Educare Schools as a Platform for Bridging the Word Gap
Acceleration Project Partnership

Juniper Gardens Children’s Project, Educare Kansas City, Educare West DuPage and Educare Tulsa

**Project Overview**

This project brings together three Educare Schools in partnership to demonstrate the feasibility of implementing an evidence-based language intervention to bridge the word gap. Designed to build the capacity of educators and parents to promote the communication opportunities and development of infants and young children, the Promoting Communication Strategies intervention will be embedded into randomly selected Educare classrooms in Kansas City, Kansas and West DuPage Illinios to provide teachers with additional tools to increase the language-learning opportunities within classrooms. The intervention will also be embedded into community-based initiatives in Educare Tulsa, Oklahoma to extend upon their local initiatives to bridge the word gap with parents of children in the community.

**Project Goals and Approach**

This project addresses the strategic priorities identified for the Educare Learning Network: (1) Continuous innovation around teaching and learning; (2) Using the Network as a platform for innovative, applied early childhood research and evaluation; and (3) Extending effective Educare approaches beyond the walls of Educare Schools; and (4) partnering with parents to promote positive outcomes. The goals of this project include:

- Utilizing the Promoting Communication Strategies intervention with ongoing curricula to provide Educare teachers and adults leading community-based initiatives with additional tools to increase children’s language
- Facilitating the Educare mission to engage parents and the community by extending opportunities that children have in Educare beyond “the walls.”
- Expanding local initiatives to bridge the word gap with parents of children across Educare Schools and community agencies to align efforts.
- Leveraging expertise of the Educare Learning Network, the Bridging the Word Gap Network, and participating Educare Schools in a Practice-Based Research Partnership to bridge the word gap.

**Research Questions to Be Addressed**

1. Does the Promoting Communication professional development and coaching model result in increases in teachers/adults’ use of strategies for embedding language opportunities and support within classroom and/or community activities?
2. Do measurable increases in teachers’ or others’ use of the language intervention strategies and overall language interaction with children result in improved child language and communication outcomes for all children?
3. As a result of efforts to build continuity between school and home, do parents report using the strategies at home to scaffold their child’s learning and growth?
4. Do efforts to extend Educare beyond the walls result in parents’ and community members’ reporting increased awareness of the importance and use of the Promoting Communication Strategies along with other word-gap interventions to bridge the word gap?
5. Do the alignment between bridging the word gap efforts at Educare Schools and community-based initiatives result in reported shared benefits around bridging the word gap?

**Intervention Description and Expected Outcomes**

The Promoting Communication TALK Intervention incorporates: (1) Working in partnership to embed the naturalistic language promoting strategies into daily routines and randomly selected Educare classrooms and community-based programs serving infants, toddlers and preschoolers; (2) sharing the Promoting Communication strategies with parents to build their capacity to support their child’s early language development and provide continuity from school to home; (3) coaching and professional development for implementing the intervention; (4) documenting teacher, parent, and coach fidelity of intervention delivery using multiple methods and reporters; and (5) documenting child outcomes.

Through this Educare Acceleration project we expect to:

- Test a model for how Educare can serve as a platform for bridging the word gap.
- Provide information and lessons learned as to how teachers in Educare schools can increase their instructional support for language learning across classrooms.
- Document continuity between classroom—home support for language learning.
- Document the implementation of the intervention in community-based efforts.
- Share this information across the ELN and with community-based organizations to ensure findings may inform efforts in Educare schools and community-wide

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