

Educare of Lincoln Evaluation Report 2016-2017



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Executive Summary

Educare of Lincoln. Educare of Lincoln opened in March 2013, and is currently a collaborative effort between the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF), Lincoln Public Schools (LPS), and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). Educare of Lincoln is part of the larger, national network of 22 Educare Centers located throughout the US. Educare builds on Head Start and Early Head Start.

Educare is designed to give students in poverty an improved chance for success in school and life by providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five. Educare's program model is specifically designed to help these at-risk students and their families overcome barriers. Educare's mission is to ensure that these students receive the services they need to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn on par with their more economically advantaged peers.

The Evaluation of Educare of Lincoln is provided by the College of Education and Human Sciences, University of Nebraska, Lincoln, as the Local Evaluation Partner (LEP). Data collectors work in conjunction with LEPs from other Educare programs and the National Evaluation Partner (NEP), Frank Porter Graham Institute, University of North Carolina. The evaluation is designed to answer to following questions:

Who are Educare of Lincoln Families and Children?

The Educare of Lincoln families are diverse and busy, comprised of many immigrants, non-English speaking families, presenting both challenges and opportunities. With 38% of Educare of Lincoln's parents born outside of the U.S. and 18% of children's first language differing from English, the typical classroom in Educare of Lincoln is both diverse and unique. The majority (51%) of Educare of Lincoln's families are single-parent households with an average of three children per household. Of the 136 children Educare of Lincoln served in the 2016-2017 school year, 74% were reported to be in excellent or very good health, and 26% in good to fair health.

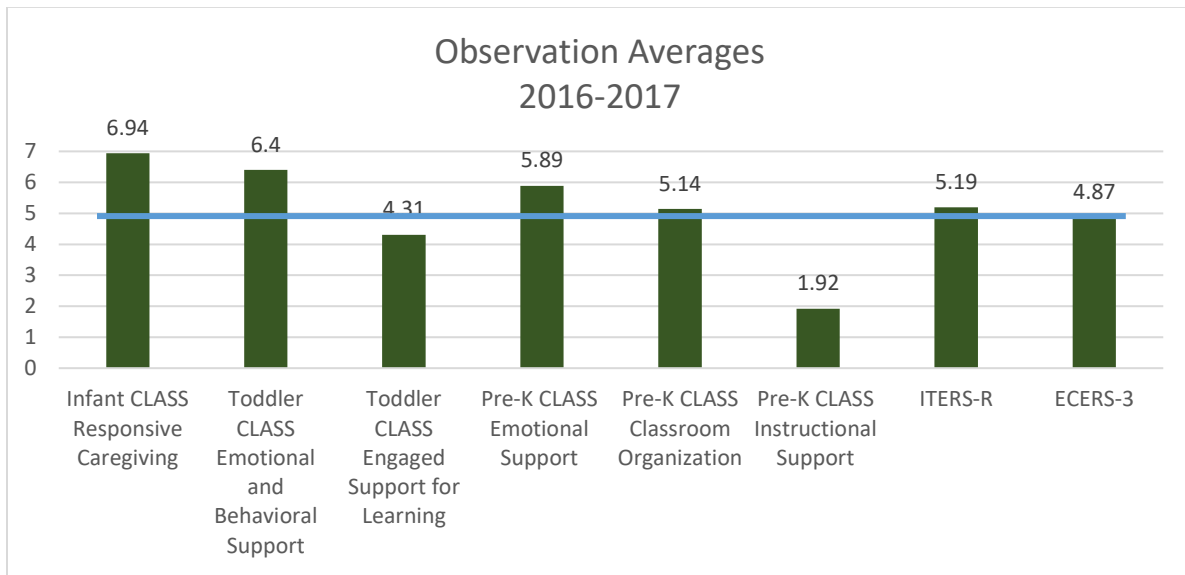
How Are Families Faring and Contributing to Their Children's Development?

Through family interviews, parents reported both strengths and stressors related to their functioning and supports for their children's development. To help facilitate learning at home, 62% of parents in Educare of Lincoln report they read to their children at least three times per week while 22% report reading to their children daily or six times per week. In addition, 30% of parents reported playing counting games daily or six times per week with their children and 27% reported talking with their children about numbers and letters daily. Concerning parent-child relationships at Educare of Lincoln, 99% reported maintaining an affectionate relationship with their child, which was reflected by the average Closeness score of 4.8 out of 5 on the Parent-Child Relationship Scale. Eighty-one percent of parents reported they aspired for their children to attain a BA degree or attend graduate school. However, 45% of families in Educare of Lincoln reported food security issues (worrying about or experiencing running out of food in

the last 12 months). In addition to food security issues, 12% of families report they sometimes or often worry about being homeless while 8% of families reported having no home in the last 12 months.

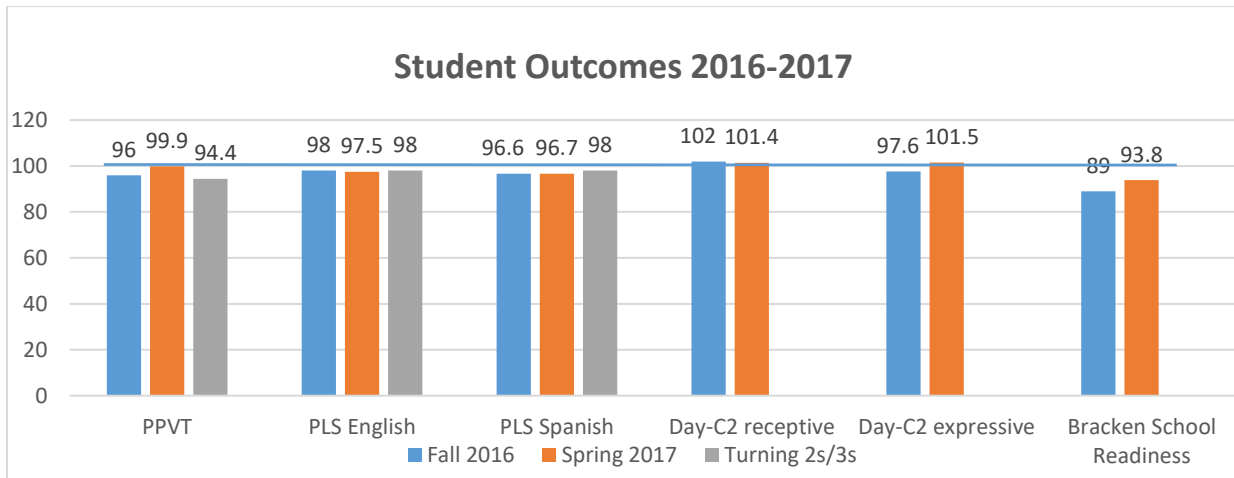
Are Classrooms High Quality?

Classroom quality was measured for all classrooms using the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R), and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-3rd Edition (ECERS-3). Educare of Lincoln’s classrooms continue to meet and exceed quality standards, indicated by scores above 5 on a 1-to-7 scale (see table) for most of the quality indicators. For those areas that scored below the high quality range, staff have set goals and the program has put into place supports for increasing these scores.



Are Children Benefitting?

Scores of preschool-age children on several measures administered in the fall and spring demonstrate that Educare of Lincoln children progressed relative to their peers during the 2016-2017 school year, indicating the children gained more skills than would typically be expected. One of Educare’s goals is to help children reach standard scores of 100 or higher on the assessments administered. Scores in receptive vocabulary increased almost four points (96 to 99.9) along with Bracken School Readiness scores progressing from 89 to 93.8. Children are entering Educare of Lincoln with low abilities in language and vocabulary skills and leaving to attend school with improved abilities as evident by their assessment scores reflecting the effectiveness of Educare programming. In areas of social-emotional development (measure by the DECA) and executive functioning skills (measure by the MEFS), children also showed some gains, although not significantly and there were some areas of no change or decline (see full report for details).



Key Recommendations

Moving forward, several key recommendations should be considered:

Parent Support

- *Provide activities and opportunities for parents to meet one another.*
- *Increase knowledge and access to community resources related to food and housing.*
- *Continue to provide more parents with mental health and/or parenting support.*
- *Build on efforts to help families and children further engage with the community.*

Classroom Quality and Staff

- *Provide individualized professional development opportunities for staff in areas that teachers are lacking necessary skill sets or may be interested.*
- *While focusing on specific areas (such as social-emotional development), maintain a balance with other developmental areas (such as instructional support).*
- *Work with program administration on addressing factors related to subscales of space and furnishing, personal care and program structure, to address items that received lower scores.*

Child Outcomes

- *Provide professional development on supporting dual language learners.*
- *Include interventions around social-emotional development, executive function and math.*
- *Engage parents in activities to support their children's development at home including:*
 - *Loaning children's books in English and home languages, helping parents get and use library cards, and encouraging and modeling reading to children.*
 - *Sending home a math activity each month or demonstrating age appropriate, simple math activities during parent meetings, for parents to do at home.*

Introduction

Educare of Lincoln

Educare of Lincoln opened in March 2013, as a collaborative effort among Community Action of Lincoln (CAL), the Buffett Early Childhood Fund (BECF), Lincoln Public Schools (LPS), and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). In order to provide high quality early childhood education and care, funds were provided through multiple sources including the Buffett Early Childhood Fund, Head Start, Lincoln Public Schools, the College of Education and Human Sciences, UNL, and the University of Nebraska Foundation. Funds also were provided from the Lincoln Community Foundation. On July 1, 2016, the partnership was reconfigured. At that time, Educare of Lincoln became a partnership of Lincoln Public Schools, the University of Nebraska, and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund.

The Educare Model

Educare of Lincoln is part of the larger, national network of 22 Educare Centers located throughout the US. Educare builds on Head Start and Early Head Start. Educare of Lincoln is a partnership of Lincoln Public Schools, the University of Nebraska, and the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. More information



about the Educare Model can be found at: www.educareschools.org.

A summary of the Educare Model and Theory of Change are below.

Educare is designed to give students in poverty an improved chance for success in school and life by advocating for and providing the highest quality care and education from birth to age five. Students and families from low-income homes often face unique barriers in developing foundations for academic success. Educare's program model is designed to help at-risk students and their families overcome such barriers. Educare's mission is to ensure that these students receive the services they need to arrive at kindergarten ready to learn and participate on par with their more economically advantaged peers.

Educare is based on research from a variety of relevant disciplines, such as early childhood development, social work, and other allied fields. Social-emotional developmental theory informs all aspects of the model, as the development of healthy relationships and positive social-emotional skills are a key component of student academic success. Educare incorporates ongoing evaluations to assess the quality of classroom environments and students' progress. Data are used for program improvements and policy development at the state and national levels.

The Educare Model's core features include data utilization, embedded professional development, high-quality teaching practices, and intensive family engagement. Through the coordinated implementation of these core features, Educare promotes high-quality early childhood programs that encourage strong family-school partnerships and parental support for children's learning, helping to ensure that children grow up safe, healthy, and eager to learn. In turn, children are better prepared for kindergarten, increasing their chances for long-term academic and life success.

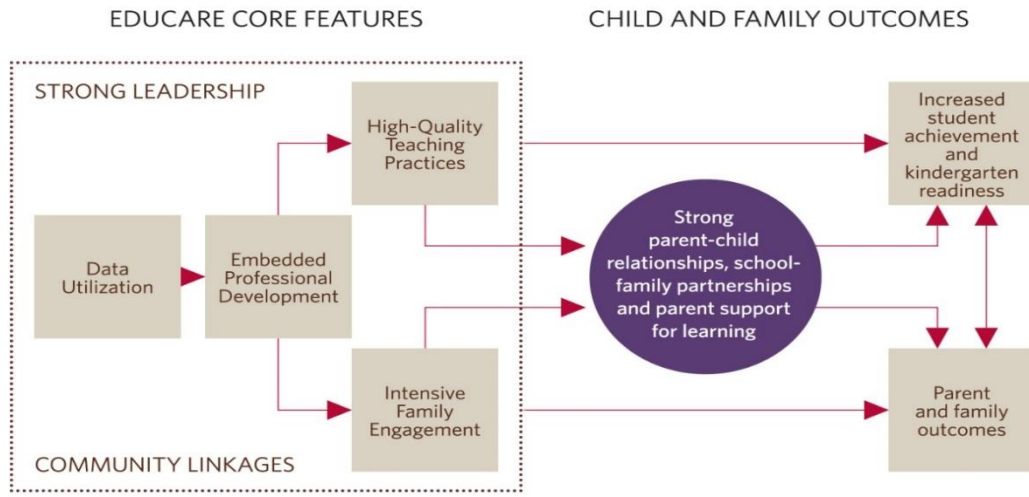


Figure 1. Educare Theory of Change

Evaluation

As noted above, the data and evaluation play a special role in the Educare Network. Each Educare has a Local Evaluation Partner (LEP) and common data are collected across all sites and aggregated by the National Evaluation Partner (NEP). LEPs collect some unique local data as well, to help the program understand matters of local interest. The College of Education and Human Sciences at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln is the LEP for Educare of Lincoln. The evaluation is coordinated by Departments of Child, Youth, and Family Studies and Speech and Language Pathology. Under the supervision of faculty, graduate students are involved in data collection. In addition, after data are collected, teachers and parents are informed about children's development, teachers and Master Teachers receive classroom observation scores, data dashboards are prepared, and this annual report aggregates for the year. Altogether, there are two major purposes of the evaluation:

1. Internal: to use data in a timely fashion to inform the program about its own practices and progress and,
2. External: to present aggregate reports and scholarly articles that can inform about the network's efforts overall and inform the field as innovations are implemented in Educare (e.g. Yazejian, Bryant, Freel, & Burchinal, 2015).

