

Ensuring school readiness for children birth to age five.





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Designed by Jennifer Paré



### What is Educare Central Maine?

### Educare is a Place.

Educare Central Maine (ECM) is a state-of-the-art early learning center located in Waterville, Maine. ECM is connected to the George J. Mitchell Elementary School (GJMS). Together the partners focus on a continuum of quality early learning experiences from birth through grade 3. The partnership with GJMS offers a natural transition between educational homes for the young learners, their parents, and maximizes staff resources and expertise.



ECM is Certified as a LEED "Green" facility. It is designed to support each young child's unique social, emotional and cognitive development. The design of an early learning environment is critical to supporting teacher:child and parent:child interactions. ECM's facility design is based upon research that highlights the relationship between high quality learning facilities and improved child and family outcomes. In essence, the way that the building is designed enhances the learning of each child. Adjacent to the classrooms are learning spaces and hallways that provides ample space and layout to be used for year-round indoor small and grossmotor development.

*ECM functions as a high quality early care and education demonstration site for the State of Maine.* Like all states with Educare facilities, ECM serves as a demonstration site for the highest quality teaching and instruction and a model for excellence in space design elements. The goal is not to construct a new center in every Maine community, but rather to replicate elements of its best practices across the state, regardless of learning environment.

ECM is the most rural Educare center in the nation and provides the Educare Learning Network critical information to aid in rural program development across the country.







### Educare is a Program.

Educare Central Maine *serves 202 mostly low-income children* from birth to age 5. Of these children, 100 are attending full-day, full-year because their parent(s) are working or going to school. The remaining children are enrolled in part-day, part-year programs. Service is designed to prepare children to enter kindergarten engaged, healthy and socially/emotionally ready to succeed. Parent input, education and needed supports to help their children succeed in education and life are key program components. Parent partnerships are critical to sustainability of long-term child and family outcomes.

Children and families enrolled at ECM receive an array of early childhood development, health, nutrition and family support services. Among other features of quality child care settings, the program includes the following:

- Low child/staff ratios to ensure trusting and secure relationships improve the quality of care, and support the child's developing identity.
- Literacy development; the foundation for school readiness.
- Infant mental health services, which promote healthy emotional development in infants and toddlers.
- Nutritious meals and nutrition consultation.
- Primary care, mental and oral health services for infants, children, and families, including sick and wellbaby care.
- Extensive staff training and development programs at the on-site training center.





**C** ducare Central Maine is a formal partnership between Waterville Public Schools, KVCAP Early/Head Start, the William and Joan Alfond Foundation and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. It is governed through shared leadership among and between these four primary entities which strive to:



Educare is a Partnership

...Ensure meaningful collaboration and decision-making between the school district, Early/Head Start, and private philanthropy community that is committed to long-term support, quality assurances and ongoing evaluation;

..Provide assistance to replication opportunities in partnership with the state and emerging Educare community partnerships; and

..Support and promote a vision to better prepare disadvantaged children to succeed in school and in life.

*Quality Staffing:* In order to meet the nationally-recognized Educare model requirements for quality, lead classroom teachers hold bachelor degrees and receive coach/mentoring support from a master level teacher.

*Family and Parent Support:* Family support staff conduct a full range of activities with families, adapting to the schedules and life setting of parents. The family support staff has a specific and intentional role in supporting the parent:child relationship and the parent's role in their child's school and educational experiences, the development of relationships with community providers who can assist families in receiving necessary supports, and connecting families to those supports.

*Link to Higher Education Degree Programs:* ECM is designed to serve as a state-of-the-art professional development and resource center for child care professionals, as well as a teaching lab for students seeking a degree in early childhood. It provides multiple opportunities for parents and staff, college students and practitioners to observe and participate in high quality service and innovations in practice.

*Child academic, social/emotional achievement and family engagement* are driven by an interdisciplinary teacher and family support model that is strengthened by ongoing assessment and evaluation. Teachers actively engage in observation, reflection, shared intentional planning, and receive feedback from master teachers.

**Program evaluation** is conducted by the University of Maine at Orono and Frank Porter Graham. All children who attend full-day, full-year programming are in the evaluation cohort. Program components, professional development supports and implementation activities are guided by evaluation findings.





