



Annual Report 2021

General Information

Name of Agency: Start Early
Program Number:
Program Name: Educare Chicago
Address: 5044 S. Wabash Avenue
Phone Number: 773-924-2334
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Director Name: Angela M Lampkin
Director Email: alampkin@startearly.org

Agency Web Site Address: www.educarechicago.org
Agency Type: Licensed Early Childhood Program

Agency Description

Educare Chicago is a birth to five Head Start/Early Head Start early childhood program founded in 2000 by Start Early. This state-of-the-art school on Chicago's South Side serves low-income infants, toddlers, preschoolers and their families. By providing research-based, high-quality services to young children and their families, Educare helps break the cycle of unequal access to resources and historic under-investment and serves as a model for learning and innovation in the field nationwide.

Site Locations

5044 S. Wabash Avenue, Chicago, Illinois 60615

Community Areas Served

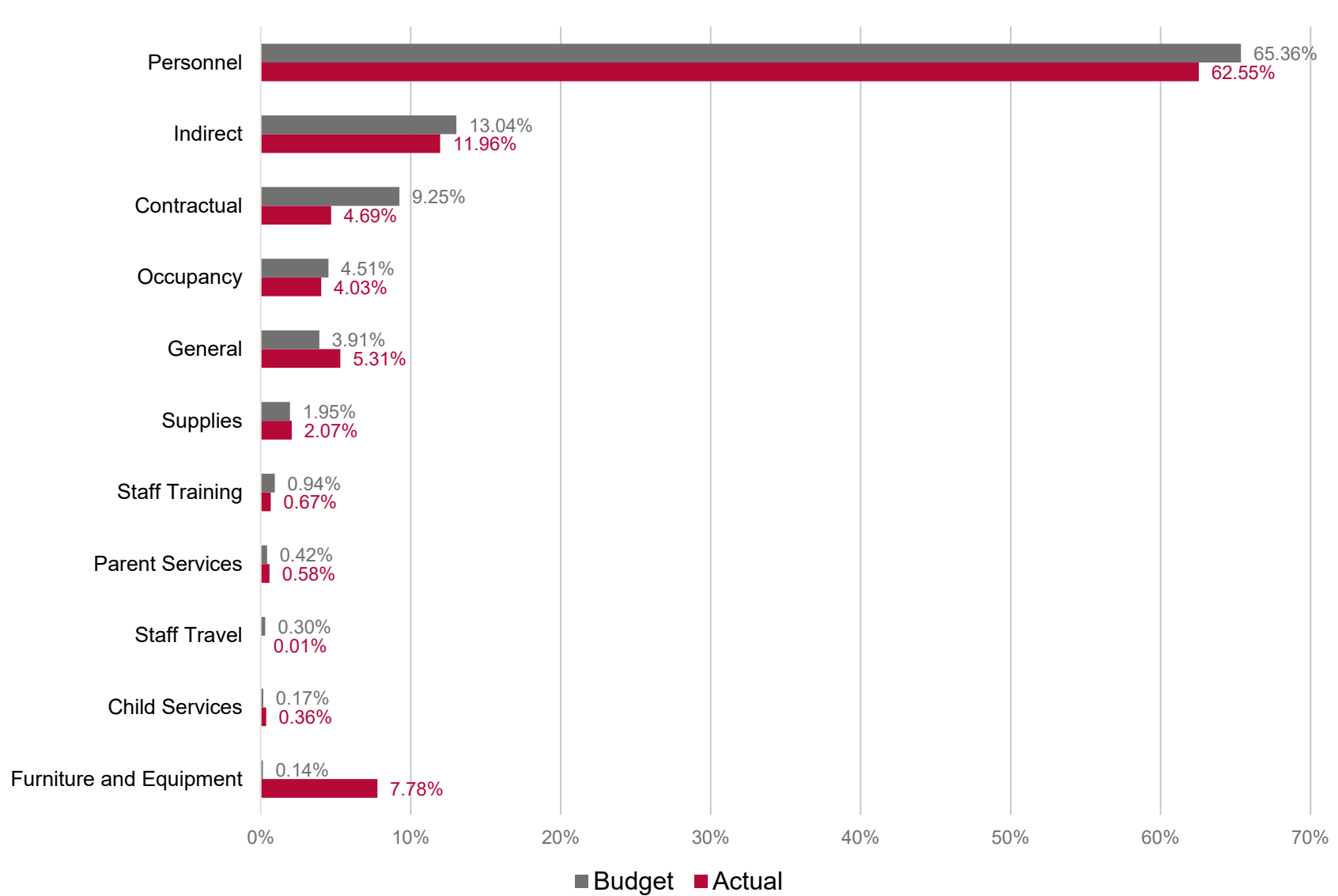
Educare Chicago resides on the south side of Chicago. The families we serve generally live in the neighboring communities surrounding Educare Chicago. These communities include Fuller Park, Grand Boulevard, Kenwood, Oakland, Washington Park and New City.

