

# **Innovation in Early Education**

*Comparing Innovation Models in Early Care & Education*

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## Disclaimer

This study has been prepared for the Alameda County Office of Early Care and Education, Oakland, CA. The student author conducted this study in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration and Public Policy (MBA/MPP) at Mills College. The judgments and conclusions are solely those of the author, and are not necessarily endorsed by the Mills College Public Policy Program, the sponsoring Client organization, or any other organization or agency.

## Executive Summary

The Alameda County Early Care and Education Ballot Initiative (Measure A) aims to transform the early care and education (ECE) sector by increasing access to affordable, high-quality child care and preschool, while ensuring that ECE providers earn at least minimum wage. If successful, Measure A will raise and spend an estimated \$140M annually towards these goals.

### The Problem

1% of the Measure A' funds (\$1.4M annually) have been set aside for innovation, and the Alameda County Early Care and Education Program (ACECEP) is seeking recommendations on how to spend these funds for maximum impact.

### The Solution

I recommend that ACECEP use the innovations set-aside to develop an Educare facility within Alameda County. Educare offers a national network of early learning schools, on-site professional development, and research initiatives that benefit the entire ECE field. By bringing together philanthropic partners, program providers, school districts, parents and community members, Educare most effectively meets the remaining community needs, left unmet by the goals of Measure A.

Educare has a proven track record of success across the county. The model has already been implemented in 14 states, including California. Each facility contributes to the network wide research, which is used to identify best practices through evidence-based research. These findings are disseminated throughout the network, allowing individuals school sites to benefit from a much larger network than they could on their own.

The Educare model could be implemented within the confines of the innovation budget. Schools are often funded through a mix of federal, state, and local funding, with the bulk of funding coming from Head Start and Early Head Start grants. Each Educare facility has its own financial support structure, giving Alameda County flