



## NEED: The Case for Educare Maine

Children from economically disadvantaged homes too often arrive poorly prepared for kindergarten and require significant and costly K-12 resources to provide them with an equal educational opportunity. In fact, nearly half of Maine children entering kindergarten are not prepared for learning, according to the Maine Department of Education.

We cannot continue to do early childhood education the way we've been doing it - our kids deserve better; families need opportunities; and taxpayers can't afford it.

### Children

- Children are born learning - 85 percent of brain development occurs by age 3 and 90 percent of development - both in size and synapses - occurs by age 5.
- More than 65 percent of children in Maine under age six have all parents in the workforce. By 2010, 85 percent of parents will be working.
- According to Maine Kids Count 2007, 18 percent of Maine children under age 5 lived in poverty, and 37 percent of Maine children under age 18 live in low-income families with family income below 200 percent of the federal poverty level - \$20,650 for a family of four.

### Families

Underdeveloped literacy skills can create enormous difficulties for adults, their children, and their families including:

- Less chance for the child to succeed in the classroom as a result of reduced support from the parent.
- Restricted access to health care because of a lack of understanding information.
- Inadequate nutrition, due to inability to read food labels and nutritional content.
- Increased periods of unemployment and reduced annual earnings.

### Economy

- Maine taxpayers spend \$300 million annually on special education costs to support students who enter school already behind in their learning development.
- Quality, affordable child care is necessary for the economic security of our families. Without it, parents - particularly mothers - are often unable to pursue education or quality employment opportunities.
- The fact is that investing in quality early childhood care and education yields an excellent return. Studies show that investing \$1 early yields a return of between \$7 and \$16.<sup>1</sup>
- Children who experience high-quality early care and education are more likely to have good physical, emotional and mental health, higher self-esteem, and greater speech and language skills; succeed academically and attend college; earn more as adults; own their own homes; and contribute more to the tax base.

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<sup>1</sup> The Brookings Institute: "Cost-Effective Investments in Children," Julia B. Isaacs



## VISION: A Different Way of Doing Early Childhood Education

- ✓ Educare Maine will shape a new way of doing business when it comes to delivering early care and education to Maine's most at-risk children and families.
- ✓ Educare Maine's highest priority is to maximize the school-readiness and life success of children who are at risk for poor life outcomes.
- ✓ Educare Maine supports parent and family involvement as central to a child's success in school and life.
- ✓ QUALITY is fundamental to Educare Maine at all levels -from physical space and environment to the highest professional teaching experience.
- ✓ Rigorous, regular program performance evaluation is essential for long-term Educare program success and its impact on childrens' school readiness.
- ✓ Educare Maine encourages and supports cross-organizational partnerships that level the playing-field for educational outcomes of families from all socioeconomic levels.
- ✓ Politicians, educators, business leaders and citizens/taxpayers will be energized and motivated to support early childhood policies and initiatives that positively impact human and economic outcomes.
- ✓ Employers and business leaders will better understand how quality, accessible early care for employees impacts retention, recruitment and productivity.



## **SOLUTION: What IS Educare Maine?**

Educare Maine is the first Educare site in New England and is designed to serve between 150 and 200 mostly low-income children from before they are born to age 5, during this most critical brain development stage. The goal is to measurably increase their school-readiness and significantly reduce unnecessary special education costs.

Parents and caregivers are essential partners in preparing children for school and Educare Maine will support them with education and comprehensive supports to improve health, self-sufficiency and long-term parent and child well-being and success.

A private/public partnership, Educare Maine will serve as a state-of-the-art professional development and resource center for child care professionals across the state, as well as a teaching lab for students seeking an early childhood degree in Maine.

Maine is undertaking a Capital Campaign to raise \$10 million to build a state-of-the-art Educare Center. Rooted in best practices, this early childhood learning center will serve 150-200 at-risk children from birth to five years.

We won't have to do it alone - an innovative \$3 million challenge grant from the Doris Buffett Sunshine Lady Foundation and upon approval, an additional \$1 million from the Educare Network, will provide a strong base for this campaign.

A true public-private partnership involving the Head Start programs, public school programs, private business, state government, the Doris Buffett Sunshine Lady Foundation, Maine foundations and local municipalities will help build and sustain the Center.

Most importantly, Maine's Educare Center will use the nation's best early childhood research to establish a new standard of effectiveness for children and parents.

## **What is an Educare Center?**

Educare Centers, where infants and toddlers form roughly a third of the enrollment, are designed to meet the needs of today's families who are making the transition from welfare to work and are recipients of a mix of Head Start, child care and preschool services.

Each classroom provides a teacher with a Bachelor's Degree, an assistant teacher with an Associate's Degree and an aide from the community. All classrooms are supervised by teachers with Master's degrees in early childhood.

In addition, each Educare Center employs family support staff and social workers to ensure that each family's comprehensive needs are addressed.

## *A Teaching and Research Center*

Seven community colleges in Maine offer an Associate's Degree in Early Care and Education and two four-year schools offer a Bachelor's Degree in Early Childhood Education. Students in these programs are often challenged to find model quality early care and education facilities and programs from which to learn.

Maine's Educare Center will serve as a model quality early care and education program and a teaching center, where college students and teachers from other programs will observe evidenced-based practices in the classrooms.

## *Parental Involvement*

Parents are expected to play an active part in the life and governing of Educare, even as they learn to balance the demands of school or work with being a parent. Parents will serve on policy councils and be active in various education events at the Center.

## *Finance, Governance and Evaluation*

Educare Centers are about 30,000 square feet in size. The full-year operating costs range from \$2.6 million to \$3 million. The Center's director is accountable to a Board of Trustees, representing all major stakeholders in the project, including parents.

The Frank Porter Graham Institute at the University of North Carolina is overseeing the national evaluation of Educare Centers.

## *Funding the Center*

Private dollars will build the Center, which will serve as a catalyst for school districts, state government and Head Start/Early Head Start grantees to blend multiple funding streams into one facility. The work plan will be developed together.

This collaborative funding will create an operating budget to support certified teachers, low child/staff ratios and small class sizes. Private dollars will supplement the publicly funded operating budget to reach the levels that research shows is needed.

## *Choosing a Location for the Center*

Data from communities with large low-income populations such as Lewiston-Auburn, Portland, Waterville, and Bangor were invited to form local collaborative planning teams that prepared applications and presented to a Stakeholders Committee, that will make a recommendation to Doris Buffett and the national Educare staff about the community most ready to embark on the development and implementation of the first Educare Center in Maine and New England.