



2023 TO 2024

ANNUAL SNAPSHOT OF EVALUATION FINDINGS

Visit us at www.educarelincoln.org

Meet the LEP Team for 2024-2025

The Local Evaluation Partner (LEP) Team includes faculty and students from the UNL Department of Child, Youth and Family Studies. The team works with Educare Lincoln to provide ongoing program evaluation and support in providing high quality early care and education.

LEADERSHIP



Dr. Clariebelle Gabas



Dr. Amy Napoli

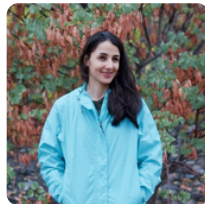


Dr. Soo-Young Hong

GRADUATE ASSISTANTS



Neli Morales Garcia



Simin Azghadi



Ni Ketut Wilmayani



Sebastian Marine Hine

Acknowledgements

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For more information about the content presented here, please contact Clariebelle Gabas at mgabas2@unl.edu or Amy Napoli at amynapoli@unl.edu.

About Educare Lincoln

Preparing children birth to 5 for school readiness



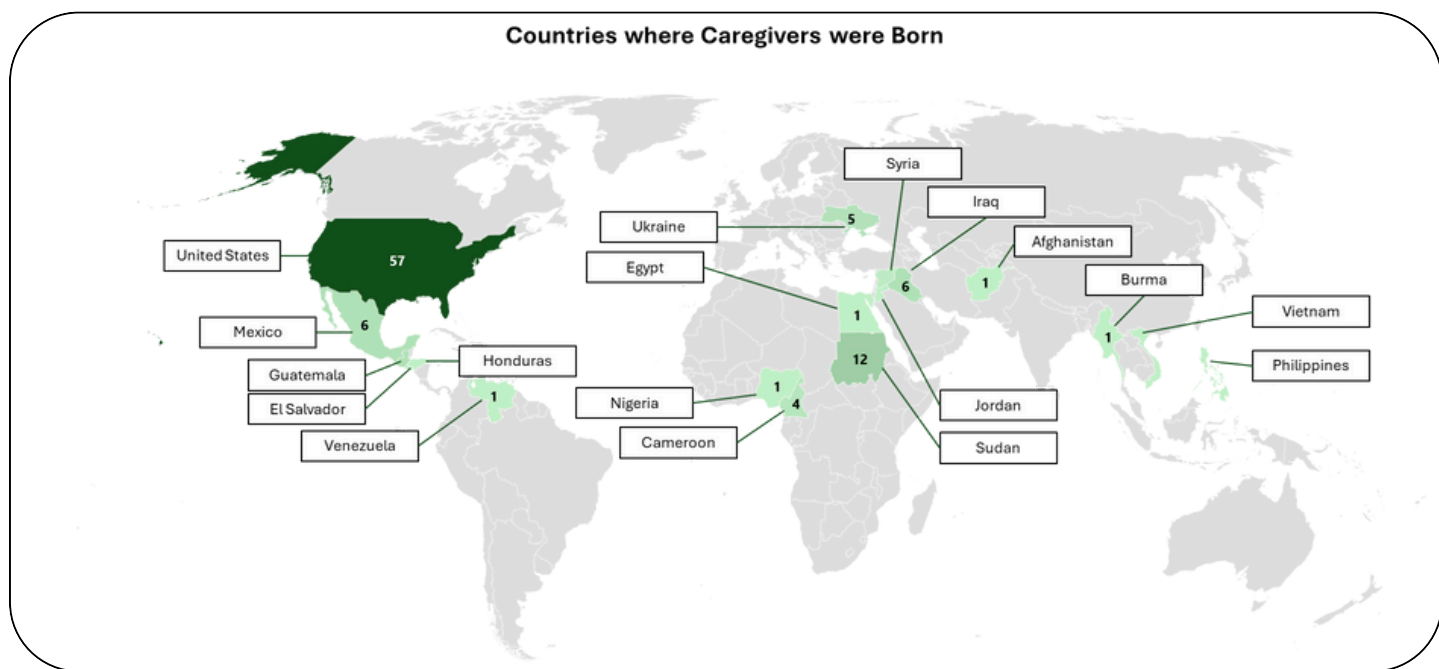
Educare Lincoln is a collaborative effort between the Buffet Early Childhood Fund (BECF), Lincoln Public Schools (LPS), and the University of Nebraska-Lincoln (UNL). We aim to prepare vulnerable children from birth to 5 for kindergarten by fostering early learning through research-based approaches. In addition, we help advocate for families and connect them to essential resources in the community. Our program works to inspire policymakers, corporate influencers, and early childhood educators by being a model of high-quality early childhood education.



Who are the families and children served by Educare Lincoln?

Educare Lincoln is one of the most culturally diverse Educare programs in the Educare Learning Network. In 2023-2024, we served families from 17 different countries, including Sudan, Mexico, Ukraine, Guatemala, Iraq, and Cameroon. In addition, the families we served spoke 19 distinct languages, including Vietnamese, Pashto, Burmese, and Urdu.

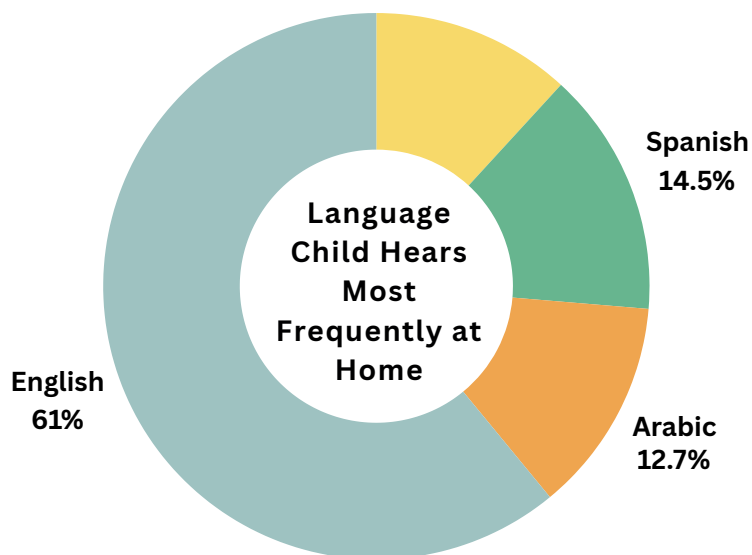
In 2023-2024, families enrolled at Educare Lincoln completed a family survey with their Family Engagement Specialist (FES). The information reported here includes the families who completed the survey ($n = 110$ families).



45% of families speak a language other than English at home



Another Language (e.g., Kurdish, French, Ukrainian)
11.8%



More on our Educare families...



Caregiver Characteristics (n = 110)



19% have a college degree



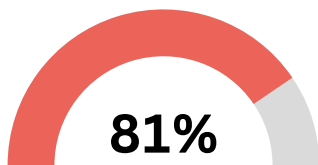
56% are working full-time



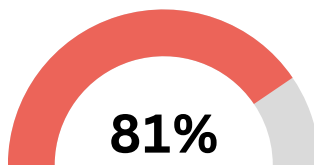
22% are enrolled in school/training program

Social Support: Who's been very helpful in raising your child?

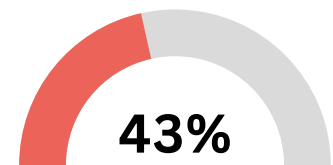
Caregivers were asked to rate the helpfulness of others in supporting their family while raising young children. Most caregivers rated Educare Lincoln staff, church members, and grandparents as **very helpful** in providing support for raising their child.



Educare Lincoln Staff



Church Members



Grandparents

Life Now Compared to Last Year



18% reported that childcare/school arrangements are a lot better.



44% reported that their child's behavior is a lot better.



51% reported that their parenting is a lot better.



32% reported that their emotional wellbeing is a lot better.

Families Describing Their Child

She is really kind and likes to help me out a lot at home.