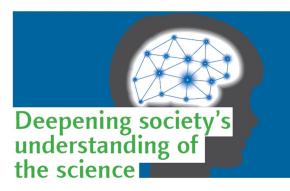
Science and research clearly reveals what is needed to promote school readiness for children in poverty. Yet, public policies and funding priorities often lag behind. In states across the country, Educare centers are helping to strengthen public investments in highquality, research-based programs.

Educare is a *platform for long-term policy change*, offering a tangible way to show policy makers and other opinion leaders the kind of early learning environment all children deserve, but specifically for children at risk of school failure. Educare shows compelling evidence of what can happen when you raise quality standards across birth-to-five programs and push for policy and system changes to ensure that public dollars are targeted.

The Educare model is designed to bring *to bear the best research and evaluation* 

*for short and long-term quality assurance*, serve as a state and regional replication model program for meeting the highest level of quality programming to children and families, and inspire local, state, and national leaders to change policy based on positive child and family outcomes.

In partnership with the Educare Learning Network, ECM and state and local planning and governance members, have a seat at the national table to advance policies related to the expansion of quality early care and learning to ensure the federal government with its state partners move towards improved standards, resource coordination and supports for "exemplary" programs.



More than 150 well-regarded scientific studies from around the globe demonstrate that "starting early" has significant short-term and long-term effects on a child's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. What happens in the earliest weeks, months and years of life shapes how well children will do as students, as workers and as parents themselves.

Investing in science remains key to the success of the Buffett Early

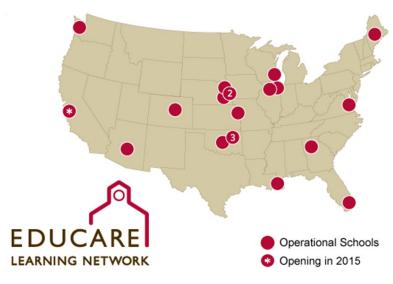
Childhood Fund's Integrated Strategy not because we need to prove that starting early matters. Rather, we invest in science because early childhood practice that is not driven by science is likely to be ineffective. Science without real-world application to practice is of little value. And policy developed without being informed by practice and informed by science is counter-productive.

Buffett Early Childhood Fund support for the **Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University**, led by Dr. Jack Shonkoff, promotes the widespread dissemination of brain research as well as implications for practice and policy development.

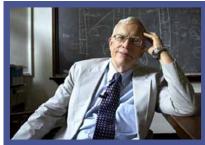
In part, Dr. Shonkoff and other experts with the Harvard Center educate policymakers, business leaders, practitioners and others about the latest advances in brain science and the impact of early adversity on children's develop"What the science is telling us now is how experience gets into the brain as it's developing its basic architecture and how it gets into the cardiovascular system and the immune system"

ment—including the existence of "toxic stress," which is the kind of deep, prolonged stress young children growing up in impoverished circumstances experience when the parents and adults around them are unable or unprepared to offer a buffer of emotional support.

Dr. Shonkoff was quoted recently as telling author David Bornstein in a New York Times essay. "These insights provide an opportunity to think about new ways we might try to reduce the academic achievement gap and health disparities—and not just do the same old things." The Harvard team also educates the public about the importance of developing the most complex of human abilities, "executive function."



Executive function is the brain's "air traffic control" system, built over time with more complex skills building upon simpler skills. When a 7-9 month old develops the ability to remember that unseen objects are still there (picture the toy hidden beneath the baby blanket) and learns to put two actions together in a sequence (the baby pushes the blanket and grasps the toy), the child is laying the groundwork for working memory skills that will serve the child throughout school and adulthood. Similarly, when a 6-month



### Spreading the Word: Promoting Social Mobility

Investing in high-quality early education "is really a family strategy. This shouldn't be a Democrat versus Republican conflict. This should really be something that should resonate with people who talk a lot about family values and also people who

are interested in reducing inequality," Dr. James Heckman explained on a February 2013 broadcast of the *Rachel Maddow Show*. "This is one of the rare public policies that has two features: it's economically productive, it survives very stringent analyses, and at the same time it reduces inequality and promotes social mobility."

old learns not to touch something he is instructed not to touch (this is called rudimentary response inhibition), the child is building a foundation for inhibitory control that, in adulthood, will help him exhibit consistent selfcontrol and develop situationally appropriate responses (for example, resisting the urge to say something socially inappropriate, or resisting a tit-for-tat response).