Overall Program Budget FY21

Total Public and Private Funds received: \$ 7,039,858

Public Funds		Private Funds	
Source	Amount	Source	Amount
Federal	\$4,879,590	Individuals, Corporations, Foundations, etc.	\$383,358
State	\$635,252	In-kind	\$2,994
Local School District	\$1,138,664		
Total Public	\$6,653,506	Total Private	\$386,352

2021 Budget and Actual Expenditures



Summary of 2021 Community Assessment

Children and Families Served in 2020-2021

Educare Funded Enrollment

	Head Start Enrollment	Early Head Start Enrollment
Center-based Program	81	64
a. 5 days per week	81	64
1. Full-day enrollment	81	64
2. Part-day enrollment	NA	NA
b. 4 days per week	NA	NA
1. Full-day enrollment	NA	NA
2. Part-day enrollment	NA	NA
Home-based Program	NA	NA
Unallocated Slots	0	0
Total:	81	64

Site

Total Children Served: 104

Total Families Served: 97

Average monthly enrollment (as percentage of funded enrollment): 82 (57%)

Number of Eligible Children in Community, Ages 0-5	49,310
Percentage of Children Served in Agency	0.21%

Health

Percentage of enrolled children who received medical and dental exams:

	Received Medical Exams	Received Dental Exams
	64	51

Parental Involvement in Educare Chicago

Community Assessment Summary

Start Early (formerly known as the Ounce of Prevention Fund) is a champion for early learning and care from a child's very first moments in order to provide the opportunity for every child to thrive in school and life. Start Early advances quality early learning for families with children, before birth through their earliest years, to help close the opportunity gap. Educare Chicago is a directly operated program of Start Early providing center-based services for children 6 weeks through five years old.

The COVID-19 pandemic has had profound effects on all aspects of community and family life. Its effects permeate all parts of this update. Hard data and numbers are not yet available on how the pandemic and subsequent economic impact has affected poverty, unemployment, child health, homelessness, child abuse and neglect, domestic violence, food security and any number of other things including the availability of early childhood programs. Where possible information was gained from non-profit reports such as the Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, from the state agencies, from news articles and other sources chronicling the pandemic and its effects on community and family life.

Despite the pandemic, Educare families were resilient and found many strengths within the community. These strengths included:

- Parents exhibited strength, resilience and creativity in combating the COVID pandemic and switching to virtual services.
- Resources in the community including churches.
- Program staff continued to be helpful, providing resources and referrals
- Schools provided technology for children that needed services during the pandemic
- Services and support from Early Intervention and Special Education continued instead of being cancelled and that was a strength
- The virtual modality helped strengthen parent's commitment and empowered them as the primary provider, showing resiliency and creativity and playing bigger roles in the therapy sessions
- Families that live in high crime areas in the past had a difficult time getting therapists to come to their homes, but now therapists from all over the state have been reaching out to families in all areas because they can service them over Zoom or other online platforms

Homelessness

The May 2020 Chicago Coalition for the Homeless' annual study, using 2018 census data, reported that 76,998 Chicagoans were homeless in 2018. While this number represents a decrease from the number of homeless Chicagoans in 2017 (86,324 in 2017), the number represents an increase of people living on the streets or in shelters, a troubling trend with shelters a potential current venue for COVID infection. Homelessness is expected to climb dramatically during the economic downturn triggered by the COVID pandemic.

The community areas below are Start Early recruitment areas with elementary schools that have homeless student enrollment higher than 5%. Table 1B in Appendix B shows that Englewood, West Englewood, Humboldt Park, Uptown, Edgewater and Rogers Park have high percentages of homeless students. Englewood, West Englewood and Humboldt Park along with Washington Park also have more schools with enrollment percentages higher than 5%.

