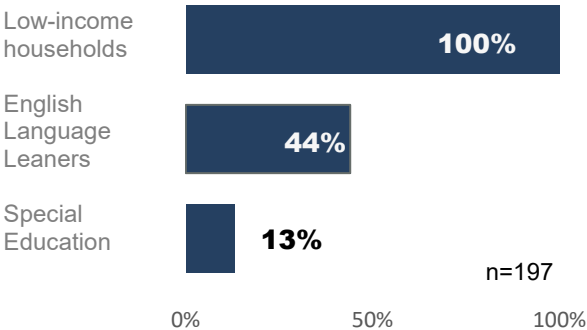
ALL FAMILIES SERVED BY EDUCARE OMAHA LIVE IN HOUSEHOLDS BELOW THE POVERTY LINE.

Indian Hill has a high percentage of children who are ELL.

Kellom



Indian Hill

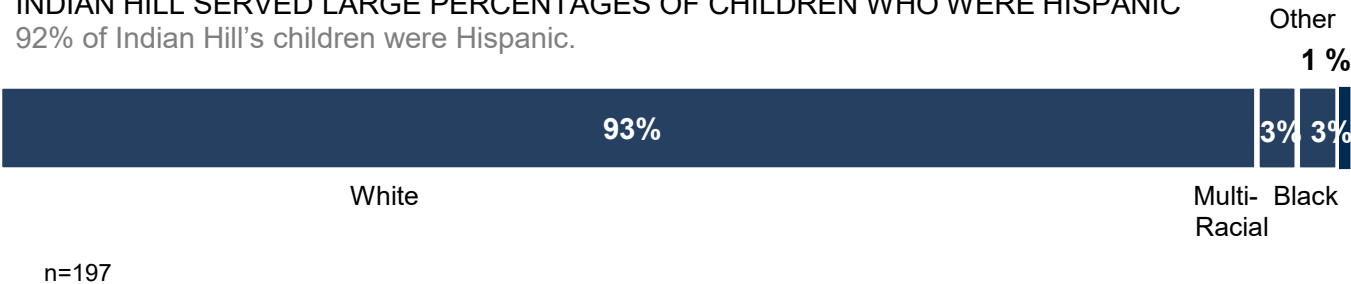


MOST OF THE CHILDREN SERVED AT EDUCARE REPRESENTED DIVERSE ETHNIC OR RACIAL POPULATIONS.

KELLOM SERVED LARGE PERCENTAGES OF CHILDREN WHO WERE BLACK  
23% of Kellom’s children were Hispanic.



INDIAN HILL SERVED LARGE PERCENTAGES OF CHILDREN WHO WERE HISPANIC  
92% of Indian Hill’s children were Hispanic.



## What were the education levels of parents at Educare?

Most parents had either a high school diploma (26%) or some college (23%). There was a moderate number of parents that had less than a high school degree (21%). Few had an associate's degree (7%) or participated in technical training (8%).

## Staff Credentials

Educare has worked to fill positions with high-quality staff. Eighty-five percent of their lead teachers had at least a bachelor's degree (with 23% of these teachers also having a master's degree) and most held degrees in the areas of early childhood, education, or early childhood special education. Lead teachers on average had worked in the field for 10.3 years and worked at Educare for 5.9 years. Eighty-four percent of the teacher associates had a child development associate's degree (65%) or a bachelor's degree (23%). The majority of the degrees were in early childhood, education, or human development. Associate teachers had worked in the field for 13.5 years and worked at Educare for 7.2 years. The number of teachers' and associate teachers' length of time at Educare was over a year longer than the previous year's report. Thirty-six percent of the teachers (aides, assistants, and leads) speak English and/or Spanish with the children in their classes.

Master teachers and family support staff also played a vital role in supporting children, families, and teachers at Educare Omaha. Typically, one master teacher was assigned to three to four classrooms and was responsible for coaching and reflective supervision. All of the Master teachers have their master's degree. Degrees were in the areas of early childhood education, special education, and other. Master teachers had worked in the field for over 10 years and worked at Educare for over 9.6.

Family Engagement Specialists (FES) work directly with families and with classroom teaching teams as part of an interdisciplinary approach. Family Engagement Specialist have either a bachelor's degree (71%) or a master's degree (29%). Degrees were in the areas of psychology, early childhood, human development, or other. FES worked in the field for 15 years and worked at Educare for 8.7 years.

## QUALITY INSTRUCTIONAL PRACTICES OUTCOMES

### What was the quality of center-based services?

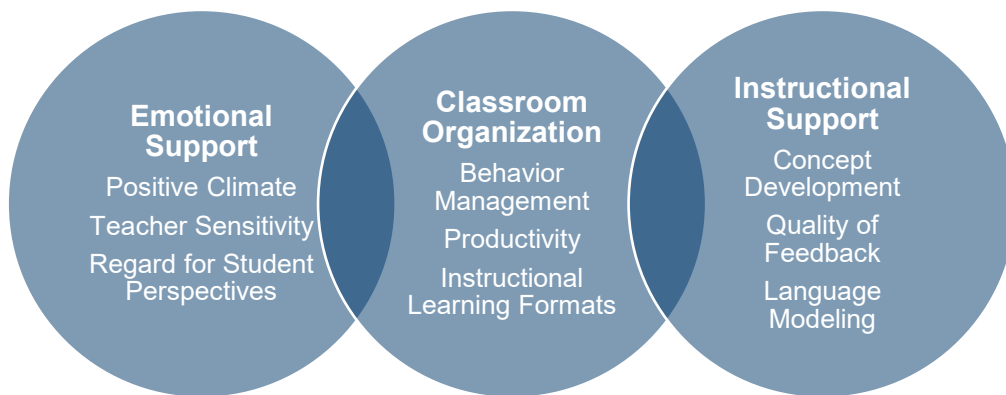
**Need for quality classrooms.** Quality early childhood programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term, positive academic performance (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta, & Mashburn, 2010; Burchinal, Peisner-Feinberg, Bryant, & Clifford, 2000). Although the relationship between classroom environment and motivation is complex, research suggests that, where there are environments that promote child choice in activities, encouragement of collaboration, and more nurturing teacher-child interactions, children are most engaged in achievement (Shonkoff & Phillips, 2000). Preschoolers in classrooms with higher quality interactions showed greater learning gains across school readiness domains, including executive functioning and early literacy (Vitiello, Bassock, Hamre, Player, & Williford, 2018).

### Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)

**Method.** Two tools were chosen to evaluate the quality of Educare 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 in-person observations of classroom activities across staff members throughout a morning period. These four cycles of 15-20 minute increments were rated by reliable evaluators. 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).

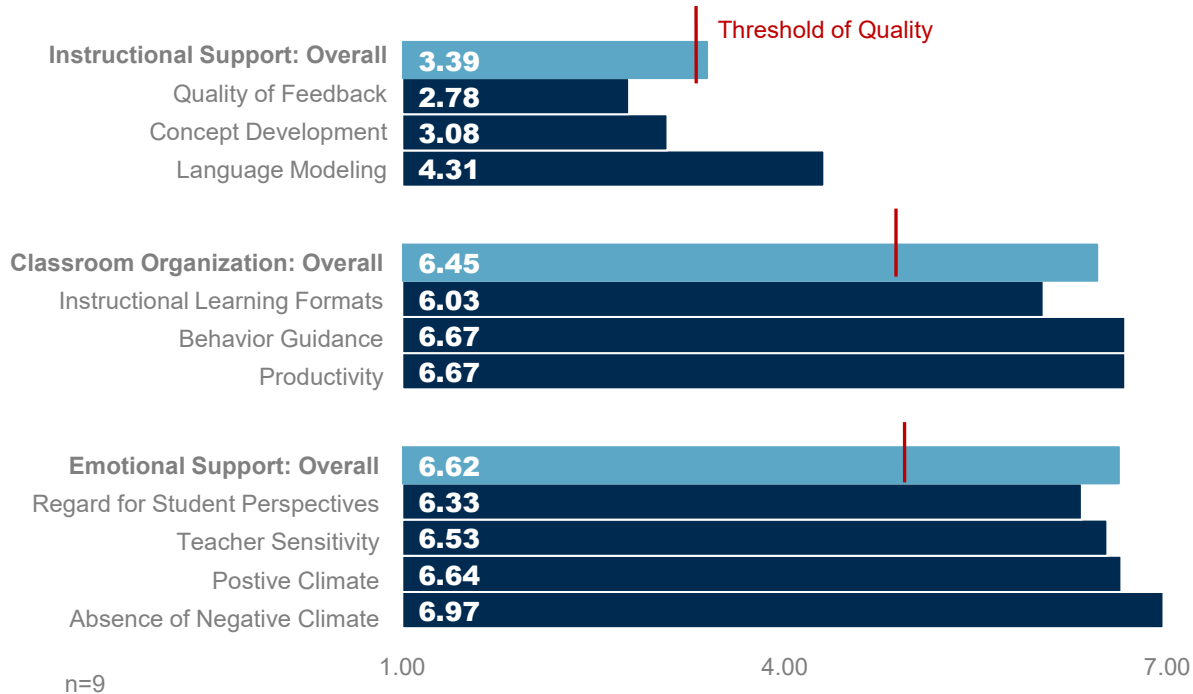


## Preschool CLASS Results

**Findings.** The results of the Preschool CLASS found that overall the classrooms met the minimal threshold of quality (score of 5 or higher) to positively impact child outcomes in the domains of Emotional Support and Classroom Organization. Almost all of the Classroom Organization and Emotional Support dimensions were in the high-quality range. In Instructional Support, the strength was in Language Modeling. Lower-rated dimensions were Concept Development and Quality of Feedback.

**PRESCHOOL CLASSROOMS' STRENGTHS WERE IN THE AREAS OF EMOTIONAL SUPPORT AND CLASSROOM ORGANIZATION AND MET THE MINIMUM THRESHOLD OF QUALITY IN ALL AREAS.**

Instructional Support was in the low to moderate range of quality.



During the 2019-2020 program year, the Office of Head Start (OHS) used the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) during its on-site reviews of grantees. Data from this report, (<https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/data-ongoing-monitoring/article/national-overview-grantee-class-scores-2020>), was compared to the results of the Educare Omaha data. Preschool teachers demonstrated classroom practices that were above the top 10% of all Head Start (HS) classrooms nationally in Classroom Organization (HS=6.17) and Emotional Support (HS=6.32). They were slightly lower in Instructional Support (HS=3.52).

