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Educare of Washington, DC, to break ground March 15

WASHINGTON—Construction of a \$12 million, state-of-the-art Educare school providing early childhood education aimed at closing the achievement gap for children in poverty gets underway March 15, with a groundbreaking ceremony featuring Mayor Vincent C. Gray and other local and national dignitaries.

Educare of Washington, DC, scheduled to open in early 2012, is a key element of the Parkside-Kenilworth Promise Neighborhood, one of 21 communities across the country that will receive federal funds to provide comprehensive services that improve the educational achievement and healthy development of children.

Funded by a unique consortium of public and private partners, Educare of DC will provide direct services to 171 infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. The 32,100 square-foot facility offers full-day, full-year programming along with space for community gatherings. In addition to serving families in the Parkside-Kenilworth communities, Educare will provide technical assistance and training to support a new effort aimed at raising the quality of birth-to-age five services for hundreds more at-risk children in Wards 5, 7 and 8—areas with the highest rates of poverty in the district.

Among those joining Mayor Gray at the March 15 event are: Alma Powell, chair of America's Promise Alliance; Kwame Brown, DC Council Chairman; Yvette M. Alexander, DC Councilmember, 7th Ward; Joan Lombardi, Deputy Assistant Secretary and Inter-Departmental Liaison for Early Childhood Development, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; U.S. Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton (D-DC); Ruth Barnes, principal, Neval Thomas Elementary School; and Carol Howard, Executive Director, Educare of Washington, DC.

"We are very grateful for the overwhelmingly strong support of the local public officials who have helped us champion this critical cornerstone of the District's Promise Neighborhood initiative," said J.B. Pritzker, president of the J.B. and M.K. Pritzker Family Foundation, an anchor funder of Educare of Washington, DC. "Our investment in this school stems from our belief that all children in America deserve equal opportunities at high-quality learning so that they can all pursue their American dreams. Research demonstrates that learning begins at birth and that investments in high-quality birth-to-age five programs can narrow the achievement gap and prevent costly interventions later in life."

The Buffett Early Childhood Fund and the W.K. Kellogg Foundation also are anchor funders of the project. They are



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THE BOUNCE LEARNING NETWORK IS A PARTNERSHIP INVOLVING THE BUFFETT EARLY CHILDHOOD FUND, THE OUNCE OF PREVENTION FUND AND COMMUNITIES ACROSS THE COUNTRY. WE CREATE EDUCARE CENTERS TO BETTER PREPARE YOUNG, AT-RISK CHILDREN FOR SCHOOL.



joined by other national partners including the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Sunshine Lady Foundation, the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the Irving Harris Foundation. Local partners include The United Planning Organization, the District of Columbia Public Schools and the Office of the State Superintendent of Education.

The private donors are paying for the construction of the facility adjacent to Neval Thomas Elementary School, and a combination of local and federal public dollars, as well as an endowment of private support, will support day-to-day operations.

“Educare will make a difference, and not just for the children and families of Parkside,” said Dana Jones, president and CEO of United Planning Organization, the local Head Start grantee and a key member of the Educare of Washington, DC operating partnership. “This school sends a strong message that investing in our youngest children is not just the right thing to do, it is the smart thing to do because it will yield dividends for years to come.”

Educare of Washington, DC joins a growing network of 12 operating Educare schools across the nation that is showing dramatic results. University of North Carolina researchers who have evaluated the program found that children who enroll in Educare between birth and age two enter kindergarten better prepared than the national average for all children. Educare children also scored better on measures of vocabulary and social skills than most low-income children - both of which are strong predictors of future success in school.

“Educare is a catalyst for change—and across the nation, each Educare school is demonstrating how much can be achieved when the public and private sectors jointly invest in quality early learning,” said Susie Buffett, chair of the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. “We are changing early childhood practices in states nationwide to benefit more families, and we have changed the life trajectories of countless children.”

The first Educare school opened in 2000 on Chicago’s South Side through an innovative partnership between the Irving Harris Foundation and the Ounce of Prevention Fund, a nonprofit organization committed to quality early childhood education programs, policies and research. Soon after the opening, the Ounce and the Omaha-based Buffett Early Childhood Fund joined forces to work with local public and private partners across America to create the Educare network.

The 12 operating Educare schools are in Chicago; Milwaukee; Denver; Miami; Oklahoma City; Seattle; Kansas City, Kan.; and Waterville, Maine, and there are two Educare schools each in Omaha, Neb., and Tulsa, Okla.. In September 2010, another Educare school broke ground in Phoenix and up to five more are expected to break ground in 2011. As Educare has spread, it has helped to create a network of like-minded philanthropists who invest together in national and state public policy reform as well as in building schools.

In addition to providing effective early childhood programs for children in poverty, Educare schools also serve as a



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“showroom” for policymakers, business leaders, early childhood providers, and others to drive public policy decisions to invest in early childhood. Educare of Washington, DC’s proximity to the nation’s Capitol—it lies just a few miles away—offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate to federal policy makers and elected officials how investments in quality early learning experiences can narrow the achievement gap for children in poverty.

Educare programming is grounded in research-based strategies. Each school provides high staff/child ratios to support individualized attention (three teachers in classrooms with eight infants and toddlers; three teachers in classrooms of 17 preschool-aged children); high staff credentials (master’s-degreed supervising teachers, lead teachers in each classroom with BA degrees, master’s-degreed family support supervisors, etc.); an intensive focus on social-emotional development and early language development; and a commitment to rigorous, ongoing program evaluation and improvement.

Educare schools draw on all available resources—Head Start and Early Head Start, local schools, child care, private support, and others—to implement highly effective birth-to-age five learning environments for at-risk children and families. Educare schools often are built adjacent to an elementary school to send the message that the first five years of life are the first five years of learning, and to reinforce more powerful connections with K-12 public education.

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The Bounce Learning Network is a partnership involving the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, the Ounce of Prevention Fund, and communities across the country. We create Educare schools to better prepare young, at-risk children for school.



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