

**Ensuring school readiness for children birth to age five.** 





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# A parent's story...

Jesse Damron has his arms full when dropping his children, Jayce, almost 2 and Eliya, 4, at Educare Central Maine. Not only does Jesse and his wife Becca have Jayce and Eliya, but they also have 3 older children to get off to school - all the while getting themselves off to work and higher education coursework. Jesse and Becca definitely know a lot about having an 'armful'.

Just recently Jesse completed his EMT (Emergency Medical Technician) course while also working. He says, "he is not done with school yet and aims to become a Paramedic,"

and already has courses lined up. Becca works full time and recently accepted a promotion at work.

Jesse credits Educare Central Maine with making it all possible. "By having Educare it has enabled us to work our jobs and go to school. We trust and know the kids are safe," he says with gratitude. "The level of care here is unbelievable – it feels like a small family child care center but offers everything you want for your children."

He points out the teachers and staff all know his children and he knows they genuinely care. He cited an example of often when the kids leave at the end of the day the custodian called out his son's name and said "good night." Jayce responds by giving the custodian a big hug. "I always know when I leave them at Educare, they're in good hands," he grinned.





# 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 gross-motor 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 210 mostly low-income children from birth to age 5. Of these children, 108 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 well-baby care.
- Extensive staff training and development programs at the on-site training center.





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:

..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.

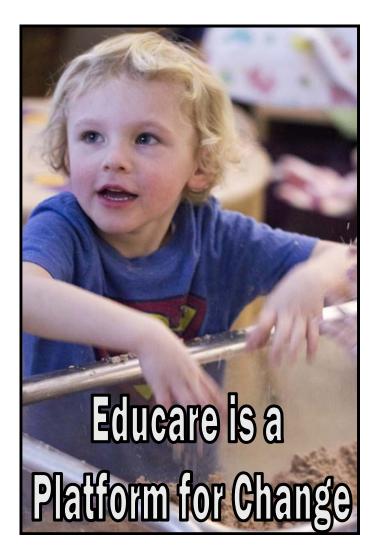
**Family and Parent Support:** Family support staff conduct a full range of activities with families, adapting to the schedules and life setting of parents. The family support staff has a specific and intentional role in supporting the parent:child relationship and the parent's role in their child's 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 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 high-quality, research-based programs.

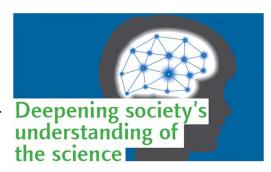
Educare is a *platform for long-term policy change*, offering a tangible way to show policy makers and other opinion leaders the kind of early learning environment all children deserve, but specifically for children at risk of school failure. Educare shows compelling evidence of what can happen when 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.

"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" Buffett Early Childhood Fund support for the **Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University**, led by Dr. Jack Shonkoff, promotes the wide-spread 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 development - 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





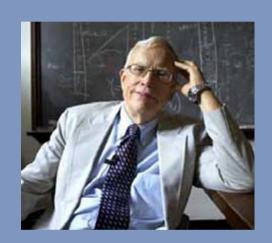
old learns not to touch something he is instructed not to touch (this is called rudimentary response inhibition), the child is building a foundation for inhibitory control that, in adulthood, will help him exhibit consistent self-control

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.