**Preschool classrooms demonstrated scores that were at or above the top 10% of all Head Start programs nationally in Classroom Organization and Emotional and Behavioral Support.**



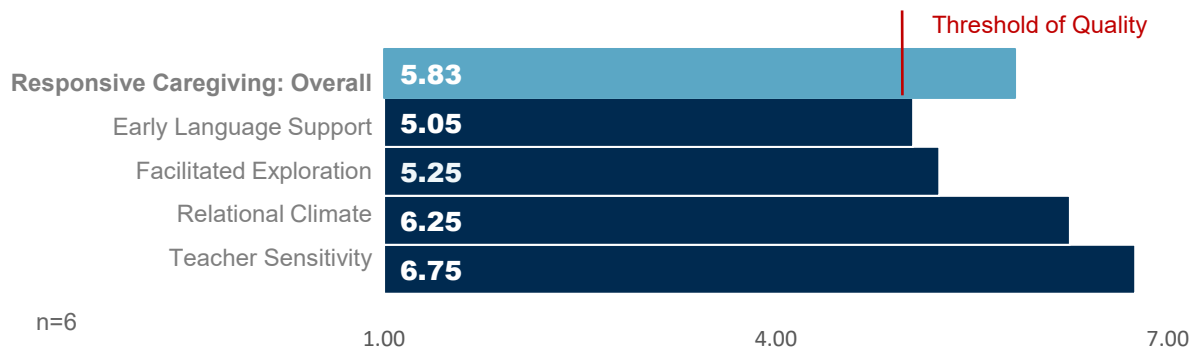
## Infant/Toddler CLASS Results

**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, which measures how teachers engage the children in discovery, promote critical thinking, and provide rich language experiences. The CLASS results for 18 classrooms (12 toddler classrooms and 6 infant rooms) are presented below.

**Findings.** The results of the Infant CLASS found that overall the classrooms met the minimal threshold of quality (score of 5 or higher) to positively impact child outcomes in the domain of Responsive Caregiving. The overall score for Responsive Caregiving was 5.83, which is similar to the previous year's score of 5.85. The dimensions of Relational Climate and Teacher Sensitivity were in the high-quality range. Facilitated Exploration and Early Language Support were in the moderate to high-quality range.

### INFANT CLASSROOMS MET THE MINIMAL THRESHOLD OF QUALITY TO POSTIVELY IMPACT CHILD OUTCOMES.

Relational Climate and Teacher Sensitivity dimensions were in the high-quality range.

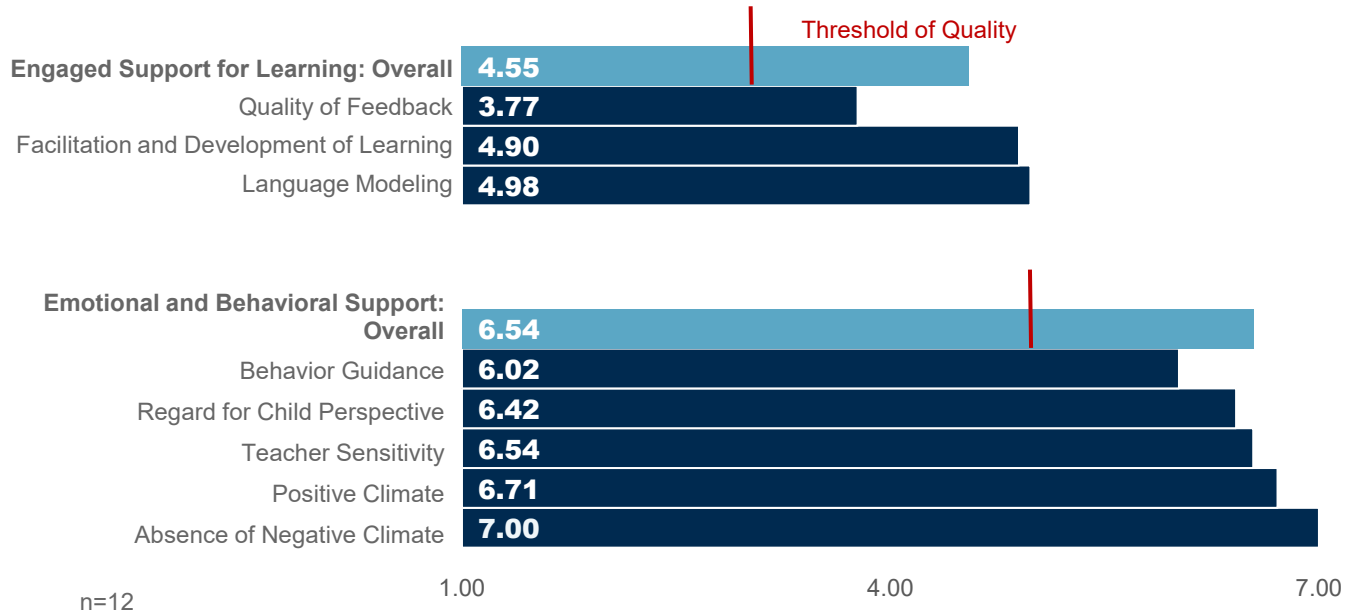


## Across Infant and Toddler classrooms, Educare teachers met the Threshold of Quality in all areas.

**Findings.** The results of the Toddler CLASS found that overall the classrooms met the minimal threshold of quality (score of 5 or higher) to positively impact child outcomes in the domains of Engaged Support for Learning and Emotional and Behavioral Support. The overall score and all dimensions in Emotional and Behavioral Support were in the high-quality range. The Engaged Support for Learning overall score was 4.55, and all the dimension scores were in the moderate to high range of quality. The strength in this area was in Language Modeling. Quality Feedback was the lowest rated area for the toddler classrooms.

### TODDLER CLASSROOMS MET THE THRESHOLD OF QUALITY IN THE AREAS OF EMOTIONAL AND BEHAVIORAL SUPPORT AND ENGAGED SUPPORT FOR LEARNING.

Emotional and Behavioral Support was in the high-quality range.



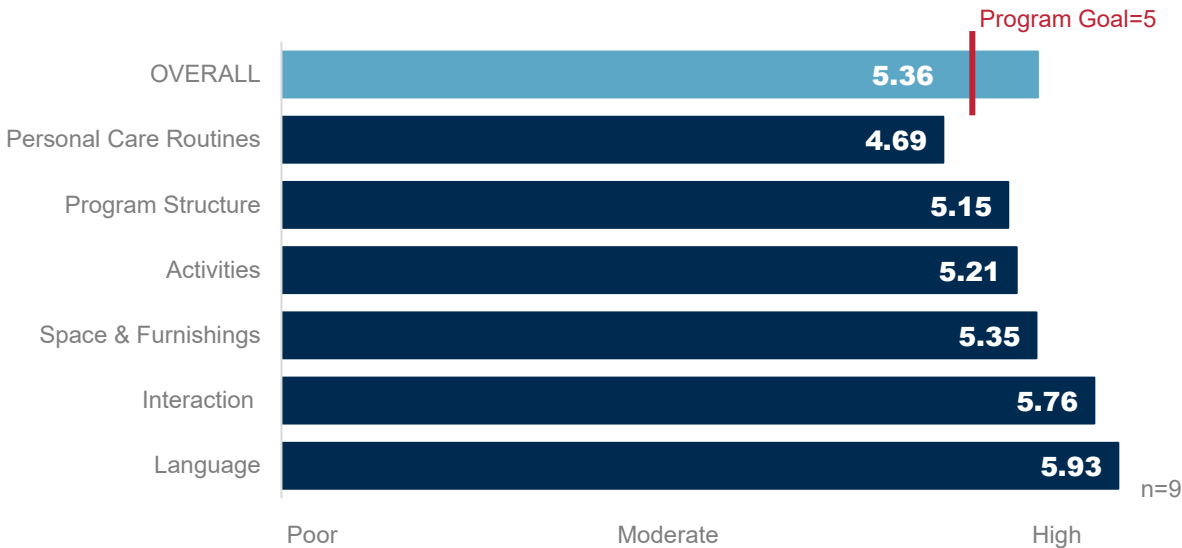
## Environment Ratings Scales (ERS)

**Method.** Both the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales, 3rd Edition (ECERS-3) and Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scales, 3rd Edition (ITERS-3) 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.

**ECERS-3.** Nine preschool 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.

**Findings.** Classrooms consistently averaged in the moderate to high range. An overall score of five is the benchmark of quality. Classrooms scored slightly above this benchmark overall. Strengths were in the areas related to Language and Interactions. An area that could be targeted for improvement is Personal Care Routines.

**ECERS-3 OVERALL SCORE EXCEEDED THE PROGRAM GOAL.**  
The majority of the practices were in the moderate to high quality range.



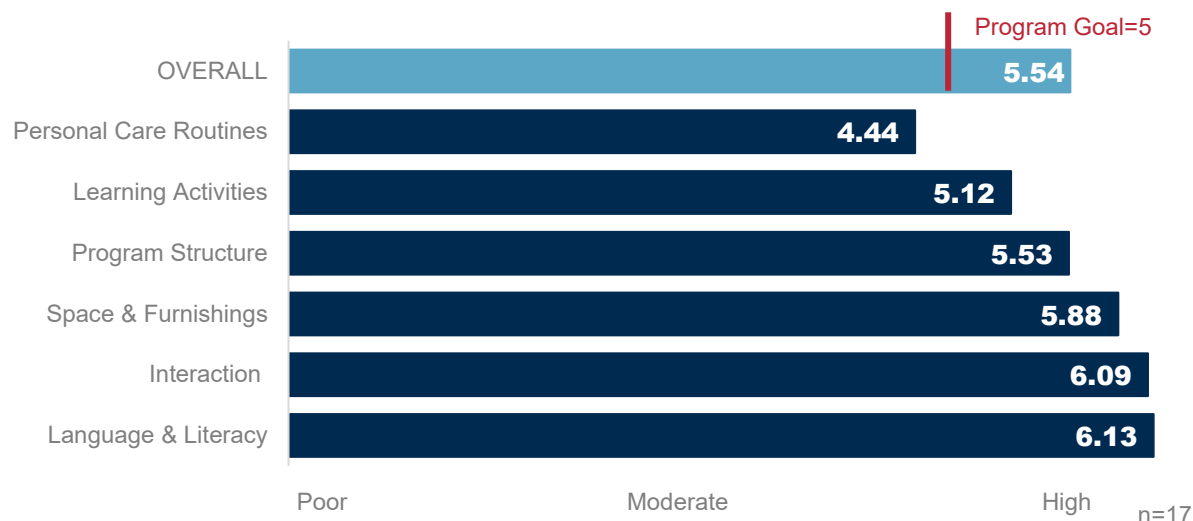
**ITERS-3.** The following graph shows ITERS-3 subscale and overall averages of the classrooms across both schools. Seventeen infant and toddler classrooms were observed and rated across both schools.