And when a 9-11 month old child develops the ability to seek alternate methods to retrieve objects beyond directly reaching for what's in her view, the child is developing the cognitive flexibility that, in adulthood, will enable her to revise her actions and plans in response to changing circumstances.

Most recently, the Harvard Center also has been exploring what they're calling Frontiers of Innovation, the ongoing search to identify positive outcomes for young children and families. "To get breakthrough outcomes for kids, you must transform the lives of those who care for them," Dr. Shonkoff notes. In part, they are working with a range of entities—including the state of Washington Department of Early Learning, New Haven MOMS Partnership, University of Oregon/Oregon Social Learning Center, and Crittenden Women's Union—to develop a learning network of practitioners and researchers. Together, they are focusing on finding effective ways to coach, train, model and practice the host of skills essential to successful parenting and caregiving.

**Dr. James Heckman**, based at the University of Chicago and winner of the 2000 Nobel Prize for Economic

Sciences, emphasizes the importance of developing socalled "soft skills" as well as intellectual development, describes how early learning begets later learning, and heralds a 10 percent return on investments in highquality early care and education. He and his team are now further analyzing the potential return in terms of costs and savings related to health by adults who experienced adverse conditions in their earliest years of life with no intervention to buffer the negative consequences.

In a September 2013 presentation to the Ready Nation National Business Leader Summit on Early Childhood Investment, Dr. Heckman noted that a major root cause of inequality is a disadvantaged early childhood. And Dr. Heckman has added his voice—and the credibility of his analysis—to budget debates nationally and in states, noting that America's advantage will come from helping the disadvantaged.

"It is a rare public-policy initiative that promotes fairness and social justice and at the same time promotes productivity in the economy and in society at large," Dr. Heckman states. "Investing in disadvantaged young children is such a policy. Yet, one key resolution to our economic problems remains the same: investing in quality early childhood development for disadvantaged children from birth to age five."

Source: Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Investing in the Early Years, "Together 2014 Outlook and 2013 Annual Report," Pages 24-26, March 2014

A child's experiences and environmental influences can affect his or her health well into adulthood.

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#### **Research and Results**

*Literacy Skills.* Children who begin school with prior knowledge and skills in a variety of language and literacy areas are more likely to become successful readers in elementary school. This is significant because children who struggle as readers at the end of first grade are usually still poor readers at the end of  $4^{th}$  grade. Reading problems can be prevented through early detection and immediate intervention. There is a strong relationship between vocabulary and reading comprehension. Educare's child assessments in the areas of vocabulary, phonological awareness and alphabet knowledge (letter and beginning sounds), rhyming, and concept of the words in text reveal:

*Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test.* This test measures English with a mean score of 100 considered a "good score." **ECM:** 106

*Classrooms of high quality.* Quality early childhood programs have been linked to immediate, positive developmental outcomes, as well as long-term positive academic performance. The Classroom Assessment Scoring Scale (CLASS) (score range is 0-7) is used to measure classroom quality. ECM rates at 6.3 in Emotional Support; 5.5 in Classroom Organization; and 3.7 in Instructional Practices.

*School Readiness.* School readiness skills of young children are assessed in six subscales of the Bracken School Readiness Assessment: colors, letters, numbers/ counting, sizes, comparisons and shapes. The range that is termed "average" is 86-114, with 100 being the mean score. **ECM:** 97.2.







Results from a longitudinal study of Educare sites around the country indicate that earlier is better. Children living in poverty who enter Educare programs at age 1 do not experience an achievement gap upon kindergarten entry and are on par with children from other socioeconomic groups.

Educare Central Maine collects data and conducts comprehensive child assessments for children in full-day, full year programming. Focus areas are social-emotional development, language and literacy skills, and math. The process is designed to describe and document the progress of the children and families, as well as inform program improvement efforts, individualize practices to the needs of the children and families and to satisfy accountability requirements set by funding agencies.

In conjunction with the Educare Learning Network, ECM incorporates the latest findings from academic research and lessons learned from the day-to-day experiences with young children, families and staff.