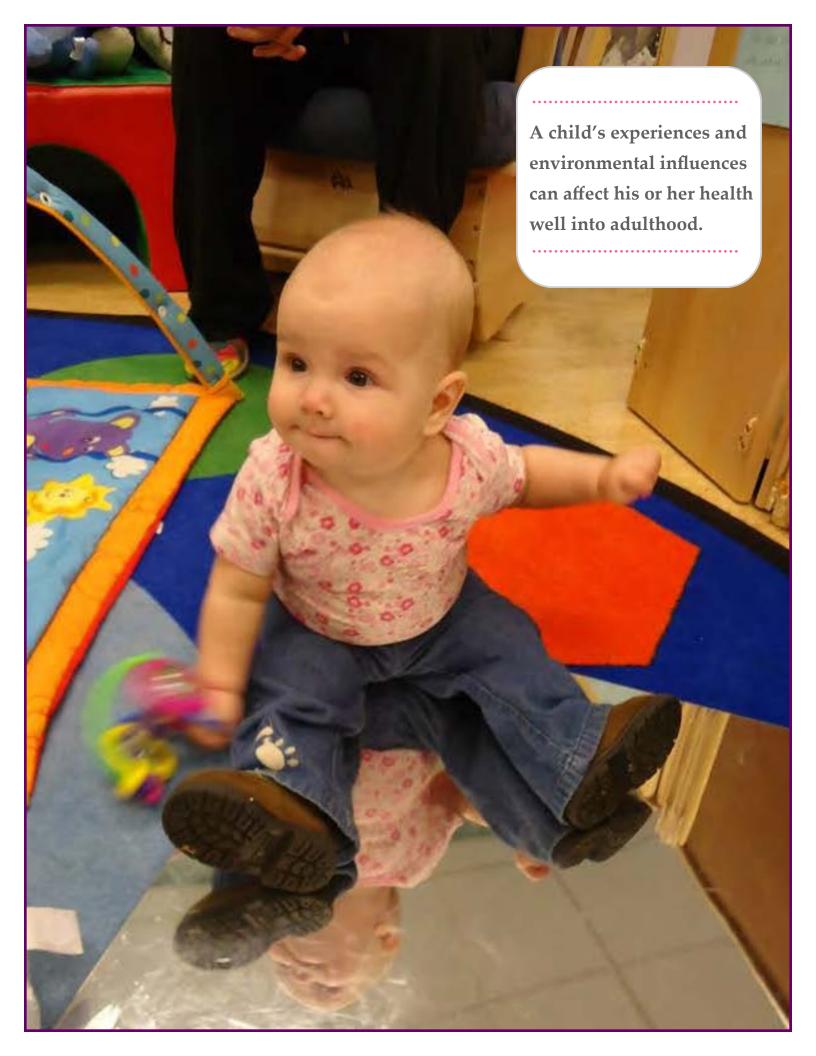
Dr. James Heckman emphasizes the importance of developing so called "soft skills" as well as intellectual development, describes how early learning begets later learning, and heralds a 10 percent return on investments in high-quality early care and education. He and his team are now further analyzing 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.



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

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.

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





#### **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<sup>th</sup> 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:** 108.5

of high Classrooms 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 6.5 in Emotional Support; 5.7 in Classroom Organization; and 4.3 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: 96.6.







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.

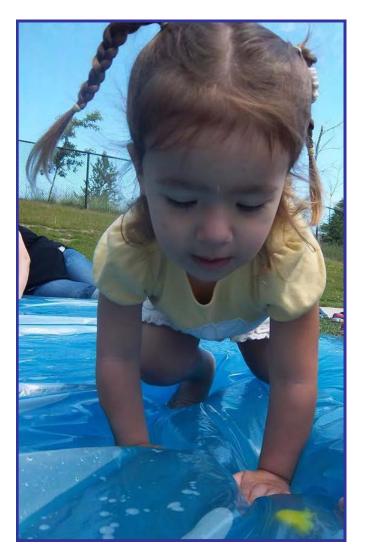
Local evaluation and program directors from each Educare school are partners in decision-making about the evaluation design. A technical work group of experts provides advice and links with the latest science in a variety of domains that impact early care and education work. Local evaluators collect 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