**Findings.** The Overall rating met the authors' benchmark for quality, which is an overall score of 5. Educare Omaha classrooms consistently scored in the moderate to high range on ITERS-3. Strengths were in the areas of Language and Literacy and Interactions. An area that could be targeted for improvement is Personal Care Routines.



## ITERS-3 OVERALL SCORE EXCEEDED THE PROGRAM GOAL.

All of the practices were in the moderate to high-quality range.



All classrooms provided children with rich language and literacy experiences.



## CHILD OUTCOMES

Multiple assessments were used to explore children's development in a variety of areas. **Due to COVID-19, only a sample of assessments were able to be collected in the spring of 2020 before the center closed.** As a result of this limited sample, interpretation of the data should be completed with caution. The result is a snapshot of the development of children enrolled in Educare as compared to a normative sample (by tool) that is representative of the general United States population of children.

### What are the children's vocabulary outcomes?

Children's vocabulary is an important indicator of children's future success in school. Children 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.

## Early Head Start (EHS) Vocabulary Results

**Method.** There were fewer than 10 toddlers that were assessed with the PPVT this year due to COVID-19 so no results are reported.

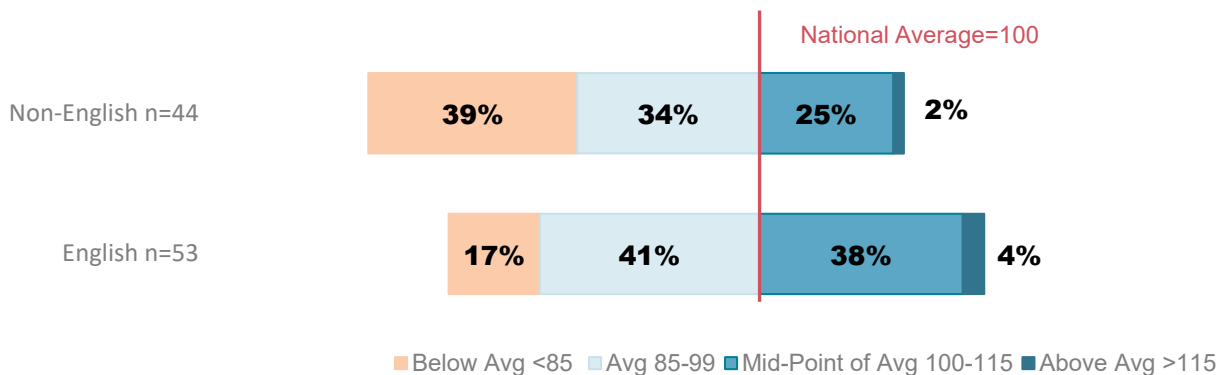
## Head Start (HS) Vocabulary Results

**Method.** Data for the preschool children 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 (the national average), and 3) if there were changes over time (fall and spring).

**Program goal.** The results found that the majority of preschool children scored within the average range. More English speaking children were within the average range (83%) than their peers (61%) who for the majority their home language was Spanish. In addition, more English speaking children were at or above the national average (42%) than their peers (27%) who for the majority their home language was Spanish.

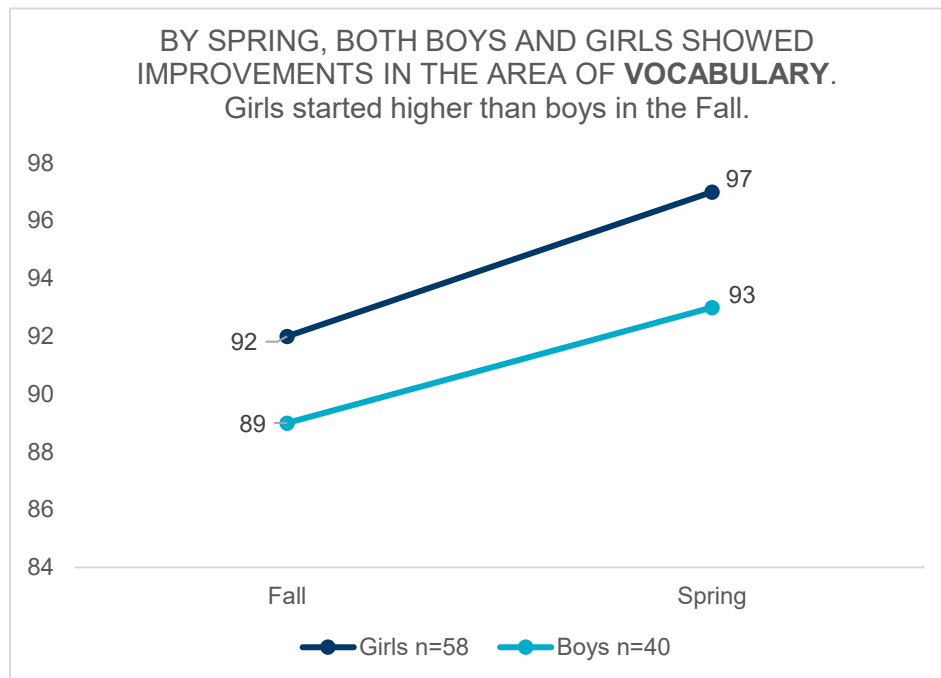
BY SPRING, THE MAJORITY OF **PRESCHOOLERS** WERE WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE IN THE AREA OF **VOCABULARY**.

More English speaking children were at the national average or above.



**Change over time.** The results of the paired t-test found that Pre-K students' language significantly improved [ $t(97)=-4.654, p<.001; d=0.560$ ] over time from their fall to spring 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 ( $p<.000; d=0.473$ ) and their ELL peers ( $p=.033; d=0.474$ ) both made significant improvements. The results found that both groups made significant gains that represent moderate to substantial meaningful change.

PreK children's vocabulary skills improved significantly after participation in Educare.



When looking at gender, the results suggest that both boys and girls make improvements over time, but boys start lower than girls, although the difference was not significant.

**Time in program.** A regression analysis was completed to determine if the length of time that a child was in Educare Omaha predicted child outcomes. The results found that they did not predict fall vocabulary scores.

## What were the children's auditory comprehension skills?

### English and Spanish Auditory Comprehension

**Method.** Toddler and preschool children's auditory comprehension skills were assessed using the Preschool Language Scales-Fifth Edition (PLS-V). This tool was used to measure children's progress with auditory language comprehension. Children were assessed in English, Spanish, and Conceptual (assessed in Spanish and English). The results are summarized first for English speaking and then for Spanish speaking children.

### EHS Results

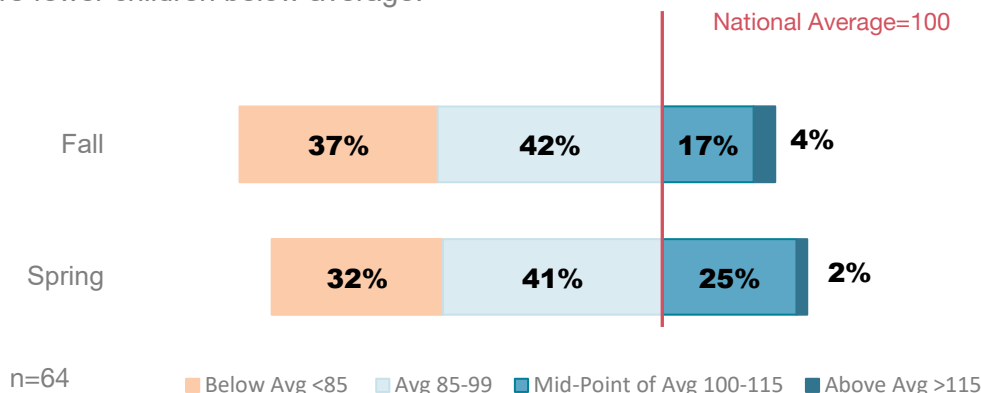
**Program goal.** Findings could not be summarized as there were only five children with a PLS-V completed.

### HS English-Speaking Children

**Program goal.** Descriptive analyses were completed to determine the percent of children that met the program goal (the national average). In the spring, English speaking preschool children had slightly higher percentages (6%) of children at or above the national average in auditory comprehension.

**BY SPRING, ENGLISH SPEAKING PRESCHOOLERS HAD SLIGHTLY HIGHER PERCENTAGES AT OR ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE IN AUDITORY COMPREHENSION.**

By spring, there were fewer children below average.



**Change over time.** The results of the paired t-test found that Pre-K students' language did not significantly improved over time from their fall to spring assessment. However, when controlling IEP, there was a significant difference from fall to spring [ $t(51) = -2.015, p = .049; d = 0.279$ ]. The findings suggest that there was small meaningful change.

**Time in program.** A regression analysis was completed to determine if the length of time that a child was in Educare Omaha predicted child outcomes when child's home language and IEP status was controlled for. The results found that length of time in the program did not predict spring auditory comprehension outcomes.

Significant change across time was found for English speaking PreK children's auditory comprehension skills when controlling for IEP and ELL status.

## Spanish Speaking Results: All Children

**Method.** There were less than 10 Spanish speaking children who had a spring assessment completed, so no analyses were completed.

## What were the children's school readiness outcomes?

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 children 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).

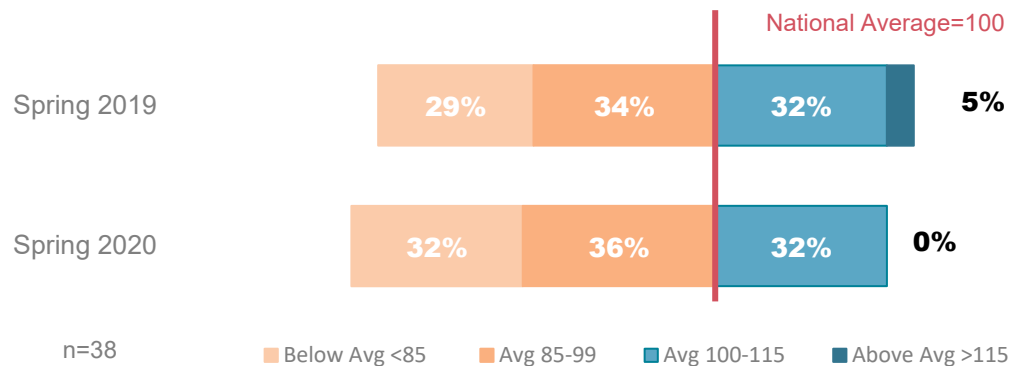
## HS School Readiness Results

**Method.** The Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA) was used to measure the academic readiness skills of young children in the areas of colors, letters, numbers/counting, sizes, comparisons, and shapes. The assessment was completed with preschool children.