We have a special bond and he's very loving.

Energetic, kind, and caring!

He is fun, adventurous, strong-willed, and kind.

She's a leader, loves to teach, and takes care of others.



How are Educare families supporting learning at home?

Educare Lincoln families support their children’s learning at home through different activities. Families reported engaging in the activities below *at least 3 times a week* to foster their children’s language development!



57% read a story with their child.



73% sang songs with their child.



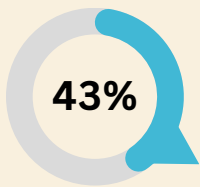
68% played counting games with their child.



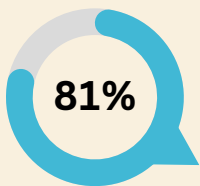
84% played with toys or games with their child.

Conversations support language development!

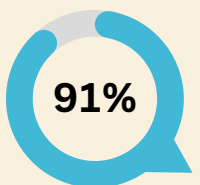
Frequent and high-quality back-and-forth interactions with young children are critical for developing language skills and supporting learning. Educare Lincoln families reported talking to their child about different topics **at least 3 times a week!**



Talked about TV or videos with their child.



Talked about what their child experienced.



Talked about Educare with their child.

Suggestions for good times and places to start a conversation!

AT THE STORE



“Look at these two cereal boxes! What do you see on them that’s the same? What’s different?”

AT THE PARK



“What do you notice about these flowers? Tell me about what you see.”

AT MEALTIME



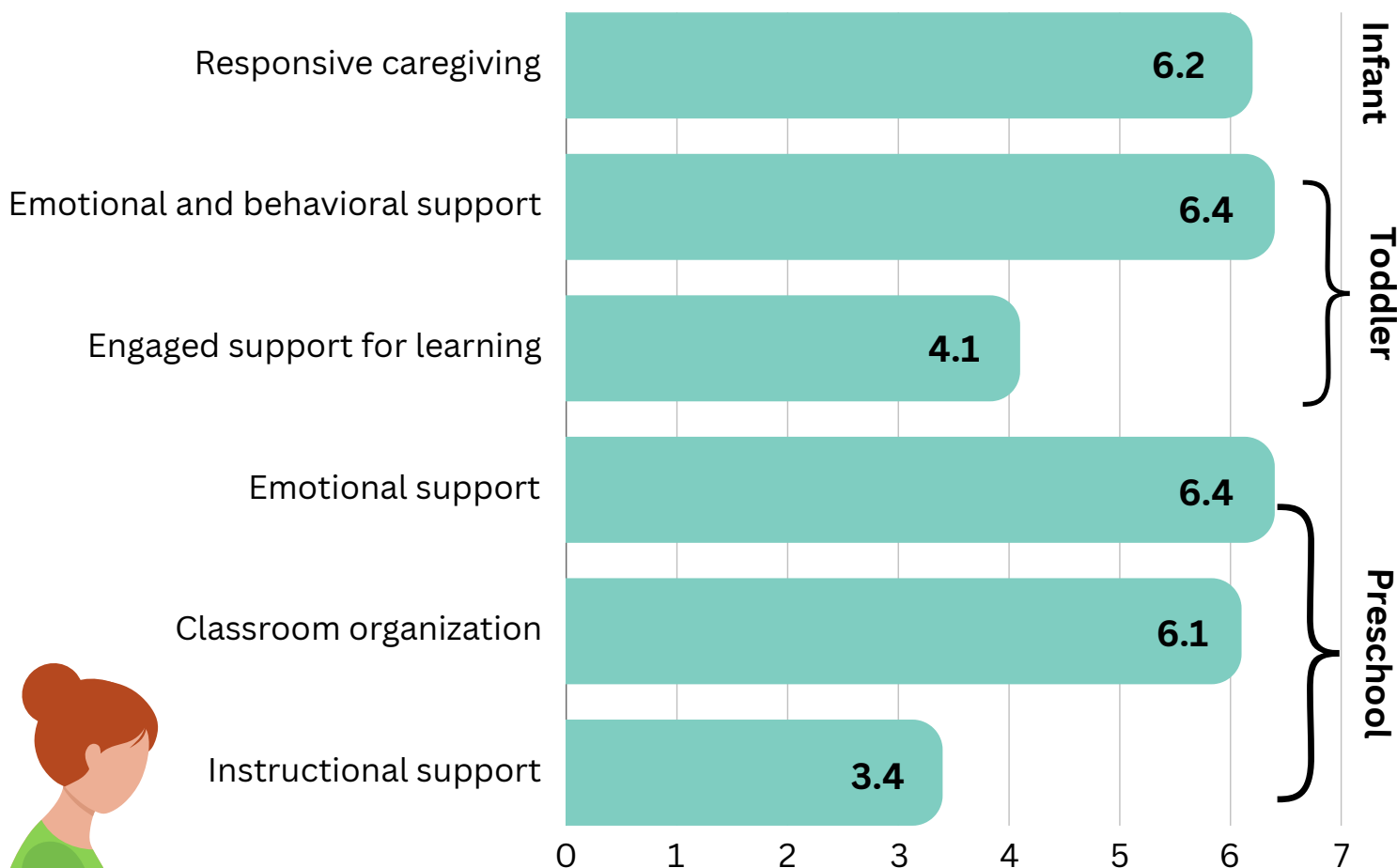
“Tell me about the noodles you’re eating. Do you see how some are short and some are long? How do they taste?”