Throughout 2016-2017, evaluation activities have focused on the first goal by providing child-level reports to classroom teachers and administrative staff. Parents were also given reports about their own children in order to bring all possible sources of information into the planning process for children's growth and well-being. In addition, classroom reports were given to all classroom teams and master teachers for all the classroom measures. Dashboard reports have been prepared for the Policy Council during the school year. For aggregate reporting, data are shared with Frank Porter Graham for Educare cross-site reports.



This evaluation report of Educare focuses on determining the overall effectiveness of the programs in providing early childhood services, parenting education, and family support services. The purpose of the program evaluation is to help the program improve and develop practices while concurrently examining the overall effectiveness of the program. The information in this evaluation report should be considered part of an ongoing evaluation. Throughout, we identify recommendations that the data suggest for program consideration.

This evaluation report strives to answer the following questions:

- Who does Educare of Lincoln serve?
- How are families faring and contributing to their children's development?
- Are classrooms of high quality?
- Are children benefitting and achieving positive outcomes in language development, general school readiness, social-emotional development, and other ways?

These questions are answered by collecting data across multiple sources. In addition, we provide information about a comparative group based on what source is most meaningful for the type of data and can inform potential goals or recommendations. As a general guideline, parent data are compared to the Educare Network, as this provides an opportunity to see how similar or different Lincoln families are to those of the network as a whole. Classroom observation scores are compared to previous years and child assessment scores are compared from fall to spring. Where appropriate, additional comparisons are made and data across multiple years are presented as a way to explore trends.

Who Are The Families And Children Served By Educare of Lincoln?

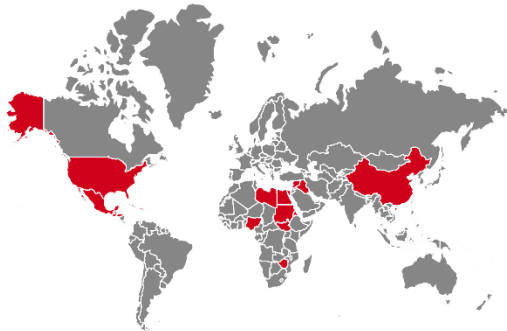
In this section, we address the families and children being served by Educare of Lincoln. The information comes from the fall parent interview. We compare the characteristics of Lincoln families with Educare Learning Network (ELN) family data aggregated across the 21 Educare sites for the same year. Educare of Lincoln served 136 children overall in 2016-2017, with some turnover. For the 2016-2017 school year parent surveys were completed for 133 children in Fall 2016. This included 107 surveys completed by parents for their first Educare child and another 26 completed as supplements when there were two or more Educare children. This data collection included 105 surveys completed by mothers; 3 by fathers and 10 by others.

Diverse Cultural Context

Perhaps because of Lincoln’s role as an Immigration and Naturalization Service-receiving community, Educare of Lincoln is unique to the Educare network in that the families of children served include a large percentage of diverse immigrants. Thirty-eight percent of parents were born outside the USA, in 15 different countries, including China, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Iraq, Libya, Mexico, Sudan, South Sudan, Egypt, Eritrea, Nigeria, Palestine, Syria, and Zambia.

Altogether, 45% of primary caregivers and 18% of children were born outside the USA.

Educare of LINCOLN Families 



Representing 15 different countries around the globe

Parents reported that for 76% of children, the child’s first language is English, 14% Spanish, with 14% speaking first other languages, with Arabic being most prevalent. However, for 82% of children, parents reported English was the child’s strongest language, for 13% Spanish was strongest, and for 10% it was other languages. Reports of languages spoken most in the home was

similar with 74% reporting English was spoken most, 14% reported Spanish is spoken most and 21% reported speaking other languages most at home.

In Educare of Lincoln, diversity goes beyond the countries of origin and languages; 39% of children’s race reported to be white, 33% black, 2% Asian, 2% Native American, 15% multi-racial, and 8% other. Seventeen percent of children’s ethnicity is Hispanic, and 83% non-Hispanic.

Table 1. Characteristics of Children Served by Educare of Lincoln

DLL	White/Caucasian	Black	All Other	Hispanic	Female	Verified for Special Education	Excellent/very good health (parent report)
29%	39%	33%	29%	17%	54%	11%	74%

Table 2. Characteristics of Parents/Guardians Served by Educare Lincoln

Parents born outside U.S.	Single parent families	Two years or more college	Have no high school	Full time employed	Teen mothers
38%	51%	27%	20%	61%	8%

Primary Caregivers: Mothers reported they are children's primary caregivers for 91% of children, fathers reported to be children's primary caregivers for 2% of the children and grandparents and foster parents for 7% of the children. At the time of the interview, over 60% of children's birth mothers were 30 or older; another 25% were in the 26-29 age range and 13% were in the 20-25 age range. At the time of childbirth, 8% of mothers were 19 or younger; the teenager birth rate in some Educare sites was higher (at 13%). Mean age for mothers when the Educare child was born was 27 years.

Education and Work: Primary caregivers reported having no high school degree in 20% of cases; 16% had a high school degree; 34% had some college or some technical training; 27% had 2 years of college or more. Of the first category, 12 primary caregivers had an 8th grade education or less, 10 had some high school and 18 had a high school or GED degree. The large majority of Educare caregivers were employed full time (61%), another 38% indicated they were employed part-time or part of year. Only 4% of the primary caregivers listed themselves as not in the labor force at all. As well, 27% indicated they were in school or in a training program.

Family Structure: Two-parent (48%) and single-parent (51%) families were fairly evenly divided in the Lincoln Educare population. Children lived with their mothers in 88% of cases reporting; with their father in 42%, with a brother (51%) or sister (57%), with a grandmother (9%) or grandfather (6%). The mean number of adults in households was 1.7 and mean number of children was 3. More households had two or more adults (63%) than one adult (37%). More households had two (27%), three (29%), four (16%) or more (14%) children living together than having only one child (15%).

Children with Special Needs: While Head Start requires that at least 10% of children served qualify for special education, Educare Lincoln exceeded that with 14% qualifying for an IEP (Individualized Education Plan and Part B for 3-5 year olds) and 6% having an IFSP (Individualized Family Support Plan and Part and Part C for 0-3 year olds). For all children, 11% of the Educare population had a verified disability, according to program records.

Child Health: While 74% of parents reported children were in excellent or very good health, another 26% reported children were in good to fair health. These rates show Lincoln parents reported lower rates of excellent or very good health and higher rates of good to fair health than the Educare Learning Network (84% as excellent or very good and 16% for good or fair). Thirty-five percent indicated that their child had special health needs. Most frequently mentioned health needs were allergies, eczema and asthma and other needs.

How are Families Faring and Contributing to Their Children’s Development?

In this section, we highlight some of the experiences of families and other factors that may contribute to children’s development. Again, we compare to the ELN (21 sites) overall for a reference point.

What do families report about their nutrition and health-related matters?

Food and home security: About 45% of families reported being worried sometimes or often about food running out (compared to 26% for the ELN), and 14% reported that food sometimes or often does run out before they are able to buy more (comparable to 16% for the ELN). Also, 12% of the families reported that they sometimes or often worry about being homeless (comparable to 14% for the ELN), and about 8% reported having no home in the last 12 months (similar to 7% for the ELN).

What do families report about stressors and supports?

Neighborhood: People were asked questions about their neighborhoods. The overall score indicated that about 46% of parents live in neighborhoods where they feel a strength of or high support (vs. 49% for the ELN).



Relationships with Other Parents: Parents were asked how many times they have a conversation with other parents when they drop off children—50% of parents said they never did this (compared to 31% for the ELN) and 28% did so once or twice a week (vs. 42% for the ELN). Also, 90% (vs. 65% for the ELN) said they had not talked to other parents in a meeting the previous week; 68% said they didn’t not have a friendship with other parents (vs. 61% for the ELN); and 32% reported having a close friendship with another caregiver in Educare (vs. 36% for ELN). These relationships among Educare parents facilitated receiving some referral recommendations for services and resources for about 31% of Educare families (slightly better than 29% for the ELN).

Parenting Distress, Depression, Life Events. The Parent Interview asks several questions regarding depression, parent challenges, perceived stress, parents’ perceived ability to bounce back after setbacks and well-being. Educare of Lincoln’s parents are also asked to report on whether 19 different life events occurred for them in the previous year—these involve major changes in family life, including death, divorce, job changes, housing changes that cumulatively have been associated with stress.

The mean score on the parenting challenges items was 1.5 and the sum was 19.1, and scores were comparable to the ELN (1.7 and 20.8, respectively). Thus, the average parent reported similar parenting challenges as the ELN. A minority of parents (7%) were rated as highly challenged about parenting, versus 9% for the ELN. The most highly rated item was: I am giving up more of my life.

Regarding depression, most parents report they had not felt depressed in the past 2 years. However, 22% report they had been depressed for 2 weeks or more in the past year and 16% said they had been depressed for a week or more in the past month. Finally, 22% of parents answered “yes” to two out of three depression questions compared to 16% for the ELN.

Perceived stress mean sum scores were 8.47, similar to the 8.36 mean sum scores for the ELN. Parents’ resiliency item scores were 3.14 on average and similar to the 3.26 average score for the ELN. Similarly, average scores on the well-being items were 76.3 (on a scale of 100) compared to 78.0 for the ELN, showing Educare of Lincoln parents running slightly lower in reported wellbeing. Lincoln Educare parents had higher scores than ELN on feeling safe and part of community but lower scores than ELN, in general, when it came to questions about life as a whole, health (considerably lower), what they are achieving in life, and personal relationships.

Lincoln Educare parents reported 3.47 (compared to 2.38 for the ELN) major life events in the past year, with one parent reporting 10 major life events. Lincoln parents have much higher (sometimes double) the ELN rates of for positive events, such as engagement to marry (11% for Lincoln and 5% for ELN), marriage (11% versus 3%), and parent partners who had changed work (23% versus 10%). However, they also showed much higher rates of negative events including, current incarceration for family members (23% compared to the ELN 13%), family members with serious illness (23% versus 12%), a family member being a victim of violent crime (13% versus 5%), a child witnessing domestic violence (10% versus 5%), children living with someone with alcohol/drugs (10% versus 4%).

While parents of Lincoln Educare faced many life and parenting challenges, 67% viewed the Educare program as very or extremely helpful.

What do we know about parenting activities and relationships with children?

Activities with Child: What do parents do with their children? Parents were asked how frequently they performed a number of typical parent-child activities with their child. These items are from the Home Observation for Measurement of the Environment Scale (HOME; Caldwell & Bradley, 1984). The activities parents and children most frequently shared

included: playing with toys or games indoors; teaching child songs, talking during errands and talking about Educare. Less frequent were: telling the child a story; teaching the child songs or music; working on arts; talking about TV or videos, and running a little below the ELN. However, In Lincoln Educare, over half of the parents (52%) reported playing with toys or games indoors with the child every day (57% for ELN) and 49% said they talk with their child about Educare every day (53% for ELN) and 60% talk with their children during errands (64% for ELN).

Lincoln Educare parents were comparable to others in the ELN in frequenting community activities. In Lincoln Educare, parents were three to four times more likely to take a child to a park than to a library, museum, or zoo and the least likely to go to a play or concert, which is relative to what was reported for ELN. Special experiences do seem to be in short order; 77% of parents had never been to a play, concert or live show with their child; 56% had never been to a museum or art gallery, nor to a zoo/aquarium or petting fair (39%). However, 97% of parents had taken their child to a park in the past month, compared to only 86% for the ELN.

Kudos! Data-Driven Improvements

Visiting Libraries! Library Cards! A year ago, 61% of children had never visited a library; this year the percentage was reduced to 56, similar to the ELN averages. During year, staff were hard at work encouraging families to get library cards; for example, at the NAEYC Week of the Young Child parent fair in April, representatives from the Lincoln Public Libraries signed families up for library cards. Perhaps by next fall when parents complete the interview even fewer will say their child has “never visited” a library.

Parent-Child Relationships - Less Conflict Reported! This year less conflict was reported in parent-child relationships compared to last year. A year ago, Lincoln had reported higher parent conflict than the ELN; this year conflict and closeness scores were in line with averages for the ELN. There have been many actions to help parents utilize positive guidance with children; for example, a Circle of Security class was held in the spring. The scores showed parents were struggling less with their children and engaging them more.

Reading and Literacy/Numeracy Activities with Children. Reading to children daily is often found to be an important predictor of language development; 22% of parents reported they read to children daily or 6 times a week (vs. 24% for the ELN) and 62% report reading at least three times a week, lower than the 65% reported by the ELN. Also, 10% of parents report they never read to their child (6% for the ELN).

Over half (56%, same as for ELN) had never visited a library with their child while 7% visited a library every week. Thirty-seven percent visited a library once, twice or three times monthly, similar to the average for the ELN (38%).

Home environment plays an important role in the contribution to children’s language and cognitive development. This essential role can be supported through having a rich environment of books, especially books in the home language. However, 24% of the families in Lincoln (21% for the ELN) reported having fewer than 10 books at their homes. For books in home language, 32% (compared to 23% for the ELN) of the families reported having a few or no books, which may affect maintaining their home languages and building literacy skills.

Learning about letters, words and numbers is important for children’s foundation in reading and math. At Educare of Lincoln, 27% of parents (37% for the ELN) said they talk with their child about letters or numbers daily while 5% said they never do this (same as for the ELN). With specific counting games, 9% never play counting games (vs. 6% for the ELN) while 30% play counting games daily or six times per week (compared to 38% for the ELN).

Parent-Child Relationship

Scale: Parents reported many positive aspects of their relationships with children. The 16-item Parent-Child Relationship Scale (CPRS; Pianta, 1992) reports on parent-child Closeness,

Conflict and Parent-Child Total. Almost all (99%) said that they definitely share an affectionate relationship with their child. The mean Closeness score on this scale was 4.8 out of 5.0 possible, which was about the same as the ELN average of 4.7; Conflict was 2.0 out of 5.0, which was the same the ELN average.