Local evaluation and program directors from each Educare school are partners in decision-making about the evaluation design. A technical work group of experts provides advice and links with the latest science in a variety of domains that impact early care and education work. Local evaluators collect data at their site, using research based, well-known assessments, observations, and interview techniques. Frank Porter Graham processes and summarizes data across sites and ensures that high standards for training and reliability of data collection are maintained.

*Continuity of service.* Continuity of care in the early years of life is an essential component of effective, quality early care and education. Often children and families experience numerous adult caregivers before the child enters kindergarten. Lack of care continuity disrupts child development and studies have found that multiple and changeable caregivers for infants and toddlers is associated with lower intelligence scores, poorer social relationships and more insecure attachment with mothers. Trust and relationship building are critical for both the children and their parents during the early learning years.



#### **Research and Results**

**Resiliency.** Resilience is important because it is the human capacity to face, overcome and be strengthened by or even transformed by the adversities of life. Children from low-income families need to become resilient to overcome the adversities they face. They cannot do it alone. A child's ability to form positive responses to adverse childhood experiences depends upon the quantity and quality of protective factors. How parents and other caregivers respond to situations, and how they help a child to respond, separates those adults who promote resilience in their children from those who destroy resilience or send confusing messages that both promote and inhibit resilience. Educare staff is trained to promote resiliency in children and families. High protective factors equate to lower behavior concerns. In Spring 2013, these results were:



*ECM Protective Factors:* 65.6th percentile (higher percentile indicates more protective factors). A lack of protective factors was a concern for only 4.9% of children.

*Behavioral Concerns:* 56.6th percentile (higher percentile indicates more behavioral concerns). Behavioral concerns were an issue for 18% of children.

**Parent engagement.** Parent engagement in their child's learning is intricately linked to a child's school readiness. Research shows that greater parent involvement in a child's learning positively affects the child's school performance, including higher academic achievement. Simple interaction, such as reading to children, leads to greater reading knowledge and skills. Parent involvement outside of home, such as participation in literacy events and/ or classroom activities relates to their reading, general knowledge, and mathematics knowledge and skills.

*ECM:* 100% of parents read twice weekly; and 78% read daily to their child. *All parents* participate in other program activities.

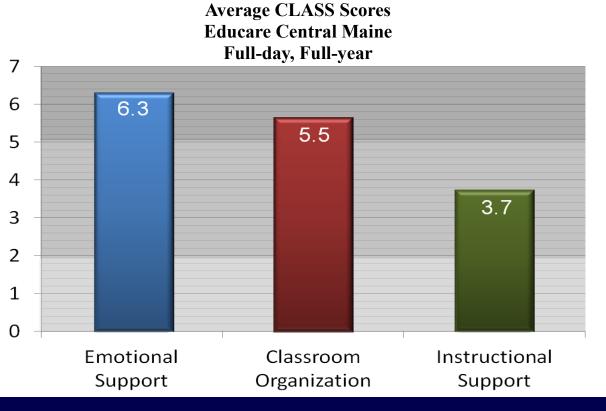
Children leave Educare prepared for kindergarten, excited about learning, confident in their own abilities, and ready to succeed.





The **Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS)** is a system for observing and assessing the quality of interactions between teachers and children in preschool classrooms. The CLASS examines social-emotional and instructional interactions that contribute to children's social competence and academic achievement. The CLASS measure includes 10 subscales organized into three domains: (1) Emotional Support, (2) Classroom Organization, and (3) Instructional Support. Each subscale is scored on a 7-point scale, with a score of 1 and 2 considered to be in the low-range; 3, 4, and 5 are mid-range; and 6 and 7 are high range.

CLASS Dimensions			
<b>Emotional Support</b>	<b>Classroom Organization</b>	Instructional Support	
Positive Climate	Behavior Management	Concept Development	
Negative Climate	Productivity	Quality of Feedback	
Teacher Sensitivity	Instructional	Language Modeling	
<b>Regard for Child Perspective</b>	Learning Formats		





### A parent's story...

"Being a single mom of a four year old I have learned very quickly that nothing comes easy. For everything she needs in life I have worked hard to get," says Megan. Megan is mom to four year old Hayden who is enrolled in Educare Central Maine. When Megan was just 17 years old she found out she was pregnant so she completed both her junior and senior year in high school in just one year. She did because she wanted to be able to support herself and child and knew she needed a quality job.