**Program goal.** Descriptive analyses were completed to determine the percent of children that met the program goal (the national average). Results found that slightly fewer children were within the average range in the spring of 2020. Slightly fewer percentages of children were at or above the national average in the spring of 2020 (32%) compared to the spring of 2019 (37%).

BY SPRING, SLIGHTLY HIGHER PERCENTAGES OF **PRESCHOOLERS** SCORED WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE IN **ACADEMIC SKILLS**.

This change in skills was not significant.



**Change over time.** The results of the paired t-test found that Pre-K students' school readiness skills decreased slightly over time, but not statistically significant.

**Time in program.** A regression analysis was completed to determine if the length of time that a child was in Educare Omaha predicted child outcomes when the child's home language and IEP status were controlled for. The results found that length of time in the program did not predict vocabulary outcomes.

## What were the children's 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 child'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 children who were two and older. The MEFS is a computerized assessment designed to measure behaviors that are associated with executive functioning in children and youth age two through adulthood. This assessment was completed with children ages two through five in the fall and spring. Due to COVID-19, limited MEFS data was collected in the spring, as a result Fall 2018 and Fall 2019 comparisons were made.



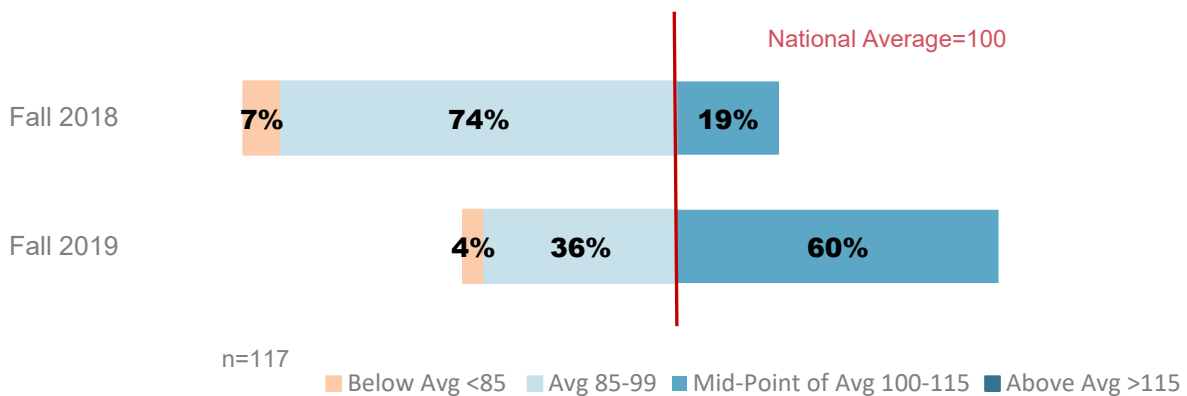
## EHS Executive Functioning Results

**Program goal.** Findings could not be summarized as there were only five children with a spring MEFS completed.

## HS Executive Functioning Results

**Program goal.** Descriptive analyses were completed to determine the percent of preschool children that met the program goal (the national average). The results found that higher percentages of preschool children were at the national average or above in fall 2019 (60%) compared to the fall 2018 (19%). Similar percentages of children were within the below average range at both assessment times.

BY FALL 2019, THE MAJORITY OF **PRESCHOOLERS** WERE AT OR ABOVE THE NATIONAL AVERAGE IN **EXECUTIVE FUNCTIONING**.



**Change over time.** The results of the paired t-test found that PreK executive functioning skills significantly improved over time ( $[t(117) = -4.953, p < .001; d = 0.605]$ ). The findings suggest that there was a large meaningful change.

**Time in program.** A regression analysis was completed to determine if the length of time that a child was in Educare Omaha predicted child outcomes when the child's home language and IEP status was controlled for. The results found that length of time in the program did not predict executive functioning outcomes.

## What were the children's social-emotional outcomes?

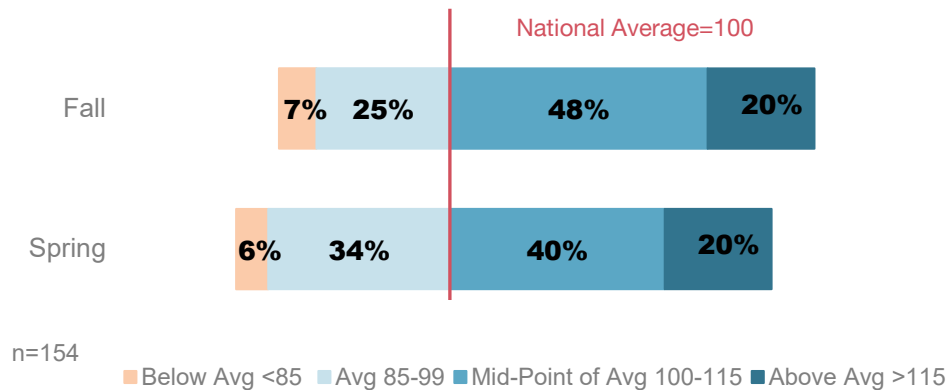
**Method.** The social and emotional development of infant, toddler, and preschool children was assessed using both the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA) and the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment for Infants and Toddlers (DECA-IT). These questionnaires assess young children's social-emotional development by identifying social-emotional protective factors overall and in the areas of initiative, self-control, attachment, and behavior concerns. Children were rated by their teachers in the fall and spring.

## EHS Social-Emotional Results

**Program goal.** Descriptive analyses were completed to determine the percent of children that met the program goal (the national average). The majority (94%) of the children scored within the average range with 60% meeting the program goal in the spring.

## BY SPRING, THE MAJORITY OF **INFANTS' AND TODDLERS' SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS** WERE WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE.

Fewer children scored at the national average or above in spring.



**Change over time.** Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses was completed to determine if there was change in children's scores over time and if any demographic variables predicted social-emotional outcomes. Approximately 37% of the variability in Total Protective Factors was due to the classroom, indicating that the scores were different across classrooms. No significant change across time was found in Total Protective Factor scores. Gender ( $p < .01$ ) and IEP status ( $p < .001$ ) were significant predictors of children's Total Protective Factor scores. On average, girls scored 3.68 points higher on DECA TPF than boys. Children with an IEP scored 6.13 points lower than children without an IEP. Home language was not a significant predictor of DECA Total Protective Factor scores.

Infant and toddler girls were rated significantly higher than boys in all areas.

Approximately 40% of the variability in Attachment was due to the classroom, indicating that the scores were different across classrooms. No significant change across time was found for Attachment scores. Gender was a significant predictor of children's Attachment scores. On average, girls scored 2.75 points higher on DECA Attachment than boys ( $p < .001$ ). Family home language and IEP status were not significant predictors of Attachment scores.

Approximately 25% of the variability in Initiative was due to classroom, indicating that scores were different across classrooms. No significant change across time was found for Initiative scores. Gender and IEP status were found to be significant predictors of children's Initiative scores. On average, girls scored 3.99 points higher on Initiative scores than boys ( $p < .001$ ). On average, children with an IEP scored 9.18 points lower than children without an IEP ( $p < .001$ ). Family home language was not a significant predictor of DECA Initiative scores.

Approximately 36% of the variability in Self-Regulation scores was due to classroom, indicating scores were different across classrooms. No significant change across time was found for self-regulation scores. Gender, family home language, and IEP status were found to be significant predictors of children's Self-Regulation scores. Girls scored significantly higher than boys on Self-Regulation, on average 2.27 points higher than boys ( $p < .01$ ). Children with a home language that was not English had significantly higher Self-Regulation scores than children whose home language was English ( $p < .05$ ). They scored 3.08 points higher on average than children whose primary home language was English. On average, children with an IEP scored 5.50 points lower than children without an IEP.

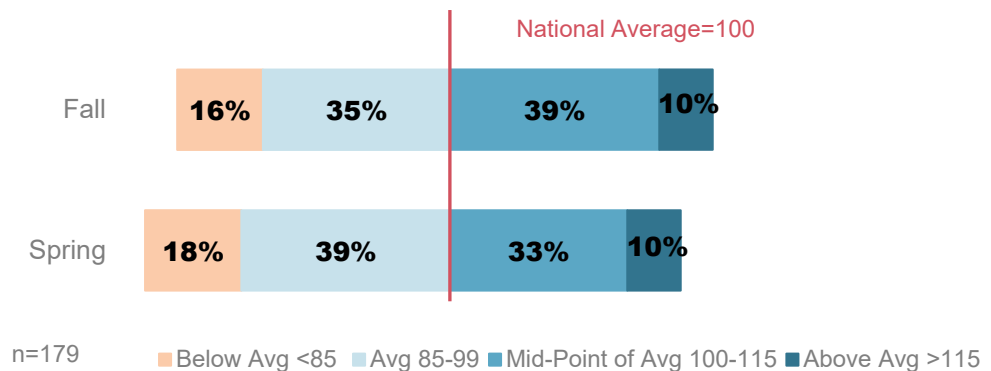
**Time in program.** A regression analysis was completed to determine if the length of time that a child was in Educare Omaha predicted child outcomes when the child's home language and IEP status was controlled for. The results found that length of time in the program did not predict social-emotional outcomes.

## HS Social-Emotional Results

**Program goal.** Descriptive analyses were completed to determine the percent of children that met the program goal (the national average). The results found that similar percentages of preschool children were within the average range in the spring (82%) compared to the fall (84%). By spring, 43% of the preschool children met the program goal, slightly less than in the spring (49%).

**BY SPRING, THE MAJORITY OF PRESCHOOLERS' SOCIAL-EMOTIONAL SKILLS WERE WITHIN THE AVERAGE RANGE.**

Fewer children scored below average in the spring.



**Change over time.** Hierarchical linear modeling (HLM) analyses was completed to determine if there was change in children's scores over time and if any demographic variables predicted social-emotional outcomes. Approximately 18% of the variability in Total Protective Factors was due to the classroom, indicating some score were differences across classrooms. No significant change across time was found in Total Protective Factors scores. Gender, family home language, and special education status were significant predictors of children's Total Protective Factors scores. On average, girls scored 6.18 points higher on DECA TPF than boys ( $p < .001$ ). Children with a home language that was not English had significantly lower behavioral concern scores than children whose home language was English. They scored 2.68 points higher on average than children whose primary home language was English ( $p < .05$ ). On average, children with an IEP scored 6.48 points lower than children who were not on a special education plan ( $p < .001$ ).