Parents’ Aspirations for their Children: Parents had high aspirations for their children; 81% indicated they hoped their child attains a BA degree or graduate school (slightly lower than the ELN where 88% of parents said they expected their child to finish college); only 3.8% indicated they hoped for only a high school degree or less for their child.

Recommendations: Educare of Lincoln’s families face significant challenges. Recommendations for supporting families include:

- Continuing to **facilitate parent support networks**. Hosting social gatherings, support groups, and event nights, e.g., family reading night could be a positive way to encourage parents’ interactions with each other.
- Higher rates of parents worrying about food running out were indicated this past year. While this may be a one-year artifact, perhaps the program can assure parents that if they do run out of food, the program will **help them get food by accessing community resources**.
- Several measures converge to show that parents, on average, are dealing with higher stress, parenting related stress and depression than is true for other Educare families in the network. We recommend that Lincoln Educare continue to focus on **providing understanding of Trauma Informed Care and in providing more intensive support for major challenges**, as well as continuing the excellent family support provided by the FES team.
- It is good news that fewer parents are “never reading” to their children this year compared to last year, but Lincoln Educare is still running behind the ELN in parents frequently reading to their children. While efforts have been made to get children’s

Kudos! Data-Driven Improvements

Feeling Safe in Lincoln and Exploring Parks! Lincoln Educare parents report greater feelings of safety and neighborhood well-being than is true for the ELN in general. Lincoln Educare parents take their children to parks more than ELN parents in other sites. Educare can build on these strengths the community provides.

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books to parents, including books in children’s home language, as of last fall (2016), Lincoln Educare still lagged behind the ELN in books available to children in the homes. **We recommend continuing stepped-up efforts to loan children’s books in English and home languages, encouraging parents to read to their children, and modeling reading in different ways. Parent meetings may include books for families to borrow (in multiple languages), as well as field trips to the library.** There are great bonuses for language growth when parents read daily or almost daily and the program is already planning on lending books next year.

- While math learning early on is a special focus for the program, fewer parents play math and counting games with their children in Lincoln than for the ELN. **We recommend sending home a math activity each month or emphasizing and demonstrating age appropriate, simple activities during parent meetings for parents to do at home.**
- Given that many Educare parents had not attended special events for children in Lincoln as of Fall 2016, this area is still a goal, recognizing that there are a number of great community-linked events planned for the coming year, including Educare at Salt Dogs, Streets Alive, Get up and Move. **Continuing to look for ways to help families and children further identify with the community will build family and community strength.**

Are Classrooms High Quality?

Classroom Quality Measures

Classroom quality was measured for all classrooms once throughout the year using the following measures: Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS), the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R), and the Early Childhood Environmental Rating Scale-3rd Edition (ECERS-3). Both measures use a 1 to 7 scale with ratings of 5 and above considered indications of high quality.

CLASS is a measure that focuses and analyzes the interactions that take place between the teacher(s) and children. CLASS rates a teacher’s attitude, actions that expand children’s learning, methods of promoting problem solving and positive social-emotional interactions. There are three CLASS scales used in the Educare network: Infant, Toddler, and Preschool.

KUDOS! Data-driven Improvements

The program focus on supporting children’s social-emotional development resulted in improvements on scores from the previous year on CLASS observation domains related to positive climate, emotional and behavioral supports, and teacher sensitivity across age groups.

The environmental rating scale (ERS) measures (ITERS-R and ECERS-3) focus primarily on the physical environments that children frequent daily. The ERS examine safety and hygiene practices and food standards (i.e., nutritional guideline adherence), measures time utilization for creative learning opportunities (such as art and music), and ensures classroom materials are diverse, clean, and developmentally appropriate.

Classroom observation data were compared to previous years to look at trends across time, taking into consideration changes in staffing and classroom make-up (i.e., different children, etc.).

Infant and Toddler Classroom Quality

Infant Toddler Environment Rating Scale-Revised (ITERS-R; Harms, Cryer & Clifford, 2006).

The quality of infant and toddler classrooms was measured using the Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale – Revised (ITERS-R). This observational tool is used to assess the quality of infant and toddler classrooms in various domains including: Space and Furnishings, Personal Care Routines, Language (Listening and Talking), Learning Activities, Interaction, Program Structure, and Parents and Staff, as well as an overall rating of quality.

Six classrooms were observed and rated using the ITERS-R this year. The resulting scores are illustrated below. Note: the older toddler room was observed and rated with the early childhood version of this tool due to the ages of the children.

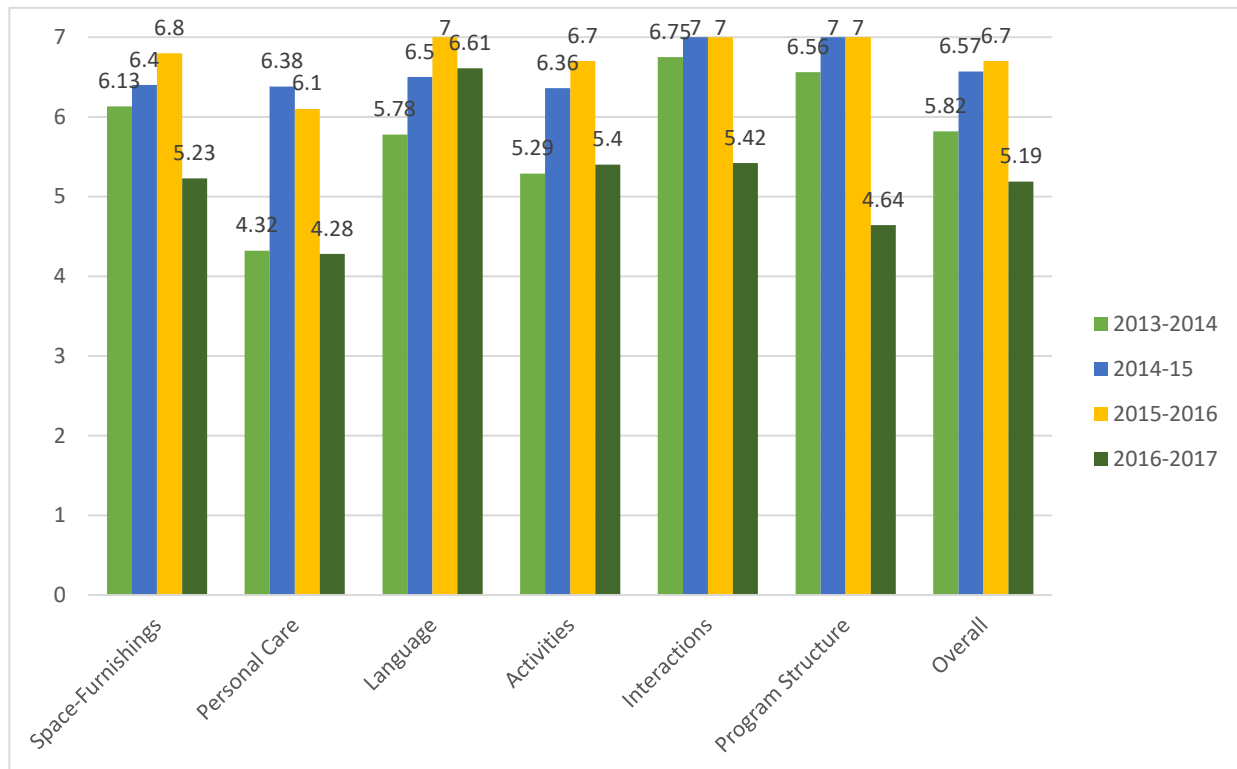


Figure 2. ITERS-R Averages 2013-2017

Classrooms met the minimum standards (5.19 overall rating across classrooms). Areas of highest ratings (overall score of 6.61 and 5.42 across all rooms) were language and interactions. Opportunities for improvement exist within personal care routines (hand washing, meals and snacks, etc.), activities (meaningful and purposeful child-led explorations), but scores were very good.

The difference of scores between current and previous years are worth noting. After scoring clarification and applying a more stringent interpretation of the scales as predicted in last year's report, the space-furnishing area scores dropped significantly (from 6.8 to 5.23) due to the architectural characteristics of the room. Scores in Program Structure were significantly impacted by more stringent scoring protocols suggested by the measure's authors. Another decrease in score pertains to the Program Structure domain. Educare of Lincoln utilizes a gross-motor playroom that is used on an alternating basis. Due to the Program Structure scores being largely dependent on the children going outside *every* day, weather permitting, the scheduled indoor play days prevented Program Structure scores from achieving the scale's maximum score as they previously had before author clarification. Also noteworthy are the changes in teaching staff; it is possible that the teacher turnover had a negative effect on the scores. The infant/toddler rooms scored higher than the Educare Network average overall score of 5.7 in 2014-2015.

Infant CLASS Observation Rating (Hamre, Paro, Pianta, & LoCasale-Crouch, 2014).

According to its authors, the CLASS "is a rating tool that provides a common lens and language focused on what matters—the classroom interactions that boost student learning." This was the third year the Infant Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Infant CLASS) was completed in classrooms with the majority of students under the age of 12 months. Whereas the Environment Rating Scales (ITERS and ECERS) rate materials and the environment, the CLASS focuses instead on what teachers are doing with those materials to boost learning, examining closely the interactions occurring. The Infant CLASS has one overall domain—Responsive Caregiving.



Responsive Caregiving

- Relational Climate
- Teacher Sensitivity
- Facilitated Exploration
- Early Language Support

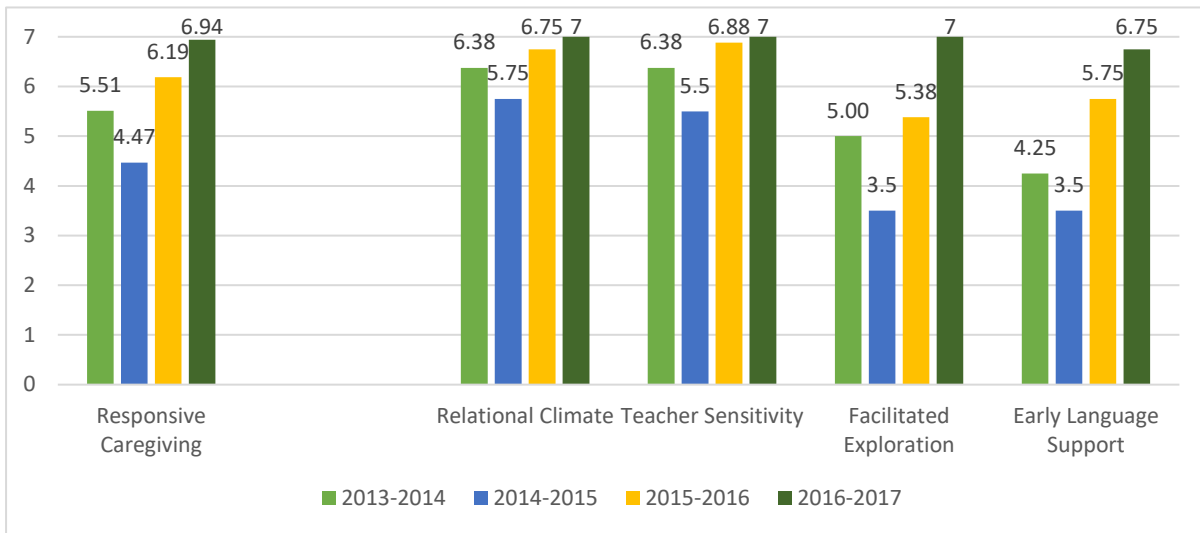


Figure 3. CLASS-Infant Domain and Dimension Averages

When we look at the domain and dimension scores for the Infant scale, we see a pattern of improvements over last year’s scores across dimensions, with the largest gain in facilitated exploration (moving from 5.38 to 7). Improvement in CLASS scores, a goal set by teaching staff and supported by Master Teachers and additional professional development activities throughout the year clearly affected these observation scores. Scores on the Infant CLASS were very good and were much higher than the previous year, for which we also saw an increase from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016.

Toddler CLASS Observation Rating (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2012). The Toddler Classroom Assessment Scoring System (Toddler CLASS) was completed in each infant or toddler classroom with the majority of enrolled students over the age of 12 months. The Toddler CLASS has two domains: Emotional-Behavioral Support and Engaged Support for Learning. These dimensions include aspects such as: Positive Climate (focuses on how teachers interact with students to develop warm relationships that promote students’ enjoyment of the classroom community) and Facilitation of Learning and Development (focuses on how well teachers facilitate activities to support students’ learning and understanding opportunities).