"I knew I had to take care of her (Hayden) now, so upon graduating high school I knew I wanted to

graduate from college and enrolled immediately to KVCC, " says Megan. Hayden was born in June and that fall Megan started KVCC. Hayden was then enrolled at Educare.

"Since we started our relationship with the program a lot of life has happened - changing jobs, schools and family issues are a few examples," Megan says with a tired grin. "Through everything I went through Hayden's teachers were always there, to not only support me through it, but to also support Hayden through it. Her teachers have become a family away from home for us," added Megan.

Megan has been able to use programs like the Child Care Subsidy through the Department of Human Services to help with the child care cost for Hayden. These programs made it possible for Megan and Hayden to grow as a family in a healthy supportive way. Hayden is thriving and Megan is working. If it weren't for such programs she wonders how she would have been able to do it. "I am so thankful," Megan said with a smile as Hayden gives her a big hug, waves goodbye and says –"I love you Mom."





#### **Parent Engagement**

is a cornerstone of service delivery. Parent involvement opportunities include decision making, program planning and evaluation, Policy Council, parent committees, training and networking opportunities, comprehensive health services for their children, and curriculum planning. Over 200 parents volunteered their services to ECM this year and/or participated in goal setting, home visits, planning, training or direct participation in their child's classroom or family childcare home. ECM promotes the involvement of the whole family and coordinates specific activities to encourage male involvement.

#### **Parent Enrichment**

A variety of education, social connection, and service opportunities were offered to families. Some of the highlights include: Conscious Discipline training, Fathers United Now, Head Start Goes to Augusta, relationship building workshops, career counseling services, and cooking classes.

### **Parent: Child Activities and Events**

In order to support parents in their important role as children's first and best educators, family events and activities are offered throughout the year. A favorite event for most families is an annual art show that honors children's creativity and emerging artistic skill. Other highlights include literacy and math nights, family meal times, field trips and fall festivals.

### **Policy Council: Shared Decision Making**

The Policy Council is a group of parents who work with program administrators and the Board of Directors to guide all areas of services. The Council, comprised by the majority of parents, provides the opportunity to participate in policy and decision making arenas of the program such as annual budgets, program planning, operations, personnel and policies and procedures.





Educare advocates for families, works within the community to help resolve issues, and more importantly, empowers the families to help themselves.



# 2013 Family Survey Summary

The family survey is an important component in the self assessment process as it gives management and staff a glimpse into parents' perceptions of the program. Overall, the results revealed that parents feel ECM is providing excellent customer service and children and families are receiving comprehensive, quality services.

- Over 97% of families report they feel they have a good relationship with program staff.
- 98% of families feel that the program provides nutritious meals and snacks and works with the family to meet their child's nutritional needs.
- Affordable family activities, affordable housing, transportation and job hunting/ keeping were the areas identified that present the most identified challenges.
- 97% of families feel their child has the opportunity to use a variety of materials (i.e. age appropriate toys, materials, etc.) that meet his/her individual needs while attending the program.
- 95% of families feel comfortable letting staff know about concerns and work together to find a solution that works for both.
- Families report that they are there are their child's first teacher and play an important role in their child's education.

• Over 95% of parents feel comfortable recommending Educare Central Maine to others.