**Girls and Spanish speaking children had significantly higher social-emotional skills.**

Approximately 15% of the variability in Behavioral Concerns was due to the classroom, indicating some score differences across classrooms. A significant change in Behavioral Concern scores across time was found when controlling for gender, family home language, and IEP status, on average children's behavioral concern scores increased 2 points across time ( $p < .05$ ). Gender, family home language, and special education status

were significant predictors of Behavioral Concerns scores. Girls had significantly lower behavioral concern scores than boys ( $p < .001$ ), scoring 6.45 points lower on average. Children with a home language that was not English had significantly lower behavioral concern scores than children whose home language was English. They scored 2.98 points lower on average than children whose primary home language was English ( $p < .05$ ). On average, children with an IEP scored 5.36 points higher than children who were not on a special education plan ( $p < .01$ ).

Approximately 19% of the variability in Attachment was due to the classroom, indicating some score differences across classrooms. A significant change in Attachment scores across time was found when controlling for gender, family home language, and IEP status; on average children's scores decreased 2 points across time. Gender, family home language, and IEP status were significant predictors of children's attachment scores ( $p < .05$ ). Girls scored significantly higher than boys on DECA Attachment, on average girls scored 3.79 points higher ( $p < .001$ ). Children with a home language that was not English had significantly higher DECA Attachment scores than children whose home language was English. They scored 2.49 points higher on average than children whose primary home language was English ( $p < .05$ ). On average, children with IEPs scored 3.21 points lower than children without IEPs ( $p < .05$ ).

Approximately 19% of the variability in Initiative was due to classroom, indicating some scores differences across classrooms. No significant change across time was found in Initiative scores. Gender and IEP status were significant predictors of children's Initiative scores. On average, girls scored significantly higher than boys, on average girls scored 5.30 points higher ( $p < .001$ ). Children with IEPs scored significantly lower ( $p < .001$ ) than children without IEPs, scoring on average 6.76 points lower. Home language was not predictive of Initiative scores.

Approximately 10% of the variability in Self-Regulation scores was due to classroom, indicating some scores differences across classrooms. No significant change across time was found in Self-Regulation scores. Gender, family home language, and IEP status were significant predictors of Self-Regulation scores. Girls scored significantly higher than boys, scoring on average 6.85 points higher on DECA Self-Regulation ( $p < .001$ ). Children with a home language that was not English scored significantly higher than children whose home language was English ( $p < .01$ ), on average ELLs scored 2.86 points higher than children whose primary home language was English. Children with IEPs scored significantly lower ( $p < .001$ ) than children without IEPs, scoring on average 6.72 points lower.

**Time in program.** A regression analysis was completed to determine if the length of time that a child was in Educare Omaha predicted child outcomes when the child's home language and IEP status was controlled for. The results found that length of time in the program did not predict social-emotional skills.

## FAMILY ENGAGEMENT OUTCOMES

Family engagement with their children and their schools is a key element for student school success (Henderson & Mapp, 2002). Partnerships between home and school are especially important for children who are socially and economically disadvantaged (Jeynes, 2005). Positive goal-directed relationships between families and program staff are key to engagement and children's school readiness (HHS/ACF/OHS/NCPFCE, 2018).

Educare used a variety of strategies to engage and support 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.** Family Engagement Specialists used the Dimensions of Parenting (DOP) assessment to help identify family strengths and needs in four areas. The Dimensions of Parenting four key areas are: 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. A total of 164 DOPs were collected. As part of the Educare Network evaluation, they also complete a parent interview with families in the fall and spring. Three hundred and twenty-seven (327) Educare network parent interviews surveys were collected this year. A number of different areas of parent outcomes were measured in this survey. These specific measures will be identified in the results section described in the following.

### How did parents support their child's learning at home?

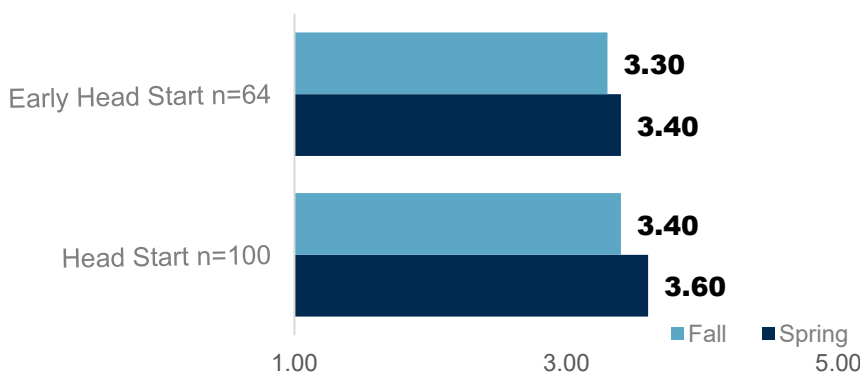
**Method.** Two measures were used to evaluate this area, the Dimensions of Parenting ratings and results of the parent interview on the extent that parents read to their children. This area of the Dimensions of Parenting evaluated parent-child relationships, the degree parents supported their child's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

### Family Nurturer and Educator Results

Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Families as Lifelong Nurturers and Educators scale found that parents' capacity improved by the spring. This area was a strength for families. Head Start families scored higher than Early Head Start families in the spring and Head Start families had a higher increase from fall to spring. Scores for both groups were rated within the "stable to self-sufficient" range.

BY SPRING, PARENTS WERE RATED HIGHER IN THE AREA OF LIFELONG NURTURER AND EDUCATOR.

Parents' capacity to nurture and educate was their strength.





## Reading to Children at Home Results

Educare supported parents through monthly classroom parent meetings, home visits, as well as monthly *Read & Play* activities, which offered parents and other adult caregivers meaningful strategies to support their children's literacy skills. Speech language pathologists at Educare would identify books and developmentally appropriate activities related to the stories for *Read & Play* activities. Children who participated received a free book as well as materials for the home activity. 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.

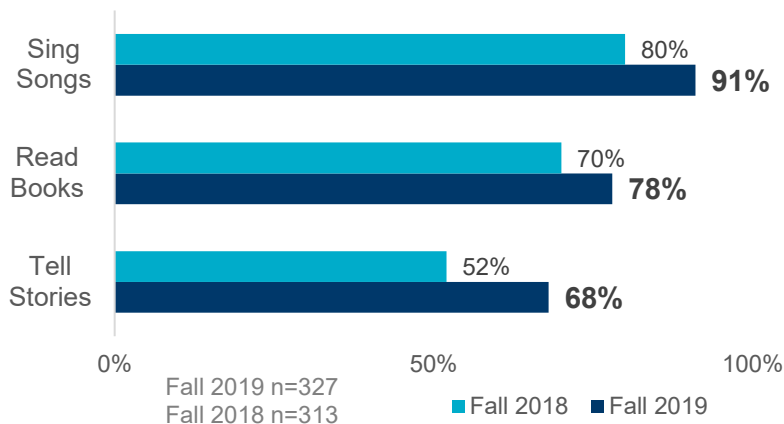
**Method.** The results from the parent interview were used to analyze parents' typical practices at home in reading to their child, telling them stories, or singing them songs. Each year parents complete an interview and indicate the frequency that they engage in these literacy promoting activities.

**Results.** Descriptive analyses were completed to determine if the engagement of parents in literacy activities at home increased after participation in the program. More parents reported that they engaged in these activities 3 times or more a week with their children over the course of the year. The area that increased the most was in telling stories. Singing songs with their children was the most prevalent activity at home.

65% of the parents reported they had confidence in supporting their child's learning.

### MORE PARENTS ENGAGED IN LITERACY ACTIVITIES WITH THEIR CHILDREN IN THE FALL OF 2019.

The majority of the parents are engaging in literacy activities 3x's or more a week in each area.



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

**Method.** The Dimensions of Parenting assessment and the Family Support Survey were 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. In addition, as part of the parent interview, families were asked specifically how helpful peers, school staff and community members were. These supports were categorized into five areas including: Kinship (e.g., parents and relatives), Spouse/Partner,

Professional Services (e.g., teachers, physician), Informal (e.g., friends, church), or Program (e.g., parent groups, social groups). This scale is based on a five-point Likert.

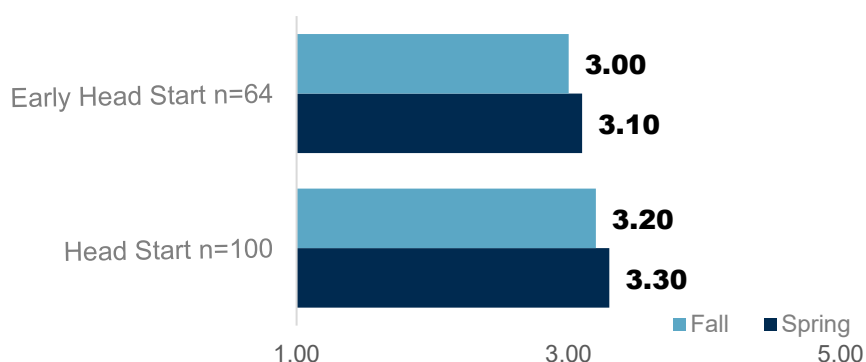
## Family Connection Results

Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Family Connections scale found that parents' capacity improved in this area. Head Start started higher than Early Head Start families but they both increased at the same rate. Overall scores were rated in the "stable" range.



### BY SPRING, PARENTS WERE RATED HIGHER IN THE AREA OF FAMILY CONNECTIONS.

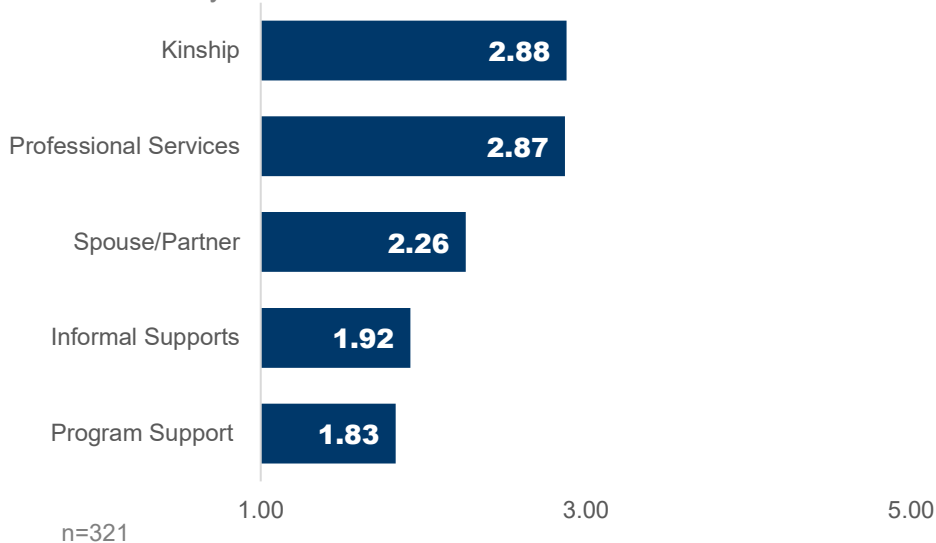
Early Head Start and Head Start parents showed similar gains in this area.