Emotional and Behavioral Support

- Positive Climate
- Negative Climate
- Teacher Sensitivity
- Child Perspectives
- Behavior Guidance

Engaged Support for Learning

- Facilitation of Learning & Development
- Quality of Feedback
- Language Modeling

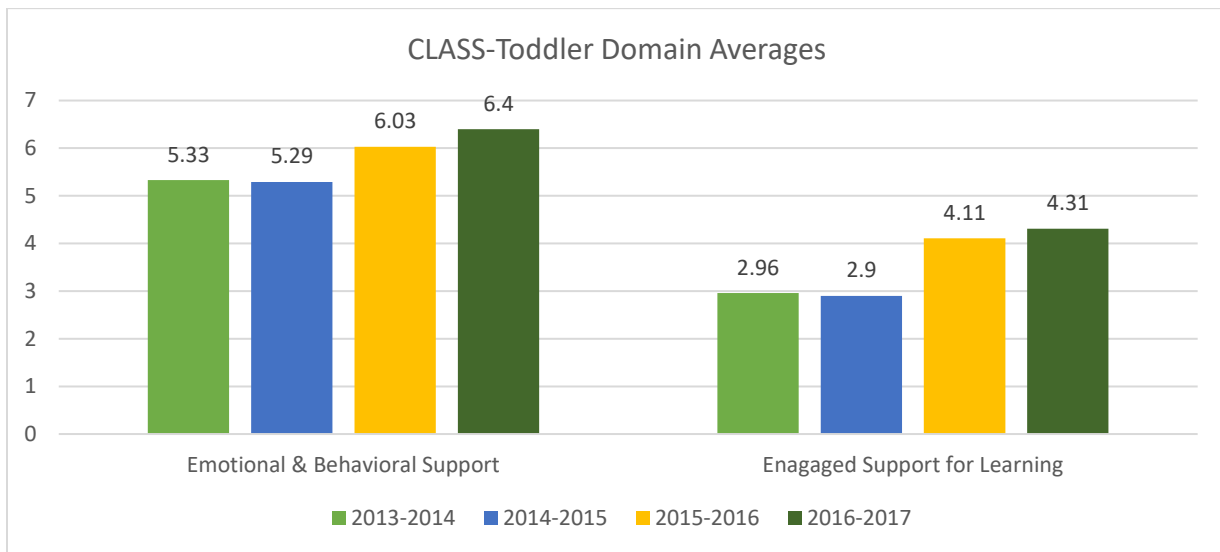
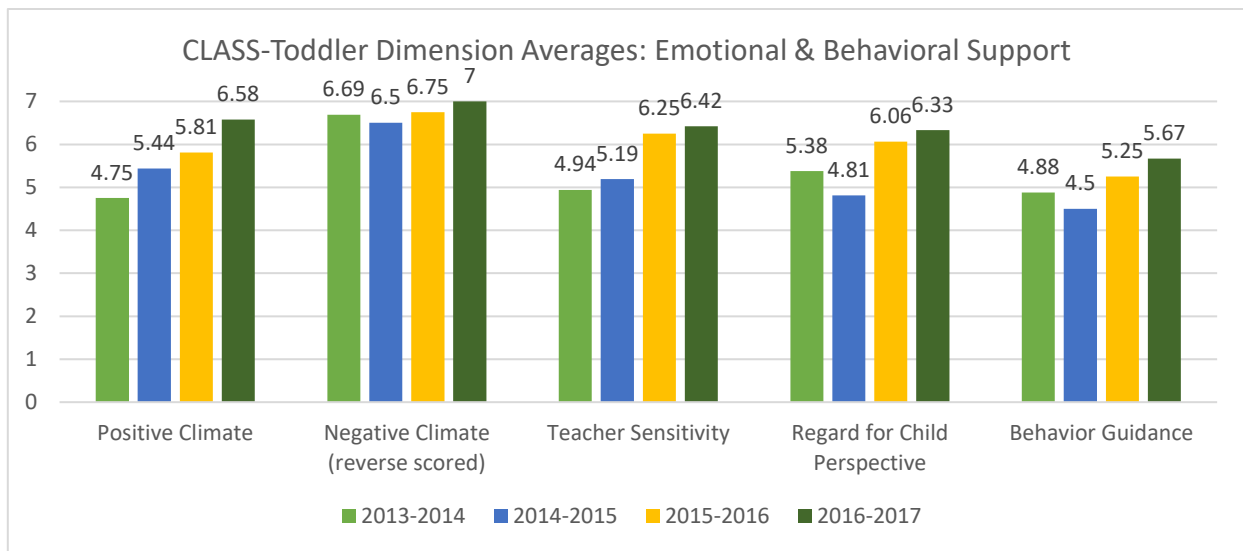
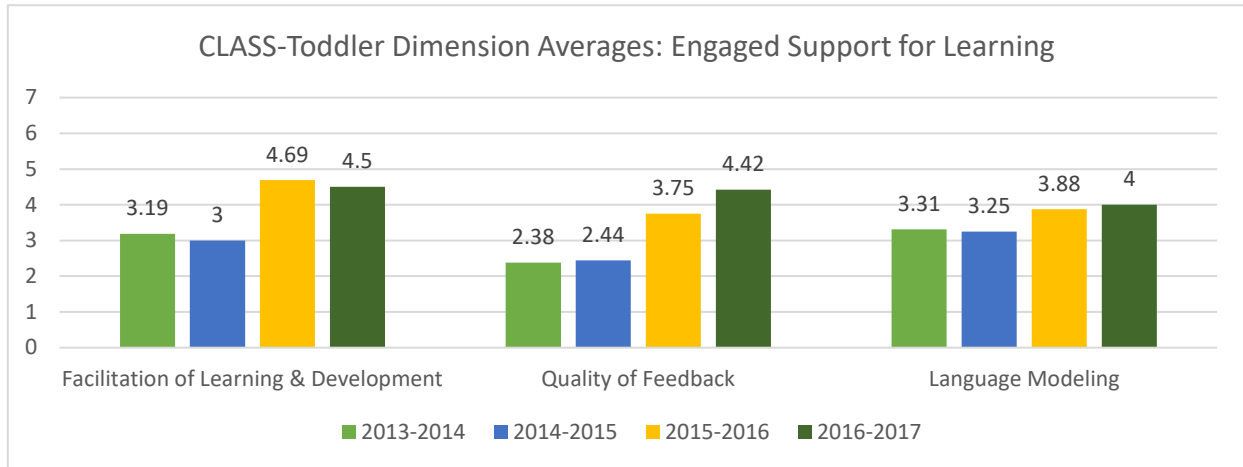


Figure 4. CLASS-Toddler Domain Averages

Toddler CLASS scores increased from previous years, with a large improvement in Emotional & Behavioral Support (from 6.03 to 6.4). When we look at the domain and dimension scores for the Toddler scale, we see a pattern of improvements over last year's scores across dimensions. Improvement in CLASS scores, a goal set by teaching staff and supported by Master Teachers and additional professional development activities throughout the year, clearly affected these observation scores.

Scores on the Toddler CLASS were very good and were higher than the previous year, which also increased from 2014-2015 to 2015-2016. The ratings are higher than the ELN averages of 6.3 for Emotional and Behavioral Support and 4.3 for Engaged Support for Learning 2014-2015.



Figures 5 & 6. CLASS-Toddler Dimension Averages

Preschool Classroom Quality

Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-3rd Edition (ECERS-3; Harms, Clifford, & Cryer, 2015). The quality of preschool classrooms was measured using the Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale – 3rd Edition (ECERS-3). This observational tool is used to assess the quality of preschool classrooms in various domains including: Space and Furnishings; Personal Care Routines; Language and Literacy; Learning Activities; Interactions; Program Structure, as well as an overall rating of quality. The 2016-2017 year was the second year using the ECERS-3. Prior to the 2015-2016 year, we used the ECERS-R. The ECERS-3 revisions include additional items around math, language and literacy support and interactions.

Four preschool classrooms were observed using the ECERS-3. The following chart illustrates the resulting classroom observation ratings, both by domain and overall.

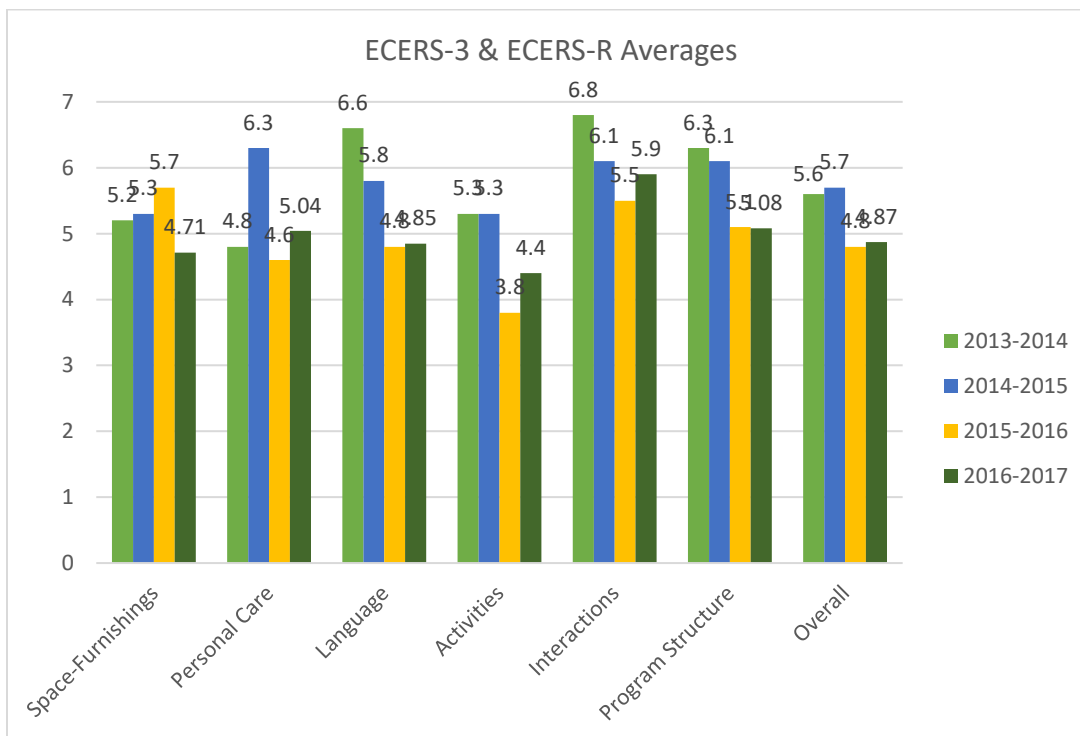


Figure 7. ECERS-3 & ECERS-R Averages

The overall ECERS-3 score improved over last year (4.8-4.87). The ECERS-3 scores demonstrate growth in Activities and Personal Care and show that Interactions continue to be a strength. However, Program Structure, followed by Language, are areas for possible growth going forward.

Preschool CLASS Observation Rating (Pianta, LaParo, & Hamre, 2008). The Pre-K version of the Classroom Assessment Scoring System (CLASS) was completed with each preschool classroom. The Pre-K CLASS has three domains: Emotional Support, Classroom Organization, and Instructional Support. Instructional Support tends to be the domain with the most opportunity for improvement as it challenges teachers to effectively extend language, model advanced language, and to promote higher-order thinking skills.



Classrooms were in the middle range for Emotional Support and Classroom Organization with average scores of 5.89 and 5.14, respectively, but provide opportunity for improvement in Instructional Support. Research on the CLASS tool supports ratings of 5 or greater within the domain of Emotional Support and 3.25 or greater within the domain of Instructional Support as being indicators of good quality (Burchinal, Vandergrift, Pianta & Mashburn, 2010). There were improvements in scores over last year for Emotional Support and Classroom organization, but Instructional Support scores yielded a much lower average. Tables below show the individual domains and dimensions, where improvements from the previous year can be seen across dimensions.