- Nicholson Elementary – 144 homeless students (32%) – Englewood and West Englewood
- Faraday Elementary – 53 homeless students (26%) – Humboldt Park
- Parker Elementary – 88 homeless students (21%) – Englewood, West Englewood
- Melody Elementary – 53 homeless students (16%) – Humboldt Park
- Courtenay Elementary – 42 homeless students (15%) – Uptown, Edgewater
- Gale Elementary – 31 homeless students (15%) – Rogers Park

Birth Rates

A March 2021 editorial in the New York Times by two economists predicted a drop in births by 8% or 300,000 fewer births in 2020 and into 2021 due to the COVID pandemic. Historically, when the labor market is weak, aggregate birthrates decline; when the labor market improves, birthrates improve. The Covid-19 pandemic has propelled the country into an economic recession and a major restructuring of work and social lives. Some of the decline might be temporary but the longer and more persistent the income losses, the more likely that many of the drops in birth will last for a few years.

Poverty

The COVID pandemic affected many aspects of society worldwide. One area of big impact has been the loss of thousands of businesses, job loss and a resultant economic recession. All of these factors have contributed to economic hardships for families and children. Precise numbers of children that have become poorer as a result of the pandemic are not yet obtainable.

The year between 2017 and 2018 saw decreases in child poverty in every Chicago community. The years between 2018 and 2019, however, saw just the opposite – most of the community areas in this report saw increases in child poverty. The Chicago young child poverty rate in 2019 was 26% and in 2018, 23%, an increase of 11%. The following community areas had poverty rates (less than 100% of the federal poverty level) at 40% or higher in 2019:

- Englewood – 50%
- West Englewood – 50%
- Washington Park – 46%
- Woodlawn – 45%
- New City – 42%

Extreme Poverty

Many of the community areas with high percentages of young child poverty also had high percentages of children in extreme poverty (below 50% of poverty). The following community areas had extreme poverty levels at or above 15%.

- Englewood – 22%
- West Englewood – 22%
- Washington Park – 21%
- Woodlawn – 20%

Unemployment

New unemployment figures for Chicago community areas were not available and the most recent census data would have reflected 2019. Since 2019, the COVID pandemic has seen large increases in unemployment. The rate jumped in April 2020 to a level not seen since the 1930s and nationwide, the unemployment still stood at 6.2 in February 2021. The rates were higher for Black and Latinx workers, 9.9% and 8.5% respectively since February 2020, compared to 5.6% for White workers. Unemployment has also risen faster among workers born outside of the United States, including individuals who are now U.S. citizens. Latina women fell into the deepest unemployment at the height of the job losses last spring, going from 12.4 million workers in February 2020 to 9.4 million in April 2020, a 24% drop.

The majority of jobs lost have been in industries that pay low average wages, with the lowest paying industries accounting for 30% of all jobs but 55% of the jobs lost from February 2020 to February 2021. Low paying industry jobs were down 11.2% compared to 5.1% in medium wage industries and 3% for high wage industries.

Crime

While violent crime has been decreasing in many Chicago neighborhoods for the last few years, the first quarter of 2021 has seen more gun violence than in the past 4 years – 131 killings so far in 2021, a 34% jump over the same period a year ago. The last year also saw 760 people killed as neighborhoods struggled with school closures, unemployment and shortages of resources in poorer communities as well as the unrest following George Floyd's death. Chicago has not been the only city experiencing a spike in gun violence and deaths; Detroit, New York, Philadelphia, as well as smaller cities such as Grand Rapids and Milwaukee, both Democrat and Republican led areas, have also experienced an increase in gun violence.

In addition to the gun violence and homicides, Chicago has also experienced a large increase in carjackings this year, continuing from an increased trend in 2020. More than 370 carjackings have occurred in the city through mid-March 2021, the most seen here during the same period in any year since 2001.

Early learning programs like Educare Chicago continue to be a need on Chicago's Southside. Educare Chicago is a Circle of Gold rated program through Illinois' quality rating and improvement system, ExceleRate. Educare provides services to address educational, health, and social services needs experienced by children and families living in poverty. Educare is a safe haven for children that supports developmental and school readiness skills while partnering with families to walk side by side with them to provide the necessary supports to be self-sufficient while providing the encouragement and resources for families to advocate for their needs.