The results of the Family Support Survey found that parents reported that kinship (e.g., family members) and professional services (e.g., providers and program staff) were the most support to them. They rated these supports between "somewhat helpful to generally helpful." The groups that were the least available for support were informal and program supports (parent groups) (rated not all to somewhat helpful range).

## FAMILY AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES OFFERED FAMILIES THE MOST SUPPORT.

On average, families find several sources of support for themselves and their family.



Parents reported having a network of both informal and formal supports.

## What were the Family as Lifelong Advocate and Leader Outcomes?

This area was assessed using the Dimensions of Parenting assessment and information from the parent interview. This area evaluated parents' leadership and advocacy skills, their ability to advocate for high-quality early learning in their community, and make informed decisions.

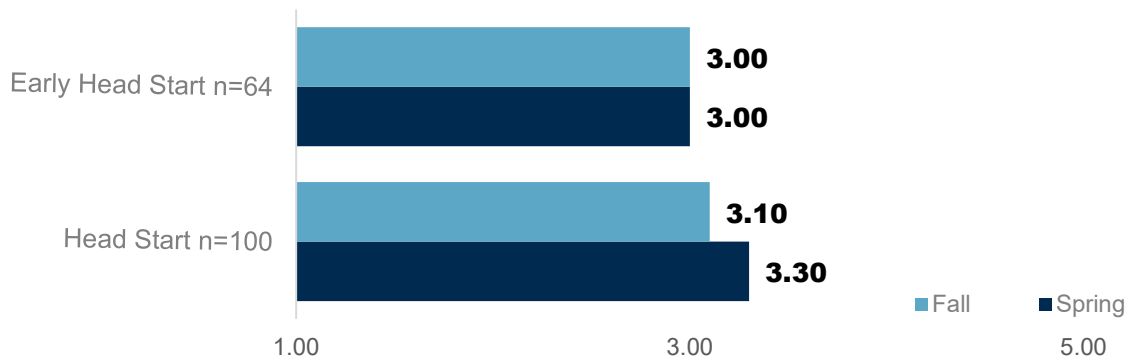
### Lifelong Advocate and Leader Results

Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Family Advocate and Leader scale found that parents' capacity improved in this area. This was the lowest rated area across the Dimensions of Parenting areas. Head Start parents scored higher in the spring while the Early Head Start parents remained stable. Scores for both groups were within the stable range. The parent interview results found the 73% of the parents felt that Educare helped to develop their leadership skills.



73% of the parents reported that Educare helped to develop their leadership skills.

BY SPRING, PARENTS WERE RATED HIGHER IN THE AREA OF ADVOCACY.  
Head Start parents showed greater gains in this area than Early Head Start parents.



## What were the Family Well-Being and Development Outcomes?

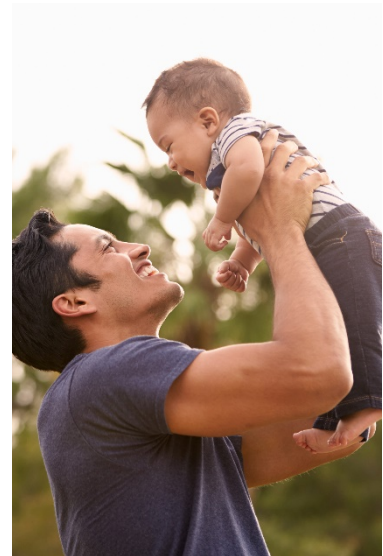
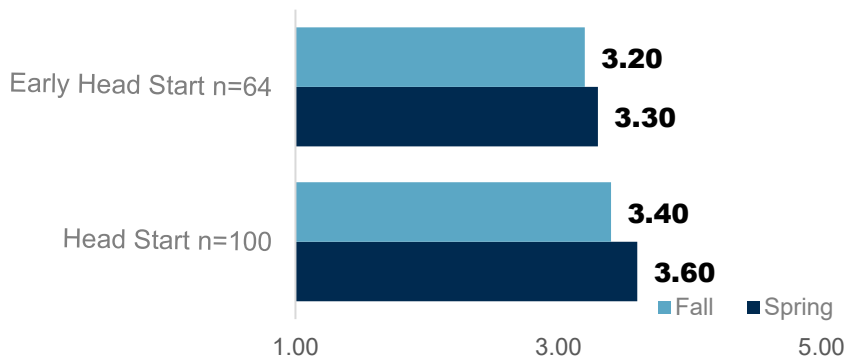
This area was assessed using the Dimensions of Parenting assessment and information from the parent interview. Family well-being area evaluated parents' level of stress, resilience, social-emotional, mental and physical health, and economic and financial stability. Stressful experiences that are frequently encountered by families in poverty can undermine their child's social-emotional competence and well-being (Thompson, 2014). If sufficient in number and frequency, these stressors can serve as barriers to improving parenting and their ability to support their child.

### Family Well-Being Results

**Findings.** Pre-post comparisons of ratings on the Family Well-Being scale found that parents' capacity improved in this area. Head Start families scored higher than Early Head Start families in the spring and Head Start families had a slightly larger of increase in scores. Scores for both groups were rated within the "stable" range.

## BY SPRING, PARENTS WERE RATED HIGHER IN THE AREA OF FAMILY WELL-BEING.

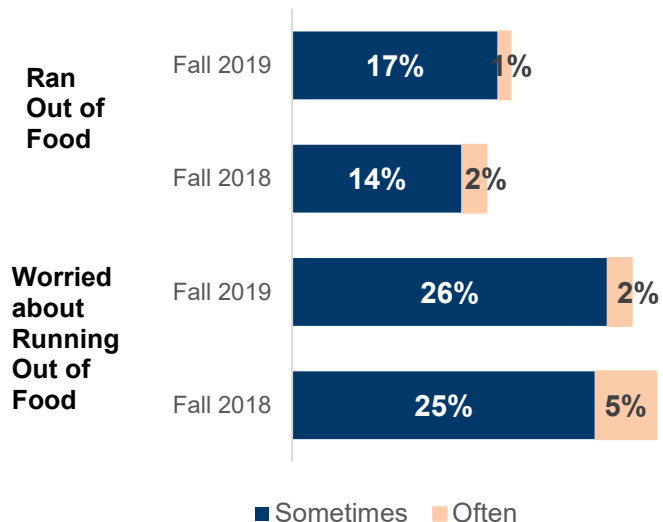
Head Start parents showed greater gains in this area than Early Head Start parents.



One component of well-being is positive mental health. Each year a mental health screening is completed with parents. This year, 15% of the parents screened positive for depression based on the parent interview that was completed in the fall. Many families at Educare are faced with stress related to a lack of access to concrete supports. Parents were concerned about food insecurities. Many parents (28%) in the fall of 2019 worried about running out of food for their families and a smaller percentage (18%) experienced going without food.

As part of the evaluation, parent resilience was measured. During the parent interview, parents answered questions based on the Brief Resilience Scale (BRS). The BRS asked questions related parents' ability to bounce back quickly, if it took them a long time to get over setbacks, etc. A descriptive analysis of the data found that by spring, 67% of the parents reported that they overcame stressful events. The results of a paired t-test found that there was no significant change in parents' resilience from fall to spring. Overall, these results indicate that most parents are feeling equipped to handle the stresses they encounter in everyday situations.

## PARENTS AT EDUCARE WORRY ABOUT FOOD INSECURITY.



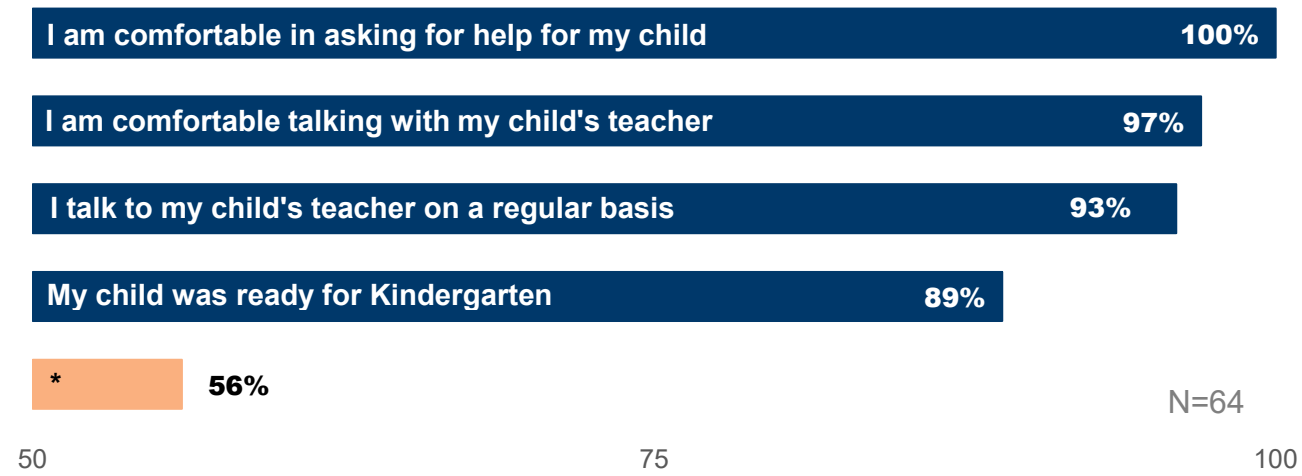


## How engaged were families with their kindergarten teacher and elementary school?

**Method.** Follow-up surveys were conducted with parents of children who 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 64 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 Family Engagement Specialist 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 participated in events at my child's school

Most parents believed that their child was fully prepared for kindergarten (89%). The majority of parents attended their child's fall parent-teacher conferences (83%). A total of 56% of parents attended events at their child's new school. This was a decrease from the previous year, which was reported at 86%. Those who did not attend stated time constraints and work schedules as the primary reasons for not attending. The majority of parents felt comfortable talking with their child's teacher (100%). Parents reported they talked with teachers at pick-up and drop-off times as well as by telephone, text, or email. The results of the survey found that Omaha Educare was not only preparing children for kindergarten, but the program was also preparing families to advocate for their child's education even after they have left the program.