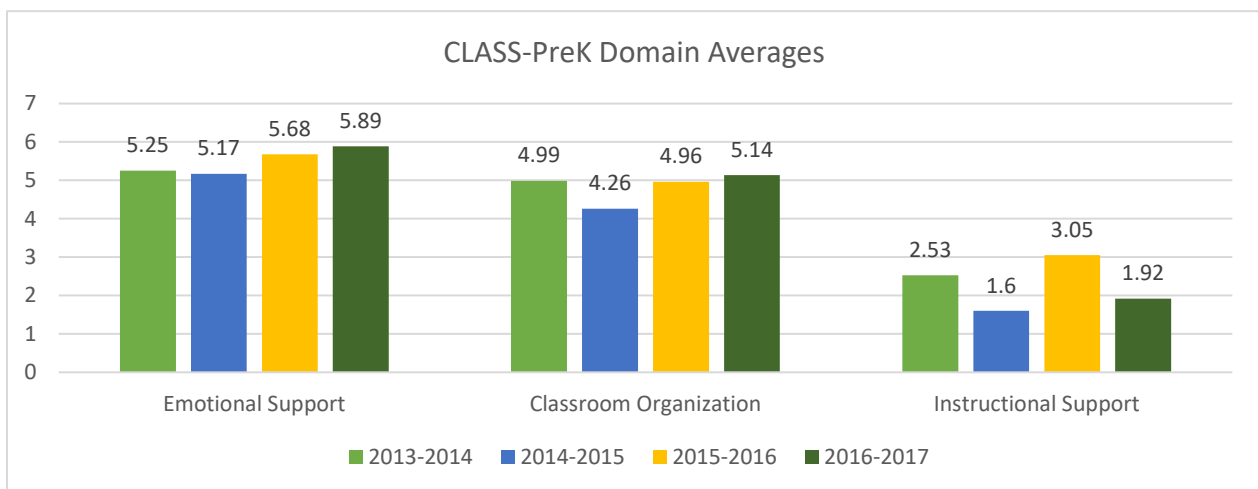
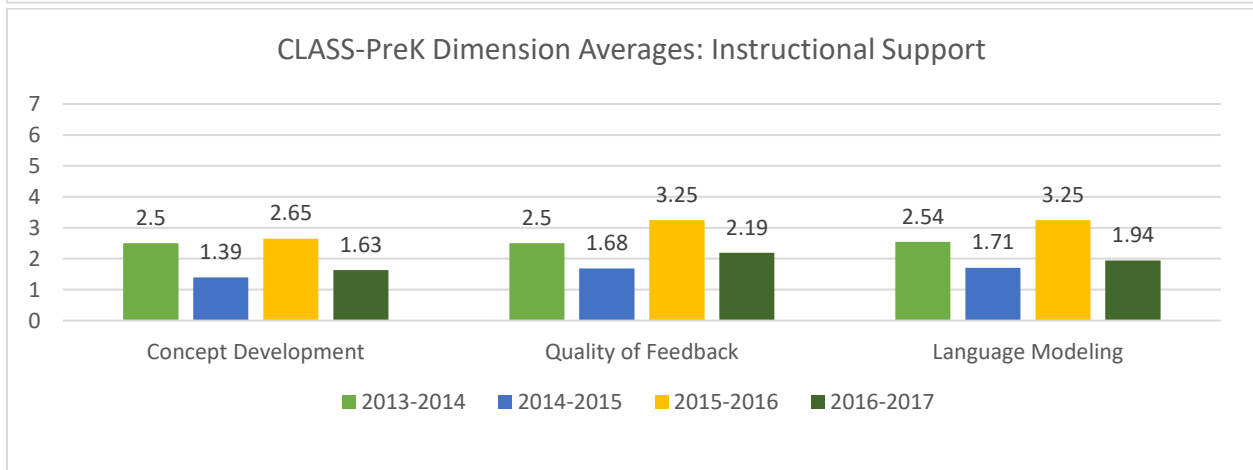
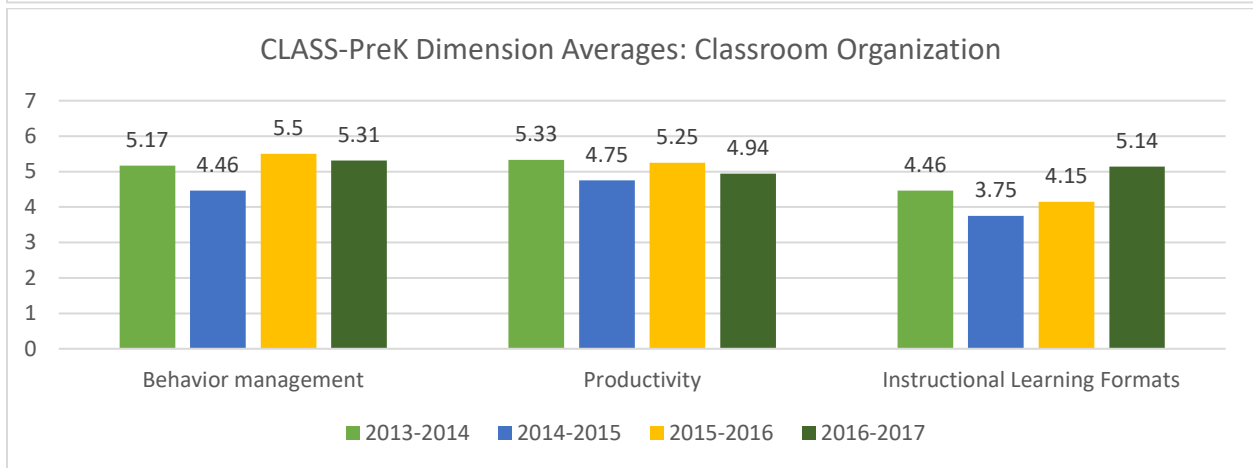
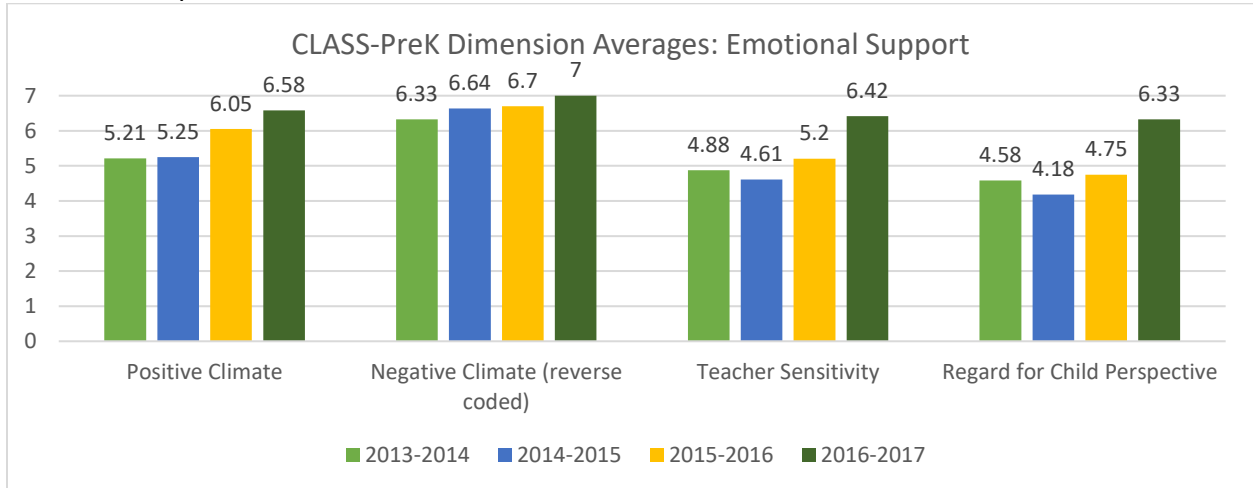


Figure 8. CLASS-PreK Domain Averages

Following the pattern of the Infant and Toddler rooms, Preschool CLASS scores increased from previous years in the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization areas, with a large decrease in Instructional Support scores (from 3.05 to 1.92). Children experienced interactions in the good quality range. Improvement in CLASS scores was a goal set by teaching staff and

supported by Master Teachers. Professional development activities throughout the year that clearly helped to improve these observation scores. Scores on the Preschool CLASS were very good in the Emotional Support and Classroom Organization domains, which have increased annually since the 2014-2015 evaluations. The Instructional Support domain, however, provides an area of improvement.



Figures 9, 10, 11: CLASS-PreK Dimension Averages

Recommendations for Classroom Quality

Educare of Lincoln classrooms continue to show high levels of quality. As new staff and children enter the program, a consistent, intentional focus on maintaining quality and building on the skills of teaching staff will be key. Recommendations for achieving this include:

- Providing professional development opportunities for staff on each of the classroom quality measures.
- Having Master teachers conduct periodic observations using the classroom measures.
- Following observation feedback from the LEP team, set goals related to areas of improvement.
- While focusing on specific areas (such as social-emotional development), maintain a balance with other developmental areas (such as Instructional Support).
- Work with program administration on addressing factors related to subscales of space and furnishing, personal care and program structure to address items that received lower scores.
- When new versions of measures or clarifications occur, there should be a focus on these new items and plans for supporting each low-scoring domain.

Are Children Benefitting?

How Did Children Progress During The 2016-2017 School Year?

Student Outcome Data

Students were assessed twice each school year on multiple measures. There was typically at least a six-month interval between fall and spring assessments on these measures. The measures selected are from the national Educare evaluation model and evaluate individual students on language, vocabulary, school readiness and social/emotional factors. For all of the norm-referenced assessments given, the goal is for students to score at or above a standard score of 100 (standard score). The assessments for which the standard scores are used are the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT-4; Dunn & Dunn, 2007), the Preschool Language Scales (PLS-5; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2011; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2012), the Developmental Assessment of Young Children-Second Edition (Day-C2; Voress & Maddox, 2012), and the Bracken School Readiness Assessment (BSRA; Bracken, 2007).

In addition, we piloted a measure of math ability, the Woodcock Johnson: Applied Problems subscale (WJ-AP; Schrank, McGrew, & Mather, 2014), with all preschool children in the spring. This administration was used to gather information on children's math abilities and for consideration of inclusion in the larger Evaluation battery. Children's social-emotional development was measured using the Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (DECA; LeBuffe & Naglieri, 1999) in fall and spring for all children. We also administered a measure of executive function, the Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS; Carlson & Zelazo, 2014), in fall and spring to all children aged 2 years and older.

Measure	What it measures	Collected by whom?	Collected with who?	Collected when?
PPVT-4	English Receptive Language	LEP team	PreK, 2 & 3 year olds	Fall & Spring for PreK At 2 & 3 year birthdays (once a year)
PLS-5	Auditory comprehension, expressive communication and beginning literacy skills.	LEP team	PreK, 2 & 3 year olds English & Spanish	Fall & Spring for PreK At 3 year birthday (once a year)
Day-C2	Receptive and expressive language	Teacher, home visitor or parent	Infants & Toddlers	Fall & Spring
Bracken	Kindergarten readiness skills	LEP team	PreK only	Fall & Spring
WJ-AP	Math skills	LEP team	PreK only	Spring
DECA	Social-emotional, protective factors	Teaching staff	All children	Fall & Spring
MEFS	Executive Function	LEP team	All children age 2 years and older	Fall & Spring

Figure 12: Student Measures

Most of our measures are scored using standard scores because they allow teachers, evaluators, and researchers to make comparisons across assessments and age groups. Standard scores are scores that have the same meaning no matter the context. They also allow comparison of growth. A standard score of 100 represents the average score for children of the same age. If the child’s score increases from fall to spring, that indicates that the child gained skills faster than would be expected based on typical growth. When comparing scores of different age groups (as in the table below), a higher score for the younger children does not mean that they have higher skills than the preschool children but that they were performing more closely to the average of their peers than the preschool children. The goal of Educare is for all students to reach standard scores of 100 or higher on the assessments given. By scoring close to the mean of 100, it indicates children’s development is on track and on par with their more advantaged peers. Scores for measures that do not have standard scores (DECA and MEFS) are explained in the findings.

Language and School Readiness Outcomes. PPVT-4, Bracken, and PLS-5 in English were administered individually to children by UNL Speech and Language Pathology (SLP) masters students under direct supervision of senior SLP faculty. MEFS and WJ-AP were administered by UNL graduate students from the department of Child, Youth, and Family Studies. The Day-C2 was administered by data collectors from UNMC for the SixPence evaluation. Administration was conducted at the Educare site. Children were invited to come to the testing rooms with assessment administrators. PPVTs took about

KUDOS! Data-driven Improvements
Educare of Lincoln staff plan daily activities, experiences, and engage in meaningful interactions with children to promote language development. Receptive language scores for preschool children grew significantly from fall to spring!

10-15 minutes each; Bracken administration was about 10-15 minutes. PLS English administration was about 45 minutes and was conducted in a separate session from PPVT or Bracken; PLS Spanish administration took about 1 hour because the administration assessed the child's Spanish and English simultaneously (see score reporting below). Day-C2 took about 20-30 minutes and it was based on observations from the teacher or home visitor or

parent report. MEFS and WJ-AP took about 10 minutes each. Spanish assessments were completed by 1 bilingual UNL Child, Youth and Family Studies (CYAF) student.

In the 2016-2017 year, students' fall and spring scores on each assessment were used for paired analyses (meaning the child had both a fall and spring score) to look at change. There were 56 matched children on the vocabulary measures (PPVT, Dunn & Dunn, 2007), 28 children on the school readiness measure in the fall and spring (BSRA, Bracken, 2007), 48 matched PLS-5 (Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2011; Zimmerman, Steiner, & Pond, 2012) scores, and 82 children in the executive function measure in the fall and spring. The following chart shows the mean scores across multiple measures of language and school readiness.

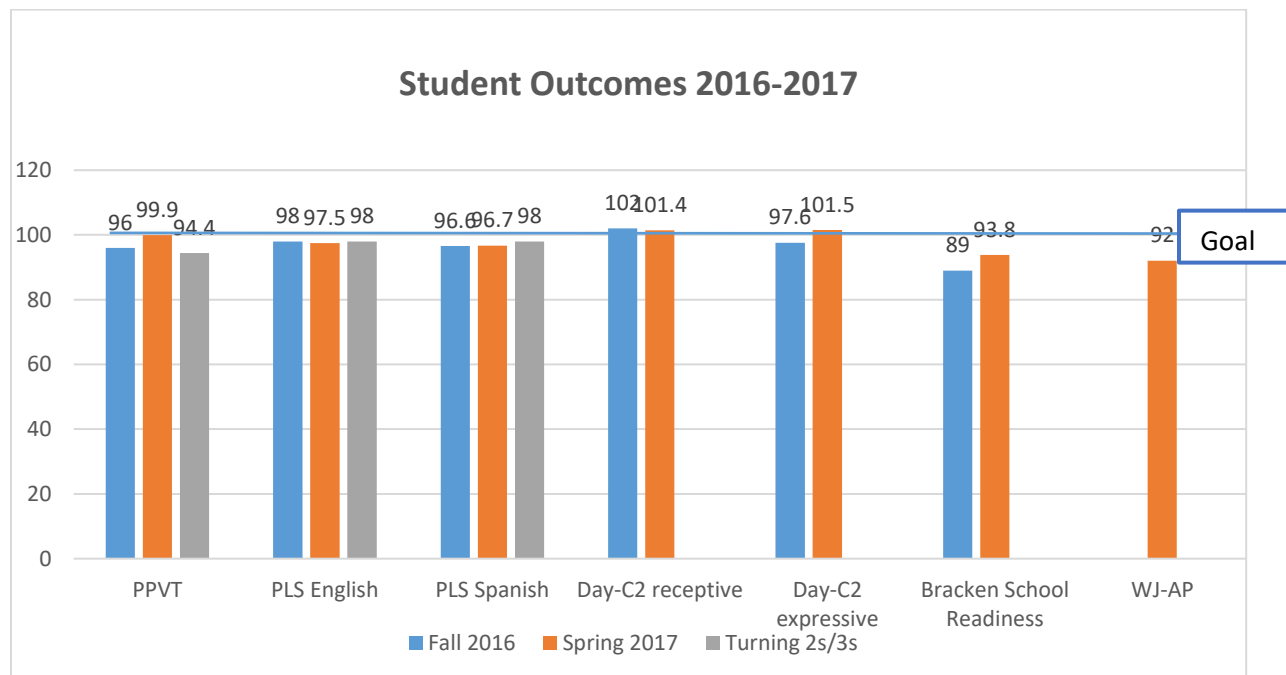


Figure 13: Student outcomes on assessments

PPVT-4. The preschool children averaged 96.0 in the fall and 99.9 in the spring a significant increase of 3.9 points over the school year. Thus children gained more than expected/more than national averages from fall to spring and are right at the national average of 100.

Children also complete the PPVT-4 when they turn age 3. This year, 10 children completed the PPVT-4 as “turning 3s.” These children averaged 94.4 or slightly below the national average and goal of 100.

