EDUCARE LEARNING NETWORK IMPLEMENTATION STUDY

Purpose Statement

The Educare Learning Network is a consortium of schools implementing the core features of the Educare early education model. Educare schools are collaborative partnerships between the public and private sectors that are committed to implementing innovative ideas and best practices to continuously improve their work with families. Network partners are linked, sharing resources and knowledge, and receive extensive technical assistance and training that build on program strengths to support implementation of the Educare model and to enable continuous program improvement.

The Educare Learning Network Implementation Study is designed to document the features of Educare and how implementation of the model contributes to program quality and links to child and family outcomes. The evaluation is led by a national evaluator at the Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute at UNC-CH. Local evaluators, program directors, and funders from each Educare site are partners in decision-making about the evaluation design. A Technical Work Group of experts provides advice. Local evaluators collect data at their site, using well-known assessments, observations, and interview items, and FPG processes and summarizes data across sites and ensures that high standards for training and reliability of data collection are maintained.

The Implementation Study measures the following domains:
> (1) the core features of the Educare model;
> (2) key unique local features and community conditions;
> (3) dosage, intensity, content, and quality of child and family services;
> (4) child and family status at baseline; and
> (5) progress over time.

The results of the Implementation Study allow the Network to describe and better understand the progress children and families are making in Educare programs. The results also illuminate the links between child and family outcomes and implementation of the model.

The evaluation provides *internal stakeholders*—programs, staff, and Network leadership—with the information they need to do their best work. Most of the data collected are useful for continuous program improvement, and each site has designed a feedback loop to share relevant data with appropriate staff (e.g., teachers, family support specialists, directors). For Network leadership, documentation of the extent of programs' implementation of the Educare model allows for Network technical assistance to be tailored to help each site attain its quality goals. For the Network, the implementation study helps answer the questions, "Are we doing what we said we would do?" and "Are we having the impact we expected to have?"

The evaluation provides *external stakeholders*, including policymakers, funders, and others in the larger early childhood field, with information to help increase access to high quality early education programs. Relevant data includes:
> (1) level of program quality and child and family outcomes using well-known measures to allow comparisons to existing national data;
> (2) the continuous improvement process used in Educare sites; and
> (3) increases in the presence of protective factors and decreases in the presence of risk factors in the lives of children who have participated in Educare programs.