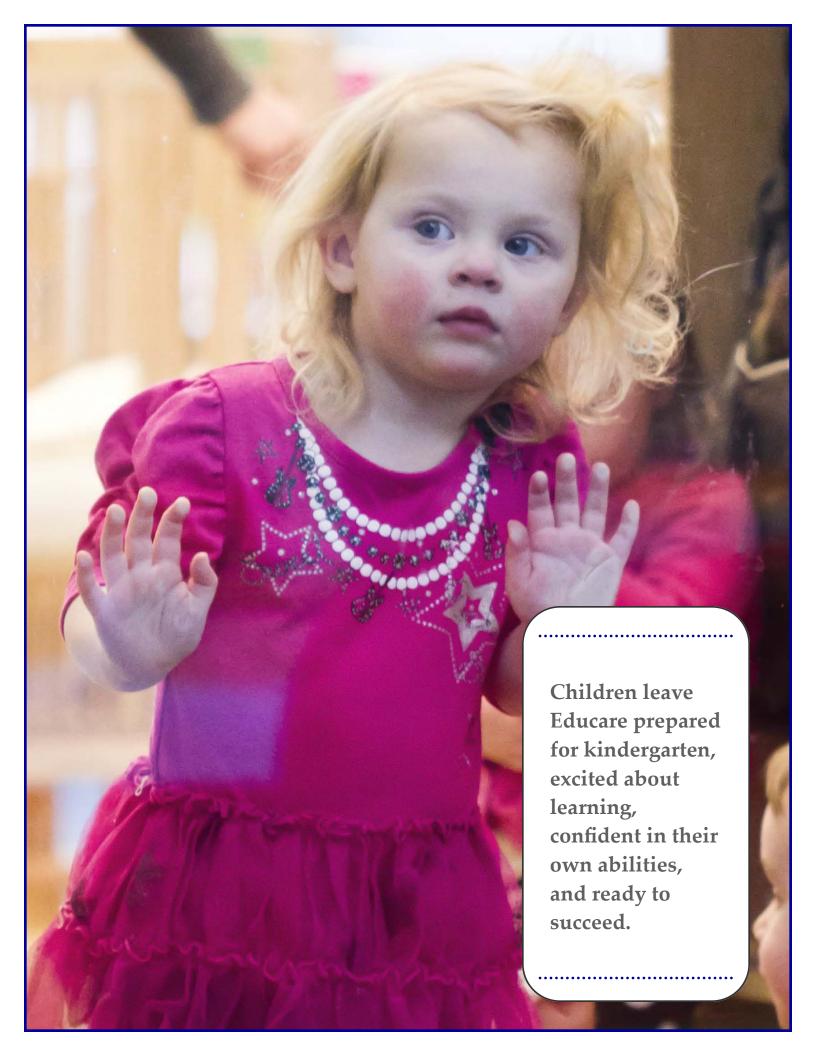
in children and families. High protective factors equate to lower behavior concerns. In Spring 2014, these results were:

**ECM** Protective Factors: A lack of protective factors was a concern for only 10.2% of children.

**Behavioral Concerns:** Behavioral concerns were an issue for 23% 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.





### **Community Collaboration Highlights**

- Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter and Kennebec Behavioral Health (KBH) - Educare Central Maine (ECM) partnered with Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter to offer playgroup opportunities for 30 children and their families experiencing homelessness. In addition to the socialization opportunity for children, the playgroup facilitator offered parents strategies to support healthy child development, developmental screenings and referrals for intervention services, connections with Early Head Start and Head Start enrollment opportunities, and assistance in accessing a variety of community resources. To further support families in their parenting role, ECM staff partnered with a KBH psychologist to facilitate parent workshops focusing on positive guidance techniques held at the Mid-Maine Homeless Shelter. Funding from the United Way of Mid-Maine. The Davis Foundation and the Griffin-Guerrette Charitable Giving Fund contributed to these outreach efforts to support families experiencing homelessness.
- Kennebec Behavioral Health, Waterville Pediatrics, and Community Dental - ECM partners with health providers to offer onsite mental health screenings and intervention, dental screenings and other health services for children and parents.
- Workforce Collaboration ECM is partnering with the collaborative to enhance targeted skill-building opportunities for ECM and KVCAP's Child & Family Services parents and clients, who are underemployed.
- <u>Project 2020</u> ECM management and staff are providing expertise and guidance for a communitywide 4th Grade Level Reading project in Waterville.
- Barrel's Market and Skowhegan Grist Mill & Market -ECM partners on nutritional cooking classes for parents and buys locally-grown foods from which to augment the over 260 nutritious meals served daily in 2014.
- Waterville Rotary Through the "Rhoda Reads Early Literacy" partnership, 34 Rotarians were trained and deployed to read to young children at ECM and throughout the community.

- Harold Alfond Foundation
  - ECM partners with The Harold Alfond Foundation to provide tuition scholarships to 69 low-income and slightly above low-income parents, who are working and/or are enrolled in educational programs to move towards improved family stability.
  - ECM promotes and assists parents to enroll their children in the HAF College for ME Scholarship program.(http://www.500forbaby.org)
- World of Difference (WOD) With support from the Lunder Foundation, ECM staff and the parents of ECM children participated in the WOD training, which is designed to help adults interacting with children, incorporate anti-bias and instill tolerance and diversity into daily activities and conversations.
- ♦ <u>Kidz b Kidz Colby</u> ECM partners with Colby students leading the Kidz b Kidz Colby program through which Colby students teach the ECM children about empathy and the importance of helping others through the creation of art. ECM children presented a quilt (photos below) made from squares of their art to a seriously ill child being treated at The Barbara Bush Children's Hospital through the magic of technology.





