An opportunity to change a child, a community, a country.
It’s what’s inside that counts.
THE GREAT AMERICAN PROMISE

In America, education is the road to opportunity—an essential path for developing the knowledge, skills and behaviors that prepare children to succeed as students, workers and citizens throughout life. But here is the sad reality: Our country is plagued by a persistent educational achievement gap that leaves many children unprepared for the demands of school and the opportunities that it has to offer.
Change the first five years and you change everything

This achievement gap can begin to develop as young as 9 months old, creating a stumbling block on the path to success that puts many children already behind by the time they enter kindergarten. These children struggle to keep up in class, are frequently placed in special-education programs, or are labeled with behavioral problems. Low-income students, in particular, consistently underperform on school coursework, graduate high school at lower rates, and are less likely to attend college. As a result, instead of joining the workforce and contributing to the economy, they remain in poverty.

Narrowing the achievement gap and changing the outcomes for children in poverty requires intensive interventions beginning in a child’s earliest months and years. Educare Washington, DC, is a response to that call. By providing a proven model of high-quality early childhood services in one of the District’s most impoverished communities, Educare Washington, DC, seeks to remove the achievement gap as an obstacle on the road to academic success and sets hundreds of children per year on the path to school readiness.

THE OPPORTUNITY

With 45% of the city’s 41,000 children under 6 years old living in low-income families, Washington, DC, has the second-highest poverty rate in the country. Ward 7—the home of Educare Washington, DC—along with neighboring Wards 5 and 8 are among the most economically distressed communities in the District. Compared to other wards, families in Wards 5, 7 and 8 are more likely to be eligible for food stamps and receive Temporary Assistance for Needy Families benefits, and children from these wards are more likely to be born to a teen mother or live in a single-mother household. Despite the daunting challenges, these families consistently demonstrate an abiding desire to improve the lives of their children.

Educare offers a bold vision for the children of Washington, DC. By starting early to prevent the development of an achievement gap that sets children on an intractable course of underachievement, Educare aims to change the life trajectories for children in Washington, DC, and in communities across America.
Neuroscientific research confirms that the architecture of a developing child’s brain is shaped in the first years of life and is significantly influenced by the child’s environment:

- Learning begins at birth and thrives through nurturing relationships with caring adults.
- The strong bonds that babies develop with caring adults have a lasting influence on their development of the skills and attributes needed to succeed in school, including self-confidence, early communication abilities and problem solving.
- Prolonged exposure to environmental stresses such as poor nutrition, homelessness and parental neglect cause the release of toxic chemicals that compromise the development of a healthy brain.
Investing in the first five years

The impact of poverty during this critical developmental phase means that young children are most vulnerable during the same time that the brain is experiencing its most significant period of growth.

**CLOSING THE PERVERSIVE AND PERSISTENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP**

Once gaps in school-readiness skills take root, they are difficult and costly to remedy. Children who start behind in school often stay behind, and the gap only widens over time, leading to pronounced disparities in achievement over the course of a student’s educational career.

Differences in vocabulary growth between children in low and high socioeconomic households begin to appear as early as 9 months of age:

The differences do not stop there, but they extend to numeracy skills as well. Children from low-income backgrounds generally demonstrate lower levels of competence in mathematics prior to school entry compared to their middle-class peers, and like the difference in vocabulary skills, this gap persists and widens over time.

Effective programs and policies that narrow the achievement gap are essential for preparing all children to be more capable, productive participants in society and the global economy.

**Research has shown that** high-quality early education programs can:

- Reduce or eliminate the achievement gap at kindergarten
- Ensure strong literacy and math-learning outcomes by 3rd grade
- Promote positive life outcomes by reducing school dropout rates and delinquency, and increasing income in adulthood.
When society does not invest in the early education of at-risk young children, the costs are clear.

These children are:

- **25%** more likely to drop out of school
- **40%** more likely to become teen parents
- **50%** more likely to be placed in special education
- **60%** more likely to never attend college
- **70%** more likely to be arrested for a violent crime
Leading economists confirm that early investments in human capital represent the most effective approach with the greatest return on public investment. According to Nobel Prize-winning economist, James Heckman, early interventions for disadvantaged children “reduce the achievement gap, reduce the need for special education, increase the likelihood of healthier lifestyles, lower the crime rate, and reduce overall social costs. In fact, every dollar invested in high-quality early childhood education produces a 7 to 10 percent per annum return on investment.”

Policymakers, philanthropists and educators must act on the evidence that investments in early education, beginning at birth, are the wisest use of education dollars.

“The best way to improve the American workforce in the 21st century is to invest in early childhood education, to ensure that even the most disadvantaged children have the opportunity to succeed alongside their more advantaged peers.”

- JAMES HECKMAN (NOBEL LAUREATE IN ECONOMICS)
A CATALYST FOR CHANGE

In communities across the country, Educare is a platform for raising awareness about the importance of learning during a child’s first five years of life.

Educare serves as a “showroom” that demonstrates what high-quality early learning programs can look like and helps to convince policymakers, business leaders, philanthropists and others that investments in early learning make a difference in the life outcomes for even the most at-risk children.