Parent Education Activities

Parent Committee Meetings

Educare Chicago had an active Parent Committee. Our Parent Committee President was also the Policy Council Chair and the parent representative for the Start Early Board of Directors. The Parent Committee met on the following dates: September 22, 2020, October 27, 2020, December 15, 2020, January 26, 2021, April 27, 2021, and July 27, 2021.

Other Special Gatherings or Activities

While operating in a pandemic, Educare Chicago provided virtual learning experiences for families and children every Friday. Additionally, six families participated in the Lullaby Project, a partnership with Carnegie Hall where parents collaborated with professional musicians to write songs for their children. Two of our parent's songs were featured in a virtual conference hosted by Carnegie Hall. Family Support Specialist continued to use Educare's parent curriculum, Parents As Teachers, to support parent's understanding of their child's development. Family Support Specialists provided 25 PAT experiences this school year. 165 parents participated in these activities.

Male Involvement

During the 2020/2021 school year, Educare had a total of 17 dads/father figures involved in a variety of program experiences. 15 dads participated in the Family Assessment and Family Goal setting process. 17 dads participated in Child Developmental Activities. Two dads participated in Program Governance, and 10 dads participated in Parent Education Workshops.

Health

Educare Chicago has an onsite Health Specialist and an onsite nurse. While operating in a pandemic, lots of support was provided to ensure children, staff, and families were healthy to receive in person services. The health team trained several staff to support the health screening and daily health check process. This process was instrumental in mitigating the spread of viruses and other illnesses within the program. Lots of health education and follow up was provided for children and families in quarantine, as well as, to stress to families the importance of ensuring children were up to date with well child exams, immunizations, and health follow up. Educare Chicago struggled with health and dental benchmarks. Some health providers provided limited services during the

pandemic and families felt uncomfortable taking their children to medical appointments during high transmission rates of COVID 19.

Mental Health

Educare Chicago has two Mental Health and Wellness Consultants. Services were offered to children, families, and staff during the 2020/2021 school year. The Wellness Consultants conducted virtual classroom observations and participated in case consultations for children. The Wellness Consultants facilitated workshops on stress, led mindfulness exercises, and provided one-on-one consultation to families. Additionally monthly opportunities to participate in family and mom support groups were offered to parents.

Community and Social Services

Other Community-related Education

During the 2020/2021 school year, Educare limited onsite programming due to community transmission rates of COVID 19. Resources were shared with families during virtual parent meetings, along with the Family Service Team providing community referrals based on needs identified by the families. Last school year 100% of families served accessed referral services. Educare provided a total of 360 services ranging from parenting education, postpartum care, nutrition education, and assistance in enrolling in school or job training.

Additionally, Educare maintained its relationship with LIFT. LIFT's mission is to partner with families to break the cycle of poverty. LIFT provides families with a counselor/mentor who works with them to establish goals. The mentor provides resources and coaching supports to assist families with achieving their goals. Twenty Educare families participated in LIFT during the 2020/2021 school year. Additionally, LIFT was an active community partner on the Policy Council.

Education and Literacy

Educare faced many challenges to support children's learning while operating in a pandemic. Enrollment was a challenge along with daily school attendance. Parents were reluctant to enroll their children in early learning programs. Parents choosing virtual learning options struggled with balancing their other responsibilities with being consistent with virtual learning in the home, and finally children missed a lot of school due to school closures and quarantines due to COVID exposures. Despite the challenges, Educare maintained its commitment to children and families. During the Spring Checkpoint, children birth through met or exceeded the following developmental expectations as measured by Teaching Strategies Gold:

Social Emotional:	82.76%	Cognitive:	85.49%
Physical:	84.37 %	Literacy:	86.15%
Language:	82.26%	Mathematics:	82.54%

Kindergarten Readiness

Educare's mission is to close the persistent achievement gap. While operating in a pandemic, families took on a major role in being their child's first and primary teacher. Educare supported families by providing virtual learning experiences that consisted of daily small group interactions facilitated by a teacher in partnership with the parents. Educare teachers prepared individualized lesson plans with asynchronous developmental activities for parents to do with their children. Additionally monthly learning kits were provided to ensure parents had the resources at home to implement the activities.