PLS-5 Auditory Comprehension (AC) English. Preschool children averaged 98 in the fall and 97.5 in the spring, essentially no change but did show average growth and just below the national average. This year 16 children were assessed in English as “turning 2s and turning 3s” and these children were just below the national average with an average score of 98.

PLS-5 Auditory Comprehension (AC) Spanish Combination Scores. Twelve children were assessed for a combination score in Spanish and English (first in Spanish and then in English) and these children showed the same pattern of average growth with an average score of 96.6 in fall and 96.7 in the spring. Seven of the children “turning 2 and 3” were assessed and averaged 98.

Day-C2. Thirty children had the Day-C2 collected in both fall and spring. Findings for receptive language show children averaging above the goal of 100 and no change (although a small but not significant decrease in mean scores) from fall to spring, with the fall average of 102.0 and spring mean score of 101.4. For expressive skills, children showed gains from fall to spring with scores increasing from 97.6 to a mean of 101.5 in spring.

Bracken. Bracken school readiness assessment was completed in fall 2016 and spring 2017 with 28 matched children who were kindergarten bound (were eligible to attend kindergarten in fall 2017). These 28 matched children averaged 89.0 on the School Readiness Composite standard score in fall and 93.8 in spring, showing change. Looking at the Bracken scores across multiple springs allows us to consider how well the program may be preparing children to enter kindergarten.

Woodcock Johnson-Applied Problems. Fifty-eight preschool children were assessed using the WJ-AP measure. The mean score was 92.0, slightly below the national average of 100. In the coming year, the WJ-AP will be administered in the fall and spring to measure children’s math skill growth over the year.

Social Emotional Outcomes. All children experience changes and challenges in their lives. The DECA is a standardized, social-emotional measure used to assess a child’s protective factors. Protective factors are resources or characteristics that buffer risk and build resilience. Risk factors are negative influences, situations and characteristics that reduce ability to cope. Resilience is the ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.



Protective factors include these dimensions:

- **Attachment/relationships:** Ability to have positive connections with others (shows affection, happiness, trusts, seeks others)
- **Initiative:** Ability to use independent thought and actions to meet needs (explores, persistent, tries new things)
- **Self-regulation:** Ability to express emotions and manage behaviors in healthy ways (shows patience, shares, cooperates, calms him/herself)
- **Lack of behavioral concerns:** Children with underdeveloped protective factors are more likely to experience emotional and behavioral problems

There are 3 versions of the DECA form, based on the child's age (0-18months, 18-36 months and 36-60 months). There are 33-38 items, depending on the form. The infant version contains items for attachment and initiative, the toddler version adds in self-regulation and the preschool version includes all domains. The domains are then used to create a Total Protective Factors score for all versions. DECA forms are completed by teaching staff who know the children and looks at the frequency of behaviors over the last 4 weeks.



DECA scores are reported as t-scores, with scores between 41-59 considered 'average', below 40 is considered an area of concern and above 60 is seen as a strength, with the exception of the behavior concern domain, for which, scores about 60 indicate a concern (meaning, the higher the score, the more behavior concerns reported). The developers advise that, when looking across different age versions, to compare the Total Protective Factors scores only. When we do this with our data, looking at all DECA's completed (children who had either fall and spring but may have had different age versions in fall and spring), we see an overall increase in Protective Factors scores for infants (from 45.5 to 47.6) but a decline for toddlers (from 50.7 to 46.4) and preschoolers (from 58.3 to 53.8), as well as an increase in behavior concerns for preschoolers from fall to spring (50.1 to 54.3).

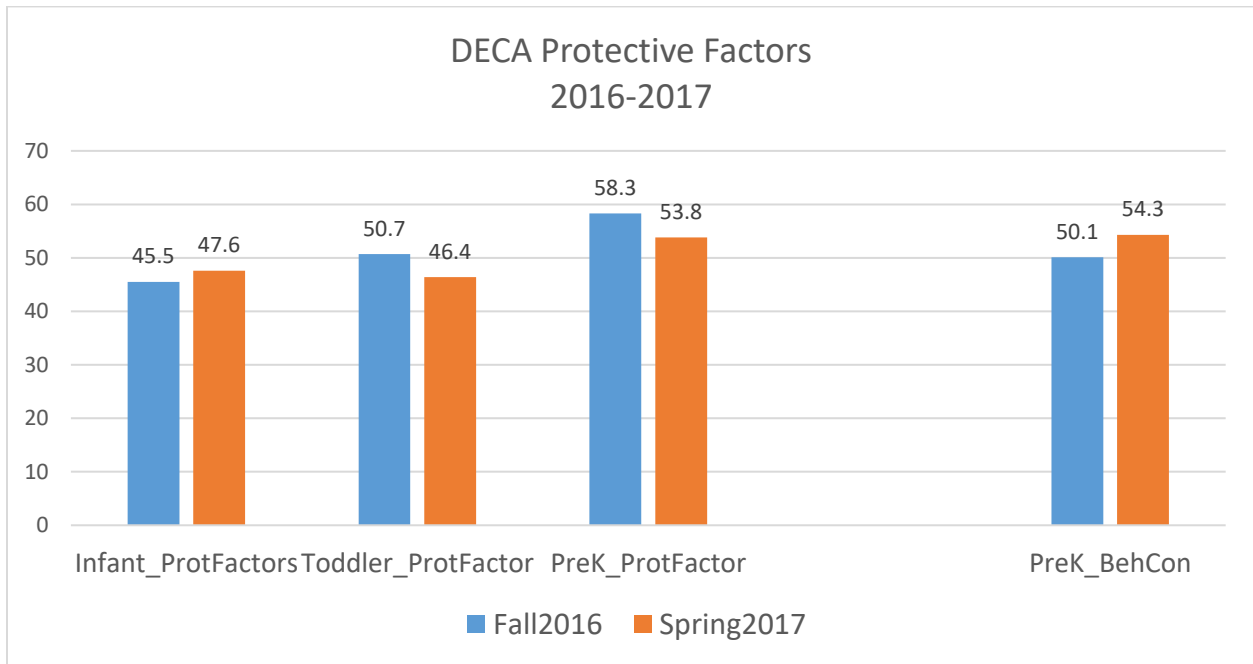


Figure 14: DECA Protective Factors Scores

Data were then analyzed at the domain level using only at children that received the same age version from fall to spring (infant n=8, toddler n=15, pre-k n=58). Here we see slight changes in specific domains for each age group from fall to spring (see tables below for details).

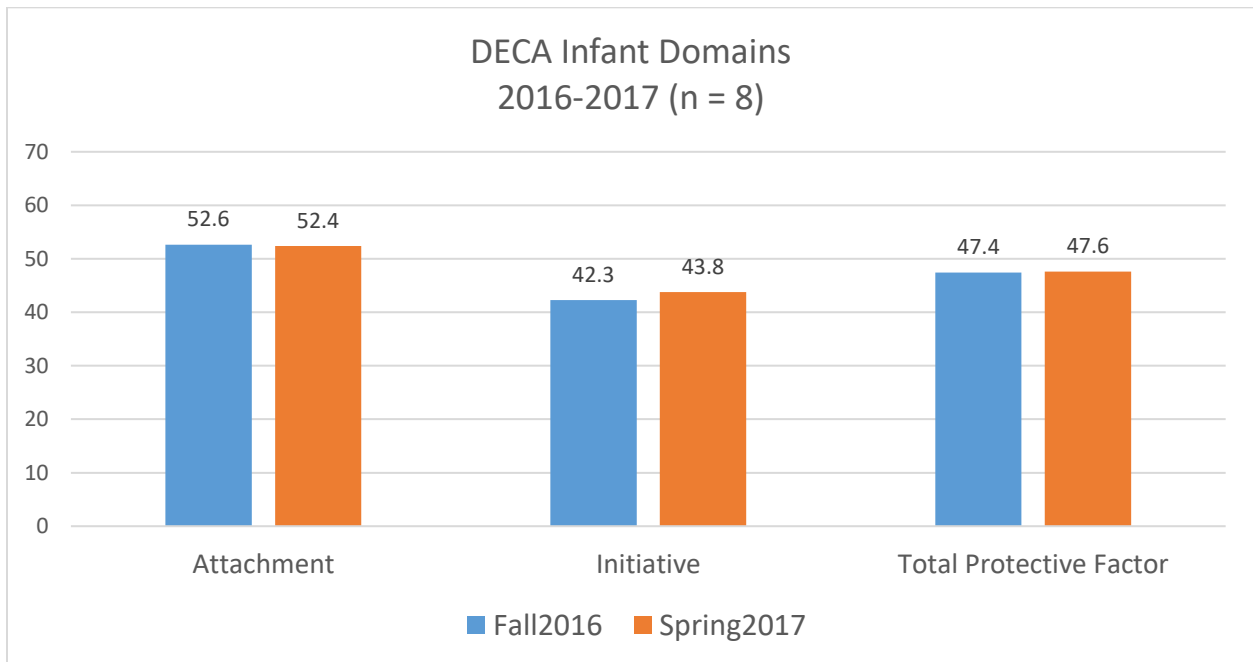


Figure 15: DECA Protective Factors Scores

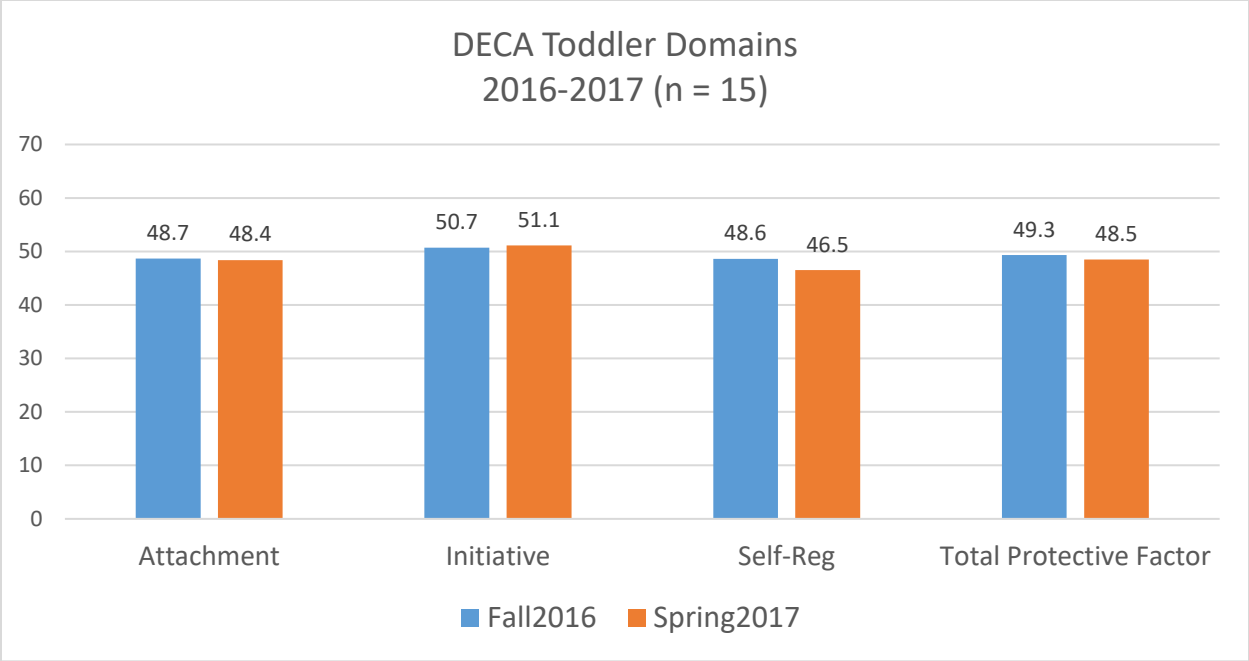


Figure 16: DECA Protective Factors Scores

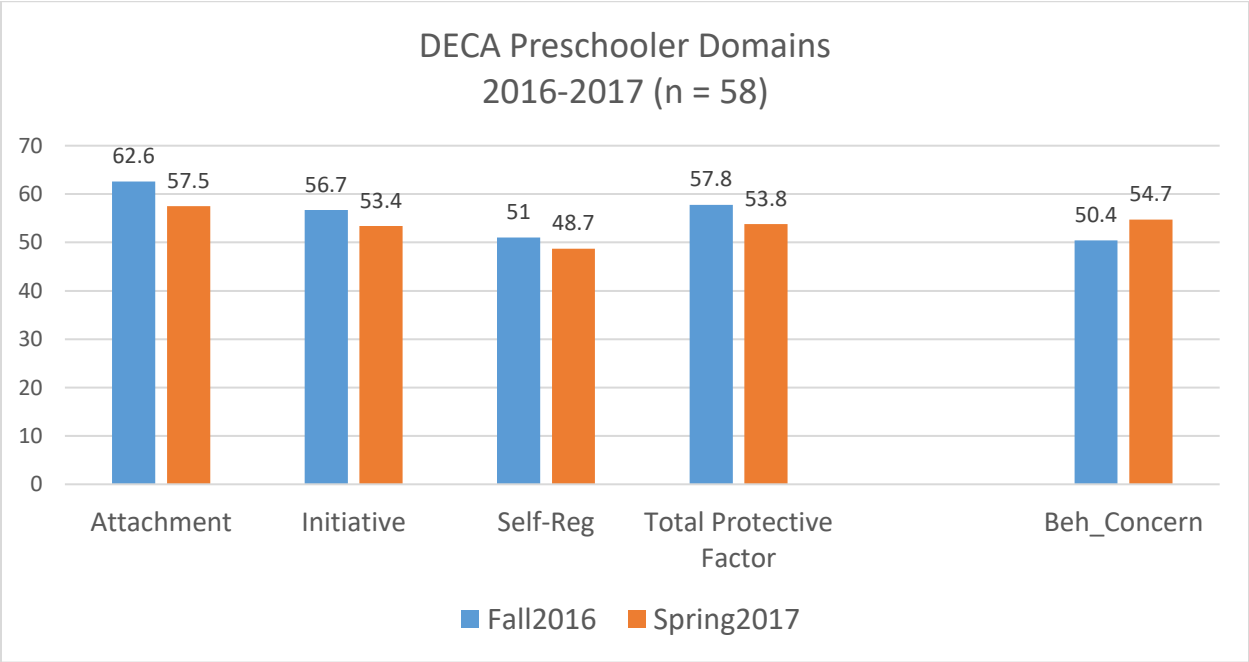


Figure 17: DECA Protective Factors Scores

Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS). Eighty-two children were assessed in fall and spring. The MEFS scores are national percentages, which, like standard scores, show how the children at Educare are doing compared to a national sample. A score of 50 means they are scoring at the national average. As we can see, Educare children score below the national averages, and in some cases, in the lowest quartile of scores.