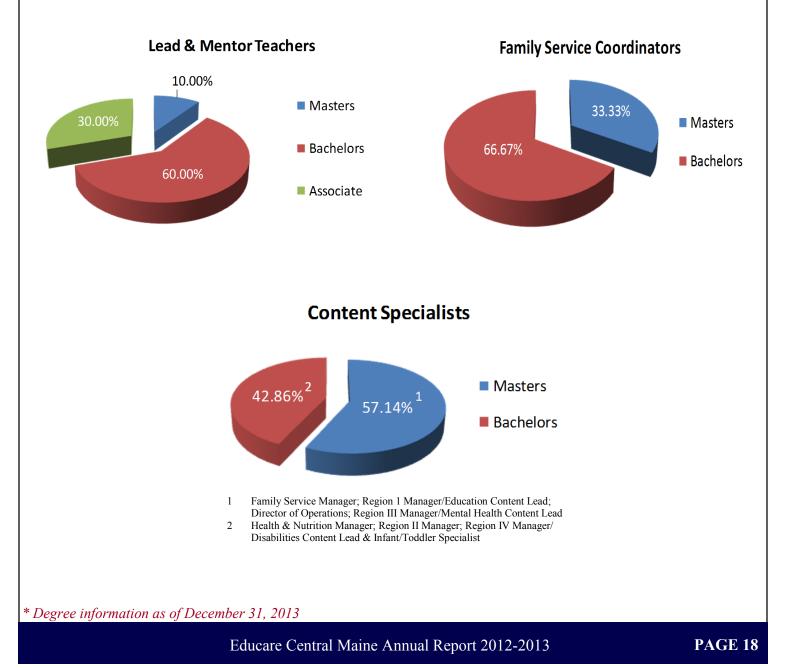






## **Staff Qualifications & Development**

Professional Development is a major focus within ECM. All preschool classrooms have a teacher with a minimum of a bachelor's degree. Staff discuss professional development needs during his/her orientation period, and reviews/revises this plan ongoing and as part of his/her annual evaluation process.





# Collaboration

# Highlights for 2012-2013

### Local Partnerships:

- <u>Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter</u> Through the Educare & Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter partnership, Educare served 47 homeless children and their parents living at the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter with United Way and Maine Community Foundation funding support. Educare staff facilitated parent/child playgroups, offered parents strategies and supports regarding child development, securing permanent quality early care and education, and assistance in accessing a variety of community resources.
- Kennebec Behavioral Health, Waterville Pediatrics, and Community Dental - Educare partners with health providers to offer onsite mental health screenings and intervention, dental screenings and other health services for children and parents.
- <u>Workforce Collaboration</u> Educare partnered with the newly formed collaborative to seek enhanced, targeted skill-building opportunities for Educare's underemployed parents.
- <u>LC Bates Museum</u> Educare partners with LC Bates educators to provide augmented, hands-on science activities and education within the classroom settings.



- Harold Alfond Foundation
  - 59 children received scholarship support from the Harold Alfond Foundation. The scholarships ensured that children received continuity in caregiving which is "critical" to healthy growth and development.
  - Partner with Educare to provide Tuition Scholarship for low-income and slightly above low-income parents, who are working and/or are enrolled in educational programs to move towards improved family stability.
  - Educare promotes and assists parents to enroll their children in the HAF College for ME Scholarship program.(<u>http://www.500forbaby.org</u>)
- <u>Barrel's Market and Skowhegan Grist Mill & Market</u> -Educare partners on nutritional cooking classes for parents and buys locally-grown foods from which to augment the 83,000 nutritious meals served in 2013.
- <u>Waterville Rotary</u> Educare helped secure funding, and designed and conducted "Rhoda Reads" Early Literacy training to Rotarians, who are now deployed to read to young children throughout the community.
- <u>Kidz b Kidz Colby</u> Partnered with Colby students leading the Kidz b Kidz Colby program in which Colby students strive to teach the Educare children about empathy and the importance of helping others through the creation of art.

#### **Statewide Partnerships - Educare Beyond the Walls:**

- Maine Shared Services Alliance. The Maine Shared Services Alliance, being led and managed by ECM, is currently under development and whose purpose is to improve the financial stability of providers and improve the quality of early care and education services as a result. Development is funded by the John T. Gorman Foundation, the Davis Family Foundation, Jane's Trust, The Samuel Cohen Foundation, and the Betterment Fund, among others. (http://www.sharedservicesforme.org)
- Elevate Maine. Is an emerging statewide public/ private partnership with the Maine Early Learning Investment Group (MELIG), a group of Maine CEOs has chosen Educare to be their implementation partner to replicate Educare's direct service, parent engagement, and professional development model in three high-need communities in Maine based upon funding capacity. To learn more go to: (www.melig.org)
- Common Kindergarten Screening Pilot Now in its second year, Educare is leading the Common Kindergarten Screening Pilot with five school districts in Maine to research and Implement an evidence-based common screening process for school-readiness benchmarks statewide.