These were adapted from “Ideas to Spark Rich Conversations with Your Children!” by Janis Strasser and Lisa Mufson Bresson. For more information, visit: https://go.unl.edu/sparking_conversations

What is the quality of the learning environment in Educare Lincoln classrooms?

The **Classroom Assessment Scoring System® (CLASS)** measures the quality of support in the classroom. The CLASS considers how teachers support children's emotional development, learning, and critical thinking skills. CLASS scores range from 1 to 7, with scores indicating low (1-2), medium (3-5), or high (6-7) quality.

Average CLASS Scores Spring 2024



More on Educare classroom quality...



High quality early learning environments...

- support positive early brain development.
- promote social, emotional, and learning outcomes.
- have positive effects on children, families, and communities.

The **Infant/Toddler Environment Rating Scale (ITERS)** assesses various aspects of the classroom environment, including the physical setting, learning materials, health and safety procedures, and interactions between children and teachers. ITERS scores range from 1 to 7, with 7 being the highest quality possible.

Average ITERS Scores Fall 2023

ITERS Domain	Score
Space and furnishing	6.68
Personal care routines	5.61
Language and books	6.10
Activities	5.53
Interactions	6.62
Program structure	6.00
Total average score	6.06

What do high quality learning environments look like?



RELATIONSHIPS

Teachers are warm and caring. They are often engaged with children. They get to know your child and your family.

LANGUAGE AND LEARNING

Teachers encourage children to speak and try new things. Teachers set appropriate boundaries for behavior.



TEACHER SUPPORT

Teachers have ongoing professional development. They are supported by program directors and mentors.

To learn more about quality early care and education settings, **visit go.unl.edu/highqual**

How are Educare Lincoln children doing in their social-emotional development?

The **electronic Devereux Early Childhood Assessment (eDECA)** is a strength-based assessment that assesses young children’s social-emotional development and behavior challenges. Teachers evaluate each child on how often they observe specific behaviors in up to four areas (shown below).

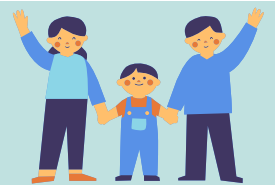
Initiative: Ability to use independent thought and action to meet needs.

Example: Asking a friend to play



Attachment: Ability to promote and maintain positive connections with others.

Example: Showing affection to familiar adults



Self-Control: Ability to express emotions and manage behaviors in healthy ways.

Example: Sharing with others



(Lack of) Behavioral Concerns: Reflects the severity of child’s behavior challenges.