Special Efforts to Prepare Children for Kindergarten

To support learning in the home, Educare provided families with the learning app, ReadAskChat and access to Hatch/Ignite web based educational computer games. ReadAskChat is a web-based application for families to use at home that provides developmentally appropriate children's literature supported by age-appropriate

extension activities with follow-up open-ended conversation starters that promote language, communication skills, and higher order thinking. In September of 2020, Educare held an orientation for families to learn more about the app, and how the app supported children's learning and development. Carolyn Saper, the app creator, facilitated the event while providing families with hands-on opportunities to review some of the stories and to practice some of the extension activities. 63 families registered for the ReadAskChat app. 132 stories were read. This was an average of 5 stories per user. Families used the app for an average of 8 times per week for an average of 11 minutes. Families completed an average of two extension experiences per story.

In August of 2020, Educare purchased a new computer system for preschool children called Hatch Ignite. This system provided web-based educational games children could access at home and at school. The Hatch system individualized activities as children played the games to scaffold learning. The system provided additional supports for home and school to extend learning opportunities to ensure children mastered developmental skills. Additionally, as children played the games, developmental data synced to Educare's assessment system Teaching Strategies Gold. This provided teachers with needed information to determine children's developmental progress. Hatch recommends each child play learning games on Hatch for at least 30 minutes per week. According to Hatch, each child plays for approximately 715 minutes/ per school year to reach kindergarten readiness as measured through the Hatch Ignite system. On average our preschool children played 398.75 minutes. Educare had 46 preschool children enrolled. Of the 46 preschool children enrolled, 19 children are transitioning to kindergarten for the 2021/2022 school year. As of June 2021, our kindergarten bound children showed strengths in Science and Technology, Language and Communication, and Self-Care within the physical domain. A small percentage of k-bound children also showed strengths in alliteration. Two of the 19 children were consistent with using the Hatch system. These two children accumulated the most time using the system and showed the most progress on the system. As of June 2021, one child has exceeded K-bound expectations in Science and Technology, Social Emotional Development, Language and Communication, Physical Development, Concepts of Print, Alliteration, and Listening and Comprehension

Transition Activities to Promote Kindergarten Readiness

Educare establishes an annual Transition Plan to support children and families transition from Early Head Start to Head Start and from Head Start to elementary school. The plan is facilitated by a school-based Transition Committee. Our plans begin with establishing individualized Transition Plans with families of children turning 30 months in Early Head Start and at the beginning of the school year for K-Bound families. Our Family Support Specialist meet with K-Bound families to assist them with enrolling in public school through a process called Go CPS. This past school year, Educare hosted a virtual Charter School Meeting to allow parents to learn about Charter School options. K-Bound students also participate in Kindergarten Corner. Each preschool classroom provides a time for the K-Bound children to do kindergarten readiness experiences in a small group to provide children with additional opportunities to master the developmental skills necessary to be prepared for kindergarten. Finally, classrooms invited former Educare parents and children to come speak with K-Bound children and families about their kindergarten experience.

Summary of Audit Findings

Educare had an annual licensing visit by the Illinois Department of Children and Families in January of 2021. There were no findings from this audit. The City Health Department conducted backflow line inspections. Educare received a finding for missing documentation. The finding was corrected and now documentation is attached to the backflow line location. The Fire Marshall also conducted an audit. The findings and corrections are listed below:

- Kickstand door stoppers need to be removed from all doors – COMPLETED
- Repair closers on laundry room, hallway water closet, and boiler room doors – COMPLETED 1/11/21
- Emergency lighting needs repair in Educare Staff Lounge and Sensory Room – COMPLETED
- Nozzles on the servery stoves were repositioned so they are directly over all burners – COMPLETED 1/11/21
- Purchase a Type K fire extinguisher for the servery – COMPLETED
- Implement Monthly Fire Inspection Checklist - COMPLETED

There were no findings in our Fiscal Year 2020 financial audit. The audit for Fiscal Year 2021 is in progress.

Summary of Information Required by the Secretary

The Start Early Board of Directors and Policy Council were given brief summaries and links to all Program Instructions and Information Memorandums.