### Nutrition

Meals and snacks are provided to meet the nutritional needs of young children and support the child's physical health and well being. Meal times and nutrition activities are planned that foster a positive learning environment, supports child development and promotes school readiness. There are many opportunities for families to join a variety of activities that promote nutrition education and provide nutritious meals and snacks helping families establish good eating habits, including cooking classes, nutrition displays and activities promoting locally grown foods and farmer's markets.

### I Am Moving, I Am Learning

*I Am Moving, I Am Learning (IMIL)* is a proactive approach for addressing childhood obesity in children. IMIL seeks to increase daily moderate to vigorous physical activity, improve the quality of movement activities intentionally planned and facilitated by adults, and promote healthy food choices every day.

Choosy is a role model who encourages healthy decision making and wants to help prevent childhood obesity. Choosy assists parents, teachers, and health professionals by supplying consistent health messages and recognizes that preferences for food and physical activity are "learned" from others early in life. Choosy also helps grown ups to intentionally facilitate movement and nutrition experiences

of young children so that healthy preferences are reinforced early and often. Choosy's name is tied to his behavior, and his message is simple: *Be Choosy Be Healthy*.



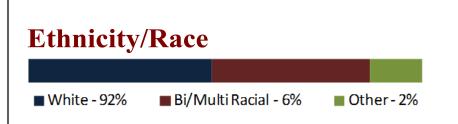
www.choosykids.com



"Together, we make the difference."

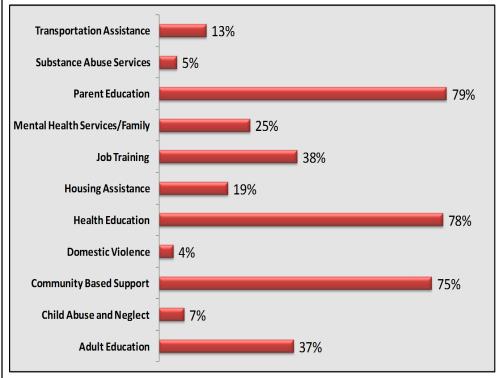


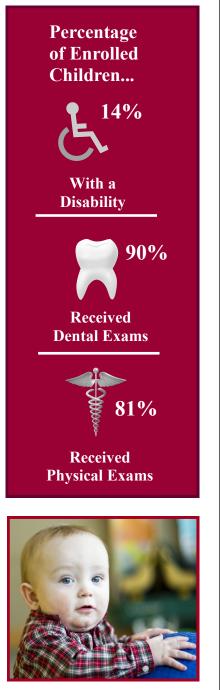
ECM enrollment provided services to 202 children; of which 170 were preschool age (3-5) and 32 were infants and toddlers (0-3). One hundred twenty five (125) children were enrolled in Head Start; 34 in Early Head Start.



### **Family Services**

Educare Central Maine assists parents in their efforts to improve the quality of life for themselves and their children. The following services/referrals were made for families in 2012-2013:

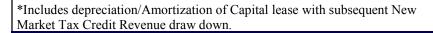






### Educare Central Maine Statement of Revenues & Expenditures 10/1/2012 - 9/30/2013

Revenue:			
Grants and contracts	\$1,676,345		
Program revenue	\$1,149,098		
Other revenue (HAF Scholarship, Bingham Tufts, NMTC Interest, etc)	\$519,980		
Total Revenue	\$3,345,423		
Expenses:			
Personnel	\$1,879,328		
Payroll Taxes & Employee Benefits	\$546,918		
Staff Development	\$35,098		
Travel	\$18,406		
Office Costs	\$17,813		
Telecommunications	\$3,841		
Contract Services	\$161,054		
Materials & Supplies	\$141,018		
Indirect/Administration	\$433,694		
Other	\$16,284		
Facilities - Administration*	\$275,396		
Facilities - Other	\$158,104		
Total Expenses	\$3,686,398		
Net Revenue over Expenditures*	(\$341,531)		











# Board of Directors





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> **Eric Haley, Secretary** Superintendent, AOS #92

Kathryn Colfer Director of Child & Family Services/ Educare Central Maine

**Bill Alfond** *President, William and Joan Alfond Foundation* 

Michael Burke Vice President, Buffett Early Childhood Fund