The first Educare opened in Chicago in 2000, and today, the Educare Learning Network includes 21 schools from Seattle to Miami to Maine that serve more than 3,400 children and their families each day.

“Public-private partnerships like Educare are the only way we’re going to get there. ... It takes adults putting egos aside, putting historical differences aside, and saying, ‘Let’s figure out a better way to do it.’ ... This, Educare, is a better way to do [early education] —and it’s starting to become a real national model.”

ARNE DUNCAN, THEN-SECRETARY, US DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, SPEAKING AT EDUCARE OKLAHOMA CITY
A SHOWCASE FOR QUALITY

Educare is a full-day, full-year early education program designed to help children excel by addressing their academic and developmental needs. State-of-the-art Educare schools provide a unique environment where research-based, innovative best practices in early childhood education are used to build the early language, social-emotional, math and problem-solving skills and competencies that are critical to long-term school achievement.
A Commitment to Learning

High standards drive Educare’s success. Educare teachers hold college degrees, and each teaching team participates in intentional staff development and evaluation of its practices. Class sizes are small, and children remain with the same teachers for several years to build and reinforce the stable relationships essential for learning.

Active family involvement is critical to Educare’s mission. Full-time social workers and other specialists support families and help parents develop the skills and confidence needed to champion their child’s learning once they enter elementary and secondary school.

Educare also works to strengthen the early childhood education field by serving as a training ground for thousands of early learning professionals who receive coaching to implement innovative and research-based methods. By developing effective practitioners and school leaders, Educare schools reach beyond their walls to strengthen the broader field of early education.

**DELIVERING RESULTS**

Educare schools partner with leading research institutions to evaluate outcomes, ensure continuous program improvement and gather hard evidence to highlight the importance of early education programs in the fight to close the achievement gap.

Research shows that children who start Educare between birth and age 2 meet national averages on measures of school readiness. Kindergartners who spend their early years at Educare arrive at elementary school ready to learn and on par with middle-income peers.

Educare children have more-extensive vocabularies and are better able to recognize letters, numbers and colors than their low income peers. They also develop strong social skills, including self-confidence, persistence and methods to manage frustration. All of these abilities are strong predictors of later success in academics—and in life. What’s more, early findings indicate the gains Educare children make hold as they move through elementary school.
EDUCARE WASHINGTON, DC—AN INVESTMENT IN THE FUTURE

Located just three miles from Capitol Hill and east of the Anacostia River in Ward 7, Educare Washington, DC, opened in July 2012, and provides access to high-quality early learning services for up to 175 young children and their families.
Educare Washington, DC, like Educare schools across America, builds on the foundation of existing early learning efforts at the federal, state and local levels and will be bolstered by the District’s investments in preschool and other early childhood programs.

THE SCHOOL

- 32,100-square-foot LEED-Silver facility with open and engaging space for developmentally appropriate learning
- Full-day, full-year, research-based programming
- Individualized instruction provided by highly qualified teachers
- Community gathering and training space for the Parkside neighborhood in Ward 7

OUR PARTNERS

Educare Washington, DC, partners with the University of Maryland at College Park to evaluate the program implementation and to develop a rich dataset for continuous program improvement. Through this partnership, Educare is able to provide data and feedback to teachers, staff and families to help improve outcomes for children.

Local health partners support the school’s comprehensive approach to child development and learning. Educare offers each child ongoing health monitoring, three nutritionally complete meals per day, and annual vision, hearing and dental screenings.

Educare Washington, DC, is the early childhood anchor program for the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative (DCPNI). Educare coordinates with many DCPNI programs to serve the Parkside/Kenilworth neighborhood, where 61% of children live in poverty. Educare also partners with the United Planning Organization, a long-standing provider of community-based services in the District.

THE STUDENTS AND FAMILIES

- Families served have children ages 6 weeks to 5 years living at or below the federal poverty level. Families must be eligible for Early Head Start and Head Start services and be working, in training or in school.
- Families learn how to promote their children’s healthy development, how to recognize and pursue quality education and how to extend classroom lessons at home.
- Families will receive educational opportunities and participate in school events throughout the year.

Educare’s program is funded in part with federal funds from Head Start and Early Head Start and with state child-care subsidy funding through the Office of the State Superintendent. School meals are supported by the Child and Adult Care Food Program. In addition to the national foundations that have developed the Educare network, Educare Washington, DC, is building relationships with local philanthropists who support the school’s mission and seek to impact early childhood education in DC and beyond.
A number of visionary champions joined to make Educare Washington, DC, a reality. Leading the effort were three anchor funders who have invested in the expansion of Educare nationally: the Pritzker Children’s Initiative, the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. Additional philanthropic support came from the George Kaiser Family Foundation, the Sunshine Lady Foundation, the Morris & Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation, the Philip L. Graham Fund, and the J. Willard and Alice S. Marriott Foundation.
Moving from vision to reality

Educare is setting a new standard for early care and education in Washington, DC. As hundreds of business leaders and philanthropists have witnessed in more than a dozen communities across the country, investing in Educare makes sense. Educare Washington, DC, is a showroom that demonstrates what it really takes to narrow the achievement gap, and it sends the clear message that the great American promise of equal opportunity is a promise worth keeping.

Won’t you join us?
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