“  
**She is where she  
needs to be  
academically. She  
is smart and  
follows directions  
in class.**

A parent reflects on child's  
experience in kindergarten

## Program Outcomes

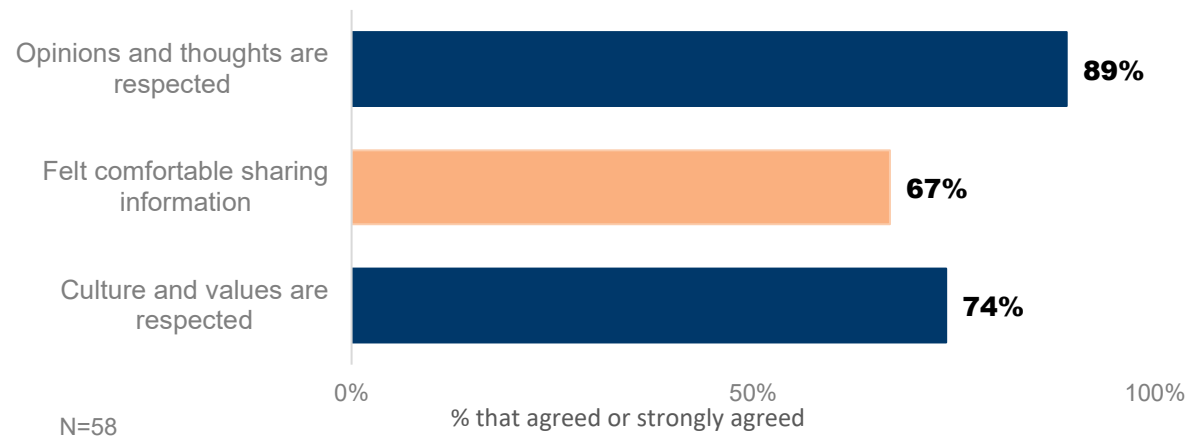
### How satisfied were the families with Educare?

**Method.** Parents (N=58) were interviewed as part of a spring survey. The purpose was to assess what they valued in their experience with Educare.

#### Parent Satisfaction Results

Parents indicated that they had a committed family engagement specialist who understood and respected their culture, values, thoughts, and opinions. Parents felt comfortable sharing information with teachers and family engagement specialists. Parents reported that family engagement specialists helped develop strategies that can be used in the home to support learning and development. Overall, parents rated themselves as highly engaged in the program (m=6.1). This was based on a seven-point Likert scale with 7=strongly agree.

PARENTS EXITING EDUCARE RATED THE QUALITY OF THEIR EXPERIENCE AT EDUCARE POSITIVELY.



# Implementation of Mindfulness and Mastery Grant: Impact of COVID-19

Due to COVID-19, Kellom and Indian Hill Educare closed on March 20, 2019 to in-person learning for students. In the spring, focus groups were conducted as part of the Mindfulness and Mastery (M&M) Acceleration grant to review the previous year and look at the effects of COVID-19 on their sites. Both teachers and leadership participated in the focus groups. The results of the focus group not only reflected the outcomes of the M&M grant, but also provided detail about the services that were offered during the COVID-19 shutdown.

## Mindfulness and Mastery Focus Group Findings

Educare Omaha participated in the Mindfulness and Mastery grant, both during the first three year cycle and second year of the second grant cycle. Both sites reported implementing a variety of strategies based on their participation in a variety of trainings including the Mindfulness Overlay, Brain Games training, and the online Conscious Discipline training. This Mindfulness & Mastery professional development resulted with teachers having a tool kit of effective approaches to use with children in their classrooms and strategies that they can share with parents. As one teacher commented, “We have jumped in with both feet 100%.” The focus groups provided insight on what strategies were implemented in the classrooms and the successes and challenges of implementing these strategies with children and parents. There were different levels of implementation based on when the teachers received their training. While some classrooms were implementing strategies at high levels, some classrooms were just starting out and were at lower levels. Those that were at the lower levels, have finally started to “buy in” because they are seeing the benefits that other classrooms are experiences.

## Role of M&M on Educare Culture and Staff Retention

**Changed culture.** Both sites unanimously stated that the M&M programming has improved staff morale and the culture of their program. “The whole atmosphere has changed. The staff feel cared for and feels that the leadership supports them,” one staff member said. “The leadership validates who they are and gives the staff a voice. They can make choices.” Another administrator, “We have been able to provide resources for the staff and that has helped to build staff morale.” Overall, staff expressed that they are working together more as a team. The culture in the workplace of supporting mindfulness, self-care, and training has helped them prioritize it during the school day. “I know it’s not just my task to make sure the kids are learning, it’s also my task to be fully present with my students and it provides a foundation for them. It gives me permission to stop and check in with myself in a way I wouldn’t, if we did not have the culture.”

One observation noted by leadership. “Teachers are prepared; it’s a time for them to reflect; giving our teachers an opportunity to reflect on their work, learn more, and time to become more creative within the materials they send home.” Additionally, “If you want the quality of learning from our teachers, they have to have time,” and “Everyone’s working really hard from home and are really excited about the new information that they are learning and being able to plan with their teams.” Providing that time in a day-to-day setting for teachers is important, as they balance their home and work schedules. “Teachers are doing some amazing things.”

**Adoption of staff self-care strategies.** An unexpected result of the program that sites observed was a large increase in staff self-care. One leader expressed, “Teachers are starting to realize that they can’t take care of children if they aren’t taking care of themselves, and they are taking that very seriously now.” “Personally, it has helped me put the teachers or adult first, because of Conscious Discipline and the mindfulness all together.” Additional notes from leadership, “I have enjoyed that because it’s helped me to make sure adults feel supported and grounded, making sure they have what they need, taking care of the adults first so the kids get what they need: It has helped me lead in my role.”

**Less turnover.** Overall, staff stated that they have seen a large jump in morale and turnover has dropped drastically since the start of the M&M grant which has been a big change. Leadership suggested that is occurring as, “The staff now have some tools that offer ways to take care of themselves.” This has resulted in staff being happier. “Because of the tools in place and the trust we have built, they are willing to come to their supervisor and work through problems.” In addition, the culture that has been created has resulted in staff staying. As one administrator stated, “The staff don’t want to leave because there is a feeling that this is such a great place to work.”

**Impact at personal level.** Not only has it impacted them professionally, it has impacted staff at a personal level. As one staff member reported, “Trauma in the classroom training was a life changing moment that has helped us adults understand why adults respond and do what we do. It has helped me on a personal level outside of the classroom and given me those strategies and techniques in the classroom as well.” Staff are incorporating mindfulness in their own life, on a daily basis (e.g., exercise, yoga, puzzles). Most teachers are setting a schedule for themselves, to keep a balance between work and home. Teachers are finding ways to be mindful of keeping their family time consistent within a normal workday.

## Implementation in the Classroom

### Implementation strategies

**Mindfulness Strategies.** Creating safe places in preschool classrooms for children has been an environmental strategy that has been implemented widely. The safe place provided with an area for self-soothing and promotes independence of children addressing their own self-regulation. Most teachers have incorporated S.T.A.R. breathing and mindfulness techniques (e.g., balloon and pretzel breathing) in the classroom setting. Other strategies used routinely in classrooms are brain games, Safe Keeper rituals, student jobs, and I Love You rituals. Overall the teachers reported that they are more aware of the students’ feelings and the importance of having the parents onboard.

**Conscious Discipline.** Implementing Conscious Discipline, a social-emotional learning program/curriculum, was a key strategy of Educare Omaha’s M&M grant activities during Year 2. In the previous year, the emphasis had been to provide training and support on Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS), which had been carried over from the first round of the executive functioning grant. Both sites overwhelmingly agreed that implementing Conscious Discipline was a success and was much easier to implement the second year. As one participant reported, “Conscious Discipline is going well. Teachers are motivated to use CD in the classroom and parents are excited about learning more about CD.”

“It (CD) has changed my entire classroom management system.”

### Influence on Children

**Children supporting each other.** Teachers provide multiple illustrations of children embracing the strategies as they interact with other children. As one noted, “The children are used to it and in some cases other children would use without the teacher getting involved. One example is, one child was upset, and another went to the safe area and got some things to help the other calm down. They walked them through smile, take a deep breath, relax.” Another indicated, “Wish well seems to have children more aware of each other and even toddler rooms, children wish each other well when they are sad.” As one teacher said, “I can feel a positive and powerful connection and they (the children) feel so safe and connected.” Overall, this increased empathy between the children was noted as a benefit.

**Calmer and positive emotional environment.** “Calming effect” were words used to describe the impact of implementing CD. One teacher described the environment in the classroom in this way: “It’s a calmer and positive environment in the classroom since using the Conscious Discipline and mindfulness strategies.” Another teacher noticed that in her baby room, the babies have less anxiety and are able to self-regulate better, because she is able to self-regulate and she has a hold on her anxiety. This illustrated that importance of the teacher’s emotional state and its influence on her babies. The use of the mindfulness strategies, supported this teacher which then provides a direct reaction from the babies in her care. If a child is screaming or upset, they give the child space and direct the child to a safe area. They help the child try to breathe and reinforce self-regulation skills so children have power over their emotions. They say, “Your emotions aren’t wrong, but what can you do about them?” Previous behavior strategies used were exhausting for teachers; now they navigate problems through the use of CD strategies. Overall, they have seen that “redirection time has decreased and emotional literacy has increased.”

“My classroom is more positive, calm and easy going. It (CD) has taught me to slow down and work through a problem.”

**Children use emotional language.** Teachers reported that children were using the language of emotions more. They understand what “anger” looks like and feels like, compared with past years. The staff indicated that they were always identifying self-regulation goals, but children don’t learn social-emotional language like they learn math. It’s not about stopping the emotion, but developing skills for self-reflection and knowing what emotions mean. They suggested that these skills can be carried into adulthood.

## Influence on Parents

Educare Omaha added a Social-Emotional Specialist and the Mindfulness committee that was charged in part identify strategies that would promote self-care for families. Various activities were provided for group and individual participation (e.g., Brain Break activities for parents). In addition, sites reported that within policy and parent meetings, parents were actively involved. “Through the grant parents are empowered, use their voice, and contribute to the conversation.” Staff reflected on the impact of this work on parents which is summarized in the following.