Example: Having a temper tantrum



Percentage of Children who Met or Exceeded Expectations for Each Area in Fall 2023



	Initiative	Attachment	Self-Control	(Lack of) Behavioral Concerns
Infants (n = 6)	50%	67%	NA	NA
Toddlers (n = 24)	100%	83%	72%	NA
Preschoolers (n = 98)	76%	85%	61%	73%

More on Educare Lincoln children’s social-emotional development...

Percentage of Children who Met or Exceeded Expectations for Each Area in Spring 2024



	Initiative	Attachment	Self-Control	(Lack of) Behavioral Concerns
Infants (<i>n</i> = 6)	100%	100%	NA	NA
Toddlers (<i>n</i> = 24)	100%	92%	92%	NA
Preschoolers (<i>n</i> = 98)	90%	96%	79%	71%

Suggestions to Support Positive Growth in Children’s Social Emotional Development!



Warmth and affection from significant caregivers build secure relationships, model gentle behavior, and enhance children's positive interactions with peers.



Listen attentively and restate what children say to help develop children’s vocabulary related to feelings and emotions.



Spend quality one-on-one time with children through activities like reading and playing games.



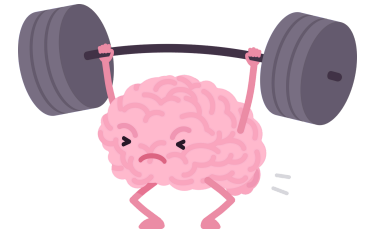
These were adapted from “Promoting Young Children’s Social and Emotional Health” by Jeannie Ho and Suzanne Funk. For more information, visit <https://go.unl.edu/emotions>

How are Educare Lincoln children doing in their cognitive development?

What is Executive Function?

At Educare Lincoln, one way we check children’s cognitive development is by assessing their executive function (EF) skills. EF skills help people control their behavior to achieve goals instead of doing what is automatic or easiest. EF skills help us manage information, plan, and make decisions.

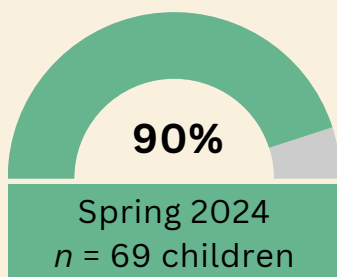
Developing EF skills in early childhood supports a range of important lifelong outcomes, including school readiness. Children can learn EF skills through practice, which can help to support their cognitive development over the first few years of life.



The **Minnesota Executive Function Scale (MEFS™)** is an assessment of executive function for ages 2 and older. It is a sorting game that children do on an iPad.



Percentage of Children who Met or Exceeded Expectations for EF Skills



Children can benefit from receiving continued support in developing their EF skills. See our recommendations for activities to support EF development!



Activities to Support EF Development

FOR CHILDREN 1.5 TO 3 YEARS

- Play matching, and sorting games with them.
- Facilitate their imaginary play, ask them questions about their play, and narrate your observation.
- Play active games that encourage them to focus on a goal, like song games with movement.



FOR CHILDREN 3 TO 5 YEARS

- Support their high-level imaginary play by exposing them to diverse experiences.
- Encourage their storytelling.
- Encourage challenging song and movement games.



How are Educare Lincoln children doing in their language development?

Developing young children’s language skills is critical for their reading and writing development and overall school success. At Educare Lincoln, we use the **Preschool Language Scales, 5th edition (PLS-5)** to assess children’s ability to comprehend or understand spoken language.

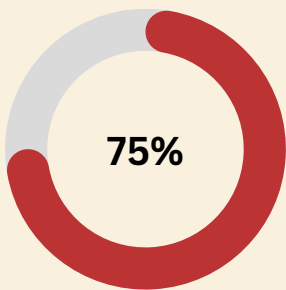


Example: We show the child a set of four pictures (e.g., ball, juice, fruit, comb) and say, “Show me which one you eat.”