All average scores for all ages had increased from fall to spring. However, children aged two-years old increased the least (fall 34.07- spring 37.87), and the five-year olds increased the most--more than ten percentage points (fall 38.66 – spring 49.57).

Table 3. MEFS scores by age in fall and spring.

Age by years	N	Fall	N	Spring
2	14	34.07	8	37.87
3	28	20.39	24	27.16
4	34	37.38	31	43.03
5	6	38.66	19	49.57

Recommendations for Child Outcomes

This year some growth in many areas of child development was observed. High quality classrooms and supports for learning add to the opportunities for growth. The Educare of Lincoln children face unique obstacles and continued emphasis on helping children reach peer norms on language, math, social-emotional and school readiness measures will better equip them for future success. These goals may be achieved by:

- Providing professional development specifically focused on supporting dual language learners.
- Engaging parents in activities to support their children’s development at home including supporting home language.
- Including interventions around social-emotional development and executive function, including providing teachers and parent with resources, ideas and activities to support executive functioning particularly.
- Continuing to build on increasing opportunities for math activities.



Summary/Conclusions

Educare of Lincoln is continuing to empower parents while improving children’s literacy and vocabulary skills, social-emotional behaviors, and executive functioning in a high-quality setting. Children typically enter Educare of Lincoln with varying challenges including food and home insecurity, emotional and behavioral problems, and a lack of opportunities for cultural and academic growth. The Educare curriculum exposes children to literacy-rich environments with teachers trained to facilitate growth in areas of cognitive ability and social-emotional attitudes. Assessments are conducted in the fall and spring in areas of executive function, social-emotional behaviors and attitudes, expressive and receptive vocabulary, teacher-child interactions, and mathematical skills, along with an examination of the learning environment.

There are several opportunities for growth in the Educare of Lincoln program. While some areas of the ERS may be unavoidably low scoring (i.e., ITERS-R’s *Space and Furnishings*) due to the building’s architecture, other areas such as *Program Structure* should be a focal point of improvement. With each successive year, Educare of Lincoln continues to provide good quality classrooms. However, with new iterations of environmental measures and clarifications of current measures, it is imperative that each low-scoring domain is addressed with substantial effort applied to improve them.

Many of Educare of Lincoln’s parents report little or no interaction with other parents. This provides another opportunity of improvement to examine for the ensuing year. As parents and their children face many similar challenges, facilitating a network for parents to use for friendship, support, advice, and resource utilization may be beneficial to both parents and their children.

Teachers’ feedback should be a major consideration for program evaluation as well. Each teacher brings specific skill sets to the program and these skills should be utilized to their maximum extent. Looking ahead, it may be beneficial to provide opportunities for professional development in areas that teachers are lacking necessary skill sets or may be interested in. New teachers, i.e., having just graduated and received their degree, are entering the program with limited experience and may not have encountered students with extensive needs. Teachers who have been with Educare of Lincoln for two years or more may be receiving repetitive professional development training and may find it beneficial to uptake training in areas they have not have yet encountered.



Overall, Educare of Lincoln has worked to achieve its goals and the data continue to show growth across domains. The partnership with the program and Evaluation team has served to guide programming with data and to reflect on progress using these findings.

Appendix A: Additional Research and Evaluation Activities

I. Acceleration Grant

Educare of Lincoln joined Educare of Omaha, Winnebago and New Orleans in proposing an Acceleration Grant to the Buffett Early Childhood Fund. This grant focuses on social-emotional development of children. It is a three-year grant, awarded to University of Nebraska Medical Center.

Year 1 (2015-2016). Grant activities included learning about social emotional strategies in all the schools and to synthesize approaches so all staff and teachers could have a large toolbox of approaches and be on the “same page.” The Positive Behavior Supports (PBIS) program was developed in Nebraska schools. All teachers completed PBIS Module 1, received social emotional training, and reviewed a building wide approach to PBIS.

Year 2 (2016 -2017). During this year there were several foci:

- All staff completed PBIS Module 1. Building-wide completion of Module 1 was a great way to “onboard” new staff for a common understanding of PBIS and social emotional emphases that were common across the building. Many completed Module 2 and several staff with greater tenure completed higher level modules.
- Educare of Lincoln actively implemented a PBIS team during the previous school year. The PBIS team met monthly and worked to implement building-wide behavioral expectations, expectations and alternatives for social-emotional guidance and applied for and received a state PBIS grant.
- The Early Childhood System-wide Evaluation Tool: Program-wide (SET) was administered by the LEP fall and spring, as had been done the previous year. There was tremendous growth from the previous year—teachers and children all reported the same building-wide rules and there was physical evidence of reminders (posters in rooms and hallways), as well as consistent reporting of orientation to the rules, positive reinforcement, discussion with children about how they applied what they learned in different situations. Building-wide, the score on the EC SET-PW was .8, a good score and provided a taking off point for goals for the new year.
- All children, aged 2 and above, were assessed using the Minnesota Executive Functioning Scale (MEFS), as shown in this report. This was accomplished by LEP data collectors becoming certified on administering the MEFS, with assessment fall and spring. Our team also completed a “data dive” workshop with one of the assessment authors to better understand and interpret the data.
- One workshop on Executive Functioning was held in Lincoln by developers of the MEFS and a second was offered to representatives of Lincoln Educare in Omaha on this topic, as well as on Trauma Informed Care.
- A group of 8 parents received Circle of Security Training. Evaluation results from 5 of the participating parents can be seen in Appendix E.
- Teachers participated in focus groups around Acceleration activities. Results from these focus groups can be seen in Appendix C.

Year 3 (2017-2018). The staff and the LEP will focus on continuing a number of the programs begun in Years 1 and 2 which include:

- Implementing the PBIS grant and growth in building-wide social emotional positive behavioral support.
- Continuation of evaluation on the EC SET-PW, MEFS and adding an executive functioning measure, Heads Knees, Toes and Shoulders. There will be expansions of programs for adults—mindfulness for teachers; expansion of Circle of Security program for parents, further work with executive functioning, growing building wide PBIS policies and skills, and coaching around trauma-informed care, PBIS, and executive functioning.

II. Student Research projects

With Educare of Lincoln's partnership with UNL, secondary, de-identified data (data that do not contain names of children and families) have been used to generate additional understanding about Educare children's development and about influences on that. In many cases, Lincoln and Omaha data have been combined to address important questions to advance our understanding about early development and its influences in the Educare context. We add to the list shared a year ago.

- 1. Predictors of preschool children's body mass index: Breastfeeding duration, child eating behaviors and parental feeding practices.** Main findings: breast feeding predicted (lower) BMI, feeding practices and child eating behaviors (in expected directions); breast feeding was mediated by child food responsiveness such that children who were not breast feed had more food responsiveness and these children had higher BMI. Amy Encinger, MS thesis. COMPLETED, AUGUST 2015.
- 2. Examining the roles of child temperament, home and classroom environments on low-income preschool children's self regulation.** Findings highlighted the importance of positive parent-child and teacher-child relationships for children's self-regulation, in particular children with low regulatory and high reactive temperament. Ibrahim Acar PhD dissertation. Several papers have now been submitted to journals based on this work. COMPLETED, MAY 2016.
- 3. Temperament, parent and teacher relationships and parent and teacher feeding practices and child eating behaviors at home and in the classroom among Latinos in Lincoln and Omaha Educare and Colombia, South America: A mixed methods study (3-4 year olds).** Elsa Escalante, PhD Dissertation. Elsa has been awarded the Patrice Engel Fund Award, Society for Research in Child Development. COMPLETED, AUGUST 2016.
- 4. The effects of digital media use and parent-child co-use on Head Start children's self-regulation.** Multiple regression analyses showed a significant positive main effect of children's amount of digital media use on their self-control and a negative main effect for behavioral concerns. As parent co-use increased, the benefits compounded in a multiplicative manner. Jan Estraich. Comprehensive Exam project. COMPLETED, AUGUST 2016. In a follow up study for her dissertation, Jan conducted an experimental design study of use of hand-held devices comparing educational software alone,

educational software with parent involvement and business as usual in Lincoln and Omaha Educare. She is now analyzing these data. She applied for and received a \$25,000 Head Start Scholars grant to do this work. This enabled her to purchase (and raffle off to parents) the expensive hand held devices and software.

5. **Influence of child behavioral problems and parenting stress on parent-child conflict among low-income families: The moderating role of maternal nativity.** While predicted relations were found between parenting stress and parent-child conflict for immigrant and non-immigrant families, relations between behavior problems and parent-child conflict were significant only for U.S. born parents. Aileen Garcia, Jan Eстераich and Lixin Ren. Secondary, de-identified Lincoln/Omaha data. COMPLETED, MAY 2016. Submitted to *Merrill Palmer Quarterly*.
6. **Parent-child relationships and preschoolers' social-emotional functioning among low-income families: The moderating role of parental nativity.** More parent-child conflict was related to behavioral concerns, social-emotional strengths and executive functioning, but only for U.S. born parents, not foreign-born. Secondary Lincoln/Omaha, de-identified data. Lixin Ren, Aileen Garcia and Jan Eстераich. Submitted to *Children and Youth Services Review*.
7. **Studies comparing U.S. and Turkish low-income children and families in early childhood education programs.** Three papers have been submitted to international journals focused on cross-cultural comparison of relations between Ages and Stages Domains and language (*Journal of Child Language*); Ages and Stages and executive functioning (*Psychological Reports*) and teacher-child relationships and self-regulation (*European Journal of Psychology of Education*). These analyses demonstrate some similarities and some differences between U.S. and Turkey.
8. **Relations between child observed and teacher report of Executive Functioning. UCARE project (undergraduate research).** Kenzie Easley. UCARE 2016-2017.
9. **Relations between language development and executive functioning for Spanish-speaking and English-speaking children.** Reina Sebastian. UCARE 2016-2017.

III. **New Ways to Use Data to Assist the Lincoln Educare in Program Improvement**

Several new efforts were launched this previous year by the LEP team.

- Interviews with teaching and FES staff to learn more about the qualities of employees successful at Educare, as agreed upon in dialogue with the Lincoln Educare Board of Directors. See Appendix D for the report from these interviews.
- Attendance of LEP in Parent Policy Council.
- Displays at the Parent Activity Night, April 28, 2017. Posters demonstrated results from the Evaluation and provided information about parent literacy activities with children as well as information about executive functioning. Parents were given books in their home languages and the opportunity to draw for executive functioning games to play with their children.

Appendix B. Results from Early Childhood System-wide Evaluation Tool: Program-wide

Educare of Lincoln EC SET-PW results – Spring 2017

As part of the acceleration grant, the SET Evaluation tool has been used twice a year to document and evaluate features of the program-wide behavior supports. The SET was administered in the program in May 2017. Interviews were conducted with teaching staff, children, master teachers, FES supervisor and staff, and the school administrator. Results for the items are included at the end of the report.

Overall, the program continued to improve and implement more of the critical features needed to support positive behavior. Staff and children were able to articulate the program-wide rules and there are systems in place for acknowledging positive behaviors. A PBIS team is in place and meets regularly, although the team lack representation of all staff (specifically infant and toddler teaching staff).

Recommendations from the SET findings include:

- Develop a documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on a monthly basis
- Include infant and toddler teaching staff on the PBIS team. Although not covered by the SET, it may also be beneficial to include a parent representative on the team.
- Develop a documented system for acknowledging student behavior.
- Define a system (or define how the current ChildPlus system will be used) for collecting and summarizing discipline referrals.
- The PBIS team should report discipline and behavioral referral findings to staff at least three times a year.
- The PBIS team should report their progress to staff at least four times per year.