**“Deeper connections” with parents and staff.** As teachers began to learn and implement Conscious Discipline strategies, they found improved connections both with their colleagues, as well as, parents. One teacher described “deeper connections” with both the children and families in her classroom. As one administrator described, “Teachers using CD language in their discussions with parents and as teachers they become more comfortable with explaining the concepts behind CD.” Most staff agreed that trauma training helped teachers relate better with parents and families. “We are more conscious of what the families are going through” and that is “the key to better relationships with families.” Teachers have found comfort during the pandemic in one-on-one conversations with parents. As one staff stated, “That is an important SEL connection too. Teachers and parents share the experience of being there for a child.”

**Parents are learning new strategies.** Parents were very interested in Conscious Discipline and they really want to know about how their child is developing and maybe why they are behaving in a certain way. As teachers became more confident in implement CD in the classrooms, they were beginning to share strategies with parents. They were aware of the benefits to children if the strategies are also used at home. Many parents have requested more CD training opportunities and information, with some participating in morning meetings to learn these strategies. Parents have reported that their children are teaching them skills at home. For example, a parent stated that her child told her, “Mom, you seem angry. Take a deep breath.” Parents were asked what they needed during the COVID-19 shutdown. They were asking for specific social-

emotional resources such as, more Conscious Discipline tools, breathing exercises, yoga, and safe place expectations.

**Parents reach out to discuss stressors.** As far as parent engagement, there has been a large increase in parents discussing stressors with FES. “In the past, parents did not realize they were stressed. Now parents are coming to us and saying, “I am stressed”. Mini sessions for parents and staff needs were provided at various times throughout the day for self-care and mindfulness (e.g., stress reduction, coping skills, wellness Wednesdays, Lunch and Learn), as one strategy to support parent stress.

## Challenges

Participants noted that CD has an intensive training component with ongoing internal work in order to become competent in implementing the strategies. This work includes training new staff and taking part in annual training and professional development. This can be difficult for some staff, but the group felt that the support from teacher and supervisors is very helpful. The intensity of the training also becomes a challenge when trying to on-board new staff.

## Impact of COVID-19

**Remote learning opportunities.** Teachers continued with classroom strategies through various communication methods between staff and families: Remind, Zoom, classroom websites, Seesaw, ReadyRosie, Facebook, and Zoom. Staff have done Zoom calls every week to talk to the students and see how they are doing and how things are going. Not all students join the calls. For those that don't join the call, staff video chat or text with their parents.

M&M teams met more frequently due to the shutdown. During these meetings, teams pulled together social and emotional strategies and trainings to share with staff and parents. Sites stated that while COVID-19 has been difficult, the shutdown has given more time for social and emotional training and implementation. One staff member stated, “Without the M&M grant, I don't think our center would be running this well during COVID-19. The strategies that we have implemented the last year, and the relationships that we have built, have made our center so much stronger and the shutdown has proven that.”

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Several examples were provided regarding implementation of remote learning strategies:

- Teachers are still integrating PATHS through daily activities and reading PATHS stories. They made a YouTube video related to “big emotions.”
- Teachers have conversations with families in which they share SEL strategies. Families are very anxious and afraid of going outside. Some live on upper floors with no outside space. We have free mental health and telehealth services for them. Teachers help parents understand their own emotions, especially related to struggles with staying with their children all day or fears at work.
- Some parents are reaching out for assistance with behavior management strategies at home (e.g., tantrums). “Experiencing it and walking through it with parents has made stronger connections.”



- “Every morning I do circle time just like we would at school. We do breathing together, and do a different technique each week through Frog Street. The parents are telling me that they get the info, but to see me do it for them in the morning and being able to do it with their kids on the video I post, they have a better understanding of what I say when we are doing a certain technique. I’m using this opportunity, not what I would have chosen, to show the parents what we do and how we incorporate in our everyday lives that they can use at home to help their kids. One parent texted me that they were having a hard time and arguing with sibling, the kid decided to do caterpillar breathing and gave the parent a greater appreciation of what the kids were learning in the classroom.”

## CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

### PROGRAM QUALITY



#### Educare Omaha has high-quality classrooms:

- Teachers met the threshold of quality across all areas of the CLASS by consistently creating emotionally supportive and caring classrooms that engaged children in learning.
- On the ERS, the classrooms met the quality goal on the Overall quality rating.

**Next Steps.** Consider ways to build preschool teacher skills in providing quality feedback and support children’s concept development through the adoption of evidence-based instructional practices. Identify strategies to increase the ongoing frequency of engaging interactions with the children.

## CHILD OUTCOMES

Due to COVID-19, only a sample of assessments were able to be collected in the spring of 2020 before the center closed. Due to smaller number of EHS data collected in the spring, pre and post data was not able to be reported for EHS vocabulary, auditory comprehension, or executive functioning results.



### Infants and Toddlers after participating in Educare:

- 96% of the children's social-emotional skills were within the average range.
- Scores in this area did not change significantly over time.
- Girls scored significantly higher than boys on social-emotional skills.

### Preschool children after participating in Educare:

- Children significantly improved their vocabulary, executive functioning, auditory comprehension, and social-emotional skills from fall to spring.
- Children's school readiness skills did not change significantly over time with 68% of the children with skills within the average range.
- Girls scored significantly higher than boys on social-emotional and executive functioning skills.



**Next Steps.** Although in most areas gains in development were noted, continued identification and support of Educare staff to implement strategies to strengthen children's communication, executive functioning, and school readiness skills is recommended. Continue to individualize for specific children that as a group scored lower on the assessment. Identify ways to support children's home language in the classroom.

## Family Outcomes



### Families after participating in Educare:

- Demonstrated improved connections, nurturing skills, well-being, and leadership skills.
- Felt confident in supporting their child's learning at home.
- Engaged with their child in literacy activities.
- Had a strong network of informal and formal supports.
- Reported handling problems and controlling important things in their lives.
- Demonstrated food insecurities (28%).

## What were the program outcomes?

### Parents reported:

- Educare had committed teachers and family engagement specialists who understood and respected them.
- They were comfortable in talking with staff.



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## ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Tool	Author	Purpose
Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)	LaParo, Hamre, & Pianta, 2012.	CLASS "is a rating tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning."
Devereux Early Childhood Assessments: Infant, Toddler and Preschool	Mackrain, M, LeBuffe, P. & Powell, G., 2007. Devereux Foundation	The DECA is a strength-based assessment that assesses young children's protective factors including social-emotional competencies and behavior challenges.
Educare Surveys: Parenting; Kindergarten; and Exit Surveys	Educare Network	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.
Environmental Rating Scales: Early Childhood Environment Rating Scales 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition and Infant/Toddler Environmental Rating Scale 3 <sup>rd</sup> Edition	ECERS: Harms, T., Clifford, R. M., & Cryer, D. ITERS: Harms, T., Cryer, D. Clifford, R. M., & Yazejian, N.	Environmental Rating Scales are observation tools that look at the following areas: Classroom layout, health & safety, play activities, language, teacher-child interactions, & program structure.
Minnesota Executive Functioning Scale	Reflective Sciences	The MEFS evaluates children's executive functioning of children beginning at age two.
Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test-IV	Dunn, L. M., & Dunn, D. M. 2007 Pearson	The PPVT is a measure of receptive vocabulary.
Preschool Language Scale-5	Pearson, Inc. 2011	PLS is a language tool that evaluates children's auditory comprehension and expressive communication skills.

## Summary of Evaluation Outcomes for Omaha Educare: Comparisons from 2014-2015 through 2019-2020 School Years

The following is a summary of the aggregate scores across the past four years at Educare for Quality Measures and Child Outcomes. For Child Outcomes an orange check is noted if the change over time significantly improved and left blank if no significant change. You will see that information was not analyzed in the same way every year for the child outcome measures.

### Program Outcomes

For the Quality measures, it was noted if the version of the assessment was used. This shift to a new version will account for some of the variation seen.

Tool	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Infant CLASS: Responsive Caregiving	6.13	6.01	6.00	5.45	5.85	5.83
Toddler CLASS: Emotional & Behavioral Support	6.51	6.61	6.61	6.47	6.67	6.54
Toddler CLASS: Engaged Support for Learning	4.26	4.15	4.74	4.12	4.68	4.55
Preschool CLASS: Emotional Support	6.29	6.14	6.56	6.56	6.49	6.62
Preschool CLASS: Classroom Organization	6.33	6.20	6.44	6.37	6.39	6.45
Preschool CLASS: Instructional Support	3.58	2.30	3.68	3.63	2.98	3.39



Tool	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
ITERS Overall	6.35	5.03*	5.57	5.28***	5.22****	5.54
ECERS Overall	6.35**	4.67*	4.74	4.75	4.64****	5.36

\*Started to anchor with state, \*\*Last year of the ECERS-R, \*\*\*Last year of ITERS-R, \*\*\*\*Collected a random sample of classrooms

## Child Outcomes: HS

Tool	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
PPVT: Significant change across time	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓
PPVT: % met goal	Not Computed	Combined =29%	SP=25% E=27%	SP=30% E=40%	SP=30% E=54%	SP=27% E=42%
PLS (English & Spanish): Significant change	English Only ✓	Spanish Only ✓	Both Groups ✓	Both Groups ✓		Spanish:* English ✓
PLS (English & Spanish): % met goal	Not Computed	Combined with toddler SP=60% E=42%	Combined with toddler SP=25% E=24%	SP=62% E=38%	SP/E=62% E=35%	SP/E=* E=27%
Bracken: Significant Change	✓	✓				

Tool	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2019-2020
Bracken: % met goal	Not Computed	37%	27%	32%		32%
MEFS: Significant Change			✓	✓		✓
MEFS: % met goal			Combined with toddler 33%	45%	35%	60%
Social-Emotional: Significant Change	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	
Social-Emotional: % met goal	Not Computed	48%	57%	48%	55%	43%

\*= Due to smaller numbers, results could not be reported.

## EHS Child Outcomes

Tool	2014-2015	2015-2016	2016-2017	2017-2018	2018-2019	2018-2019
PPVT: % met goal	Not Computed	Combined=29%	SP=18% E=35%	SP=19% E=23%	SP=30% E=26%	*
PLS (English & Spanish): Significant increase	Combined w/ PreK	Combined with PreK	Combined w/ PreK	Combined w/ PreK	Combined w/ PreK	*
PLS (English): % met goal	Combined with PreK	Combined with PreK	Combined with PreK	E=26%	E=23%	*
MEFS: Significant Increase			✓			*
MEFS: % met goal			Combined with PreK	12%	13%	*
Social-Emotional: Significant Increase	Combined with PreK	✓				
Social-Emotional: % met goal	Combined with PreK	71%	70%	63%	68%	60%

\*= Due to smaller numbers, results could not be reported.



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