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

- CareQuilt ECM and KVCAP were awarded a \$6 million federal grant over five years, matched with \$670,000 in private funds to serve additional low-income children and families and raise the quality and scope of instructional practices of 20 providers in both center-based and family child care settings in northern Kennebec, Somerset, Piscataquis, and Penobscot communities. Coaching, training and technical assistance supports for providers will include effective family engagement and comprehensive child services to meet or exceed Head Start and quality child care standards.
- ♦ Elevate Maine Elevate Maine is a statewide public/private partnership with the Maine Early Learning Investment Group (MELIG), which is a group of Maine CEO's who have chosen ECM 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. MELIG is investing in the CareQuilt project mentioned above. To learn more go to: www.melig.org
- Maine Shared Services Alliance (MSSA) The Maine Shared Services Alliance engaged over 200 providers statewide to improve their financial stability and improve the quality of early care and education services. MSSA is funded by the John T. Gorman Family Foundation, The Davis Foundation, Jane's Trust, The Samuel Cohen Foundation Fund, and The Betterment among others. (www.sharedservicesforme.org)
- Common Kindergarten Screening Pilot ECM led a two-year pilot and published the Common Kindergarten Screening Pilot Report, in which five school districts in Maine collaborated to research and implement an evidence-based common screening process for school-readiness benchmarks statewide. You can download and read the full report at: <a href="https://www.educarecentralmaine.org">www.educarecentralmaine.org</a>









#### **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, 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.





# **Healthy Nutrition**

Forty-one percent (41%) of families worry about food running out. Twenty-six percent have actually run out in the past year.

We all know that children need healthy meals and snacks. In order to meet the nutritional needs of young children and support the child's physical health and well being, Educare Central Maine provides healthy breakfasts, lunches and snacks. 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.



Thirty-eight percent (38%) of parents with children enrolled at Educare Central Maine are continuing their own education. Further, 85% hope their child(ren) will get at least a Bachelors degree.











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



#### **Enrollment**

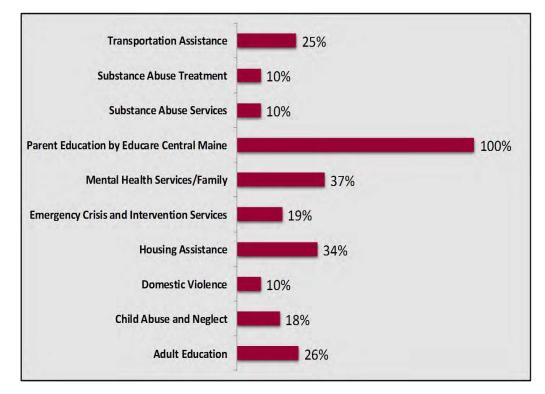
ECM enrollment provided services to 210 children; of which 170 were preschool age (3-5) and 40 were infants and toddlers (0-3). One hundred twenty five (125) children were enrolled in Head Start; 35 in Early Head Start.

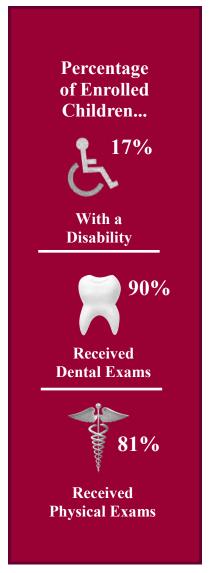
# Ethnicity/Race



# **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 2013-2014:









# **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.



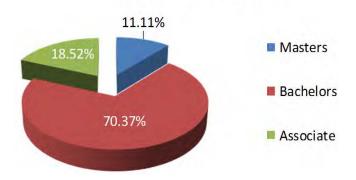
Over 97% of families feel they have the opportunity to influence their child's learning and development.