Feature	Evaluation Question	Score: 0-2
A. Expectations Defined	1. Is there documentation that staff has agreed to 3 or fewer positively stated rules/ behavioral expectations? (0=no, 1= too many/negatively focused, 2 = yes)	2
	2. Are the agreed upon rules & expectations publicly posted in 9 of 10 locations? (See interview and observation form for selection of locations). (0= 0-5, 1= 6-8, 2= 9-10)	2
B. Behavioral Expectations Taught	Is there a documented system for teaching behavioral expectations to students on a monthly basis? (0= no, 1 = states that teaching will occur, 2= yes)	1
	2. Do 90% of the staff asked state that teaching of behavioral expectations to students has occurred this past month? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-89%, 2=90%-100%)	2
	3. Do 90% of team members asked state that the program-wide program has been taught/reviewed with staff on an annual basis? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-89%, 2=90%-100%)	2
	4.a. Can at least 70% of 15 or more students without developmental delays state 67% of the rules? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-69%, 2= 70-100%)	2
	5. Can 90% or more of the staff asked list 67% of the rules? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-89%, 2=90%-100%)	2
C. On-going System for Acknowledging Behavioral Expectations	Is there a documented system for acknowledging student behavior? (0= no, 1= states to acknowledge, but not how, 2= yes)	1
	2. Do 50% or more students asked indicate they have received acknowledgement and/or an incentive for expected behaviors over the past week? (0= 0-25%, 1= 26-49%, 2= 50-100%)	2
	3. Do 90% of staff asked indicate they have delivered acknowledgement and/or an incentive to students for expected behavior over the past week? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-89%, 2= 90-100%)	2

Feature	Evaluation Question	Score: 0-2
D. System for Responding to Behavioral Violations	1. Is there a documented system for dealing with and reporting specific behavioral violations? (0= no, 1=states to document, but not how, and 2 = yes)	2
	2. Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on a procedure for receiving support from administration or a behavior consultant when problem behavior occurs, and what problems are classroom-managed? (0=0-50%, 1=51-89%, 2=90-100%)	2
	3. Is the documented crisis plan for responding to dangerous situations posted in 6 of 7 locations? (0= 0-3, 1= 4-5, 2= 6-7)	2
	4. Do 90% of staff asked agree with administration on the procedure for handling extreme emergencies (stranger in building with a weapon)? (0= 0-50%,1= 51-89%, 2= 90-100%)	2

E. Monitoring & Decision- Making	1. Does the discipline referral form list (a) student name/age, (b) date, (c) time, (d) referring staff, (e) problem behavior, (f) location, (g) persons involved, (h) probable trigger, & (i) consequences given? (0=0-3 items, 1= 4-6 items, 2= 7-9 items)	2
	2. Can the administrator clearly define a system for collecting & summarizing discipline referrals (computer software, data entry time)? (0=no, 1= referrals are collected, 2= yes)	1
	3. Does the administrator report that the team provides discipline data summary reports to the staff at least three times/year? (0= no, 1= 1-2 times/yr., 2= 3 or more times/yr)	0
	4. Do 90% of team members asked report that discipline data is used for making decisions in designing, implementing, and revising school wide effective behavior support efforts? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-89%, 2= 90-100%)	0
F. Management	1. Does the program improvement plan list improving behavior support systems as one of the top 3 school/program improvement plan goals? (0= no, 1= 4 or higher, 2= yes)	2
	2. Can 90% of staff asked report that there is a program-wide team to address behavior support systems? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-89%, 2=90-100%)	2
	3. Does the administrator report that team membership includes representation of all staff? (0=no, 2= yes)	0 No i/t staff on team

	4. Can 90% of team members asked identify the team leader? (0= 0-50%, 1= 51-89%, 2= 90-100%)	1
	5. Is the administrator an active member of the program-wide behavior support team? (0= no, 1= yes, but not consistently, 2 = yes)	2
	6. Does the administrator report that team meetings occur at least monthly? (0=no team meeting, 1=less often than monthly, 2= at least monthly)	2
	7. Does the administrator report that the team reports progress to the staff at least four times per year? (0=no, 1= less than 4 times per year, 2= yes)	1
	8. Does the team have an action plan with specific goals that is less than one year old? (0=no, 2=yes)	2
G. District-Level Support	1. Does the program budget contain an allocated amount of money for building and maintaining program-wide behavioral support? (0= no, 2= yes)	2
	2. Can the administrator identify an out-of-program liaison in the district or state? (0= no, 2=yes)	2
Summary Scores: A = 4/4 B = 9/10 C = 5/6 D = 8/8 E = 3/8 F = 12/16 G = 4/4 Mean = 45/56 = .80		

Appendix C. Acceleration Grant Focus Group Summary – Spring 2017

The LEP team conducted four focus groups of teaching staff and FES in May 2017. Staff were asked to reflect on professional development opportunities, classroom practices and strategies, supports, and planning for the coming year. Overall, staff were pleased with the acceleration grant activities, felt the changes in program practices were impactful, and noted the need for continuing improvement and engagement of families. A summary of themes is presented below followed by recommendations for the acceleration grant for the coming year.

Getting everyone on the same page and building strategies

Reflection on this year

Staff noted the improvements this year in consistency among rules and expectations for both in and out of the classroom and a common set of program rules and language. They remarked this was helpful for staff, especially staff who interacted across multiple rooms and when staff interacted with children from other classrooms in hallways or on the playground. It was also seen as very helpful for children. Staff appreciated that the rules were not just abstract ideas but that conversations with children revolved around problem-solving and putting the rules into actions. They stated that, while there was greater consistency, there were times when it still felt like staff were interpreting expectations differently.

Staff stated their strategies for supporting social-emotional and executive function development while addressing problem behaviors grew this year as a result of trainings and online modules. Professional development opportunities were well received and staff felt supported by Master teachers. They enjoyed completing the online modules and appreciated receiving a stipend from the grant to do this work. They also liked that they could watch the next module and do them at their own pace. Staff commented that, when rooms were fully staffed, it was easier to handle behaviors as they arose and that they were able to take breaks or seek out an MT for additional support, when needed.

Comments about future activities

Staff anticipated seeing the full impact of this consistency of rules and expectations when children transitioned next year from toddler rooms to preschool rooms and when new children enroll. While they are feeling more prepared, support and further trainings are still needed to continue building on these skills and supporting staff in individualizing for children. Staff shared experiences of using some strategies successfully but then having those strategies no longer work for some children. Ongoing support for lesson planning and integrating various priorities (for GOLD, CLASS, etc.) is needed. There was also concern for new staff and helping them learn these strategies while supporting staff who already had basic skills learn more.

Recommendations for further improvements were to continue to work towards making the expectations part of daily routines and identifying areas where staff may be interpreting expectations differently.

Recommendations for continuing to support staff development should consider offering a variety of training opportunities that could be tailored to staff's needs and experience. This could be done by having general trainings and then breakout groups by topics of interest or levels of knowledge/experiences. Continued focus on onboarding staff, providing new staff additional support and developing peer mentoring are also ways to address this. Trainings with a focus on practical, applied application of concepts (rather than technical, background concepts), lesson planning and continuing the use of the online modules should part of the activities in the coming year. While staff noted the support of MTs, they also noted the need to have additional staff available at specific times to either observe or assist in working with a specific child.

Engaging families

Reflections on this year

Throughout the focus groups, staff referred to the need of engaging families in supporting their children's development and addressing behaviors in a way that was consistent with program practices. This consistency is important for children and parents to learn what are age appropriate expectations and strategies that can be used at home. One staff stated that it felt like they worked very hard Monday through Friday each week but started back at "square one" each week. They commented that, while some efforts to increase family engagement occurred, strategies for talking to parents and sharing information with a wider group of parents was needed. One staff shared resources from the PBIS module website with her parents. Staff were positive about Circle of Security being offered to parents but remarked that it only reached a few families at a time.

Comments about future activities

Staff were in strong support of continuing to offer Circle of Security for families in the future. They would like to see more information provided to families about acceleration grant activities and specific classroom practices.

Staff suggested sharing expectations, rules and strategies with parents as another way to support children and families. In addition, families would also benefit from providing parent resources, workshops and continuing Circle of Security. One staff mentioned sharing resources from the PBIS module website with families. The program could consider using this resource in a consistent way with families.

Additional supports needed

While staff were able to reflect on improvements made this year in relation to acceleration grant priorities, more supports are needed to maintain these gains and further integrate them into the program. Both a continuation of current supports and adding new supports, particularly related to family engagement, will help staff, children, families and the program achieve the acceleration grant goals.

Staff made the following recommendations for additional supports related to staff development, materials and family supports to consider in the coming year:

- *For staff: Yoga classes; ongoing trainings and individualized staff supports; continue online modules with stipend*
- *For classrooms: "Solution kit card" from online module; social-emotional books for classrooms; playground materials; felt boards and accessories; puppets; materials for cozy area; emotion faces poster*
- *Materials for families: activities to do with their children; social-emotional books; resources*

Appendix D. Results from Focus Groups with Staff about Professional Development at Educare

Currently, Educare Lincoln employs 32 full-time teaching staff and three full-time Family Engagement Support (FES) staff. The Local Evaluation Partner (LEP) team from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL) conducted 12 interviews with lead teaching staff, family engagement specialists (FES), associate teaching staff and aides (three interviews with each type of staff were conducted in an effort to gauge perceptions of success-promoting attributes of themselves and others, job satisfaction, and emotionally-charging and -taxing aspects of working with a largely at-risk population of children,. The informal interviews were conducted at the Educare facility in private rooms in a one-on-one manner and were recorded manually by the interviewer.

Among the 12 staff, the duration of employment spanned from five months to 42 months ($m=19.84$ months). When asked what they thought contributed to success as a teacher in the Educare network, seven participants (58%) responded that teamwork and communication were major contributors to success and longevity. Master teaching staff monitoring, mentoring, and allowing teaching staff to be creative were common sub-themes of teamwork and communication. Some participants also attributed the continuing education training they receive as tools to promote success. The third common response pertained to teacher familiarity with their students' background and family arrangement. As one teacher noted, "[Knowing] the backgrounds of the kids. It's important when you come in to build trust with them".

The next question related to the perceived successful qualities of peer professionals. When asked why some teaching staff/FES were more successful than others, five (42%) credited their successful peers with being flexible, e.g., willing to work late, cover additional classrooms, delay breaks. As one interviewee responded, "Someone who is able to adapt well, be flexible [will be successful]". The second most common response cited successful peers' abilities to focus and build relationships. Several teaching staff believed that for their team to be successful, it was necessary for the staff to work in unison toward the same goals.

In a work environment with a history of high turnover rates, it is imperative to identify daily challenges that each teaching staff member face. *Emotional impacts* and *unpredictability* were the two most common responses among the participants when asked to identify the hardest aspects of staying at Educare. *Emotional impacts* included the feelings of seeing the effects of trauma on children as they build closer relationships with them and losing students as families pull their child(ren) out of the program due to income ineligibility or relocation. *Unpredictability* referred primarily to compensating for staff turnover in additional classrooms and shifts. One teacher remarked, "It affects us when staff are pulled from our rooms and we never know what to expect". Three (25%) of the teaching staff felt that challenging and sometimes aggressive behavior were the hardest parts of their everyday activity.

A resounding 10 (83%) of the participants mentioned positive relationships as the most desirable trait of working at Educare of Lincoln. "We have wonderful staff and the leadership is strong here at Educare", remarked one teacher. Another stated, "The leadership team is absolutely amazing. [Master teacher] makes you feel great and worthwhile. They have made

me a better teacher.” Several teaching staff also gave credit to their peer relationships as daily motivating factors to go to work.

When asked about the *least* desirable trait of working at Educare, the answers were largely unique to the individual. Unique answers included: no onboarding procedure in place when they were hired, children’s challenging behaviors, inaccessible vacation hours due to lack of coverage, too many training days, an uneven workload, and the designated hours of a work shift. There were two answers, however, that each had a two-person overlap: Two teaching staff indicated there was nothing about their job that dissatisfied them and two others specified the ambiguity of rules as they pertain to teaching roles. It was communicated to the LEP that on occasion, lead teaching staff are held fully accountable for what does (or does not) happen in their designated classroom, regardless of who the task was assigned to. Concerning responsibilities, there is a common uncertainty of who is accountable for various daily tasks, i.e., if the burden of responsibility falls on the lead teacher, the aide, or the associate teacher.

The most common reason to stay on staff at Educare was the positive and observable impact on children and their families. Six (50%) attributed their willingness to continue teaching at Educare to their personal belief that what they do individually and as a team is transforming children’s lives. As one teacher responded, “I can see the change when the parents have been told their child will never change. Two years ago, we had a child come in with speech delays and behavior problems, like hitting. After two years, he left here talking like a first-grader; there were no more problems”.

Seven (58%) of the interviewed teaching staff suggested additional training as an opportunity to create an environment that encourages professional development. While one teacher said she had become frustrated with the repetitive nature of the training modules she was taking, the majority of teaching staff enjoy learning practicable teaching and behavior re-direction methods. The teaching staff feel that it prepares them for dealing with the unpredictable issues that their students may present. Currently, Educare of Lincoln teaching staff receive professional development monthly and the consensus seems to be that more, unique, and individualized training would be well-received and utilized to make the classroom a more effective learning safe place for children.

While some teaching staff have differing views of current practices and methodologies at Educare of Lincoln, it appears that the majority of teaching staff and FES continue their employment at Educare due to the positive effects of teamwork and flexibility that has allowed them to grow closer to their peers. While the unpredictability of staff turnover is worrisome and in the consciousness of the teaching staff, it is not enough to deter most of them from enjoying the positivity of impacting at-risk students’ lives and abilities, which was the most prevalent reason given to stay at Educare. In order to reduce future staff turnover, it is paramount to note the importance of teamwork and future specific training opportunities while continuing to highlight the successful outcomes due to the current work and educational strategies implemented by the Educare of Lincoln staff.

Appendix E. Circle of Security Parenting Results

A group of eight parents received Circle of Security Parenting Training. Evaluation results were from five of them.

- Parents reported on 4.8 on a 5-point scale that “Meeting with a group of parents was helpful to me.”
- Parents reported 5 on a 5-point that that “The leader did a good job in working with my group.”
- Parents reported levels of parenting stress dropped for them—averaging 3.75 of 5 at the beginning of the course and 3.00 at the end.
- Parents reported improvements in relationships with their child—averaging 3.5 at the beginning and 4.2 at the end.
- Parents reported improvements in their own specific behaviors: recognizing behaviors that trigger their negative responses to child; identifying and responding to child’s need to explore and for comfort and contact; when they fail to respond to child’s need, they look for a way to repair it; stepping back and thinking about what child’s behavior is telling them; and feeling confident they can meet the needs of their child.

Parents gave comments of their experience with Circle of Security Parenting.

- It helps me a lot with dealing [with] my kids.
- I think it is helping me.

Parents said as their reason for joining the course:

- I wish to be a better father, to educate other parents in the future.
- My children have behavior issues.

Ages of children

- Of four persons answering the question, all four had infants and toddlers; two had preschool age children as well.

Race/Ethnicity

- Parents answering this question answered as follows:
 - Middle Eastern (2)
 - Arabic
 - White