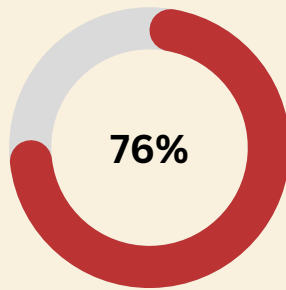


Percentage of Children who Met or Exceeded Expectations for Language Development

Overall PLS-5

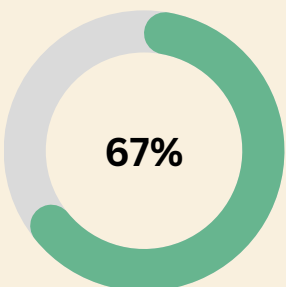


Fall 2023
(n = 101 children)

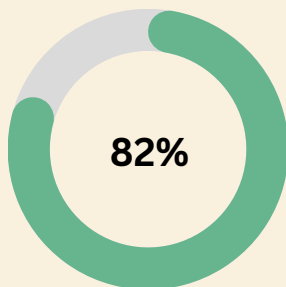


Spring 2024
(n = 142 children)

Spanish Dual Language PLS-5



Fall 2023
(n = 15 children)



Spring 2024
(n = 17 children)

Activities to Support Children’s Language Development



Engage in regular conversations in your home language. Use different words and gestures to go along with what you say.



Read books together daily. Ask questions and encourage your child to talk about the pictures or story.



Sing songs and recite rhymes in your home language.

These were adapted from “Equalizing Opportunities to Learn: A Collaborate Approach to Language and Literacy Development in Preschool” by Laura B. Reynolds and “Reinforcing Language Skills for Our Youngest Learner” by Claudina Hannon. For more information, visit go.unl.edu/supportlang and go.unl.edu/familylit

Community Resources for Families

Catholic Social Services

<https://csshope.org/>

- Performing the Works of Mercy in response to the call of God.

Lutheran Family Services

<https://www.onelfs.org/>

- Providing quality human care services that build and strengthen individual, family, and community life.

Nebraska Appleseed

<https://neappleseed.org/>

- Fighting for justice and opportunity for all Nebraskans.

CEDARS

<https://cedarskids.org/>

- Helping children achieve safety, stability, and enduring family relationships.

Asian Community and Culture Center

<https://www.lincolnasiancenter.org/>

- Our programs help to provide spaces for connection and community among refugees and immigrants in Lincoln.

El Centro de las Americas

<https://elcentrone.org/>

- El Centro's mission is to educate and empower Hispanic/Latino families and the community at large.

Empowering Communities through Her Opportunities (ECHO) Collective

<https://echocollectivene.org/>

- ECHO Collective connects and empowers refugee and immigrant women by providing opportunities for personal growth and building cross-cultural relationships in a nurturing environment.



Future Directions for Educare Lincoln

Highlights from 2023-2024

- Educare Lincoln continued to be one of the most culturally and linguistically diverse programs in the Educare Learning Network with 45% of the families we served speaking a language other than English at home.
- Educare Lincoln continued to help families in raising their children by providing social support, facilitating childcare and school arrangements, and connecting families to community resources.
- Educare Lincoln continued to provide quality care and learning opportunities as children showed positive growth in social-emotional development and language skills.

Goals for 2024-2025!

There is room for growth each year as new families, teachers, and staff join Educare Lincoln. We will continue to use data to support program improvement and to identify areas of growth. Some of our key goals the new school year include:

1. Helping families to build positive connections in the community and provide access to resources and information for their children's care and school readiness.
2. Working with teachers to continue growing the skills and knowledge they need to provide high-quality classroom instruction.
3. Ensuring that children receive essential supports at school and at home for positive growth and development.



How can you help Educare Lincoln?



Educare Lincoln receives generous support from donors, local and national foundations, corporate partners, and individual contributors.

We are grateful for any assistance you can provide.

Whether through donations, advocacy, or volunteering, your support can make a significant impact on Lincoln and its youth.

Your involvement has the power to transform the future of our community and shape a brighter path for the children of Lincoln!



3435 North 14th Street | Lincoln, NE 68521
www.educarelincoln.org

Thank you for supporting the future of young children!