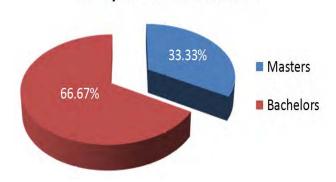
# **Staff Qualifications & Development**

Professional development is a major focus. All preschool classrooms have a teacher with a minimum of a bachelor's degree and Department of Education certification. Eighty percent (80%) of Infant/Toddler classrooms have a teacher with a minimum of a bachelor's degree, with the remaining 20% an Associate's degree. Staff discuss professional development needs during his/her orientation period, and reviews/revises individual professional plans as part of his/her annual evaluation process.





#### **Family Service Coordinators**



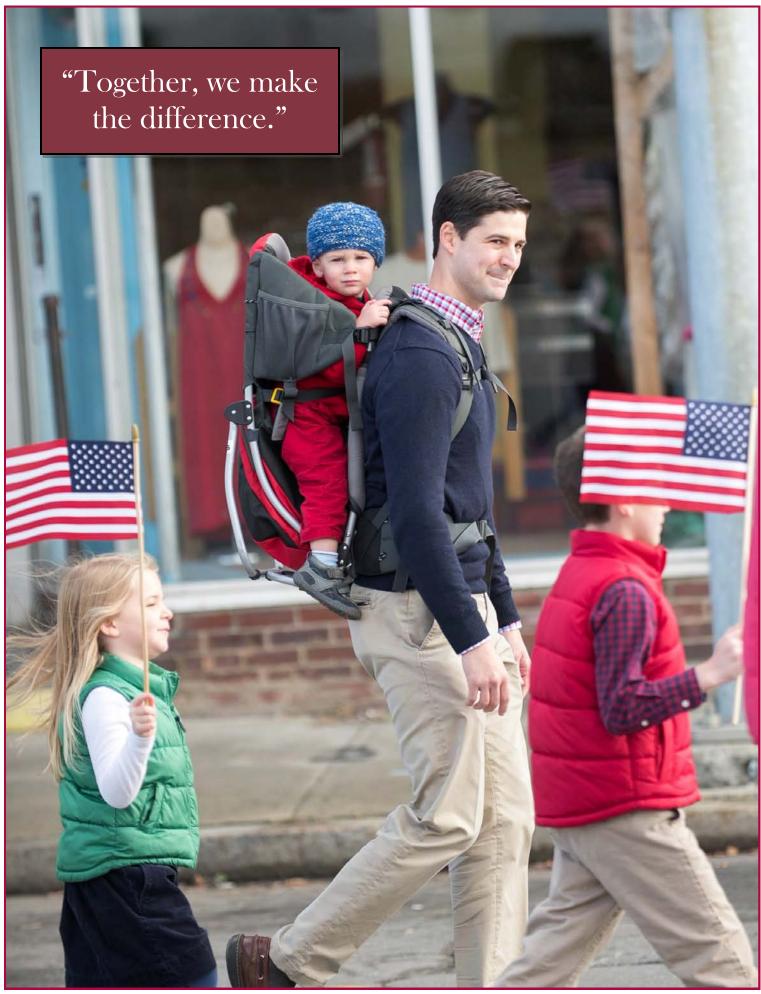
# Content Specialists

(Education, Infant/Toddler, Health & Nutrition, Family Services, Mental Health, and Disabilities)





<sup>\*</sup> Degree information as of December 31, 2014



Nick Isgro, Mayor, City of Waterville. Photo courtesy of Chris Bolduc Photography.



# **Educare Central Maine Statement of Revenues & Expenditures** 10/1/2013 - 9/30/2014

Revenue:	
Grants and contracts	\$1,887,231
Program revenue	\$1,611,222
Other revenue (Harold Alfond Foundation Scholarship, Bingham Tufts, New Market Tax Credits Interest, etc.)	\$263,974
Total Revenue	\$3,762,427

Expenses:	
Personnel	\$1,977,786
Payroll Taxes & Employee Benefits	\$608,447
Staff Development	\$26,630
Travel	\$15,551
Office Costs	\$24,383
Telecommunications	\$3,938
Contract Services	\$172,001
Materials & Supplies	\$161,939
Indirect/Administration	\$454,891
Other	\$32,306
Facilities - Administration	\$275,409
Facilities - Other	\$167,594
<b>Total Expenses</b>	\$3,920,875







<sup>\*</sup>Includes depreciation/Amortization of Capital lease with subsequent New Market Tax Credit Revenue draw down.