



Advancing Evidence.
Improving Lives.

The Flint Early Childhood Research Program Partnership

The Flint Early Childhood Research Program Partnership, formed in 2020, is a diverse group of early childhood care and education stakeholders striving to improve local early childhood policy and practice in Flint, Michigan. In response to the water crisis in Flint, high-quality early education programs emerged as a priority to help remedy the damaging effects of lead exposure on young children. Educare Flint opened its doors in 2019, along with its sister school, Cummings Great Expectations, to provide high-quality programming and intensive family supports to more than 300 children and their families in Flint.

This **Research Program Partnership** (RPP) emerged from an existing alliance between the Community Foundation of Greater Flint (CFGF) and the American Institutes for Research (AIR) that supports the work of Educare Flint and Cummings. Today, the partnership includes a broad coalition of school and district leadership, family engagement advocates, early childhood specialists, families themselves, community foundation members, funders, and local and national early childhood researchers. RPP members have generated research priorities together to ensure they are designed for the community by the community.

Our Research Program Partnership Vision

We believe that...all children in Flint are worthy of an excellent, equitable education that provides them with limitless opportunities to thrive, and that systemic racial inequities must continually be recognized (and/or confronted) to promote strengths and develop skills in children, families, and staff.

Based on those priorities, we have developed the following research agendas:

- a. understanding intensive family engagement, and
- b. increasing access to and equity in early childhood programs in the Flint community.

Each of these research agendas is described as follows.

Intensive Family Engagement. Our first research agenda is to identify the most effective and equitable strategies of *intensive family engagement* at Educare Flint and Cummings. Together, we will gather and analyze data from families about their experiences, strengths, and needs. We also will document the ways in which staff engage with families to help understand existing practice and inform new directions for intensive family engagement at Educare Flint and Cummings.

The goals of this study are as follows:

- ◆ Understand the needs and strengths of the families.
- ◆ Understand the historical biases that challenge our families.
- ◆ Document current approaches to family engagement at Educare Flint and Cummings.
- ◆ Develop new and innovative family engagement strategies that prioritize parents as advocates for their children and families.
- ◆ Evaluate our efforts and conduct a rigorous evaluation of family engagement strategies.

Equity and Access. Our second research agenda is broader, focusing on **equity and access to early childhood programs** in the Flint community as a whole. We will rely on a mix of qualitative data (e.g., interviews, focus groups) and quantitative data (e.g., student learning and growth, kindergarten readiness scores) to understand how families in Flint access early childhood programs and how these programs promote children's development and learning. We will document gaps in access and quality and strive to address these gaps together.

The goals of this study are as follows:

- ◆ Understand the context of the early childhood Flint community.
- ◆ Document the landscape of early childhood programs in Flint.
- ◆ Explore the relationship between attending early childhood programs and child outcomes in preschool and into early elementary school.
- ◆ Understand the barriers to equitable access to high-quality early education in Flint.
- ◆ Work collaboratively to address these barriers.
- ◆ Evaluate our efforts.

Through these two priorities, the RPP hopes to build on the important work of engaging children and families at Educare Flint and Cummings, as well as understand the successes and challenges to achieving equitable access to high-quality early learning experiences for all families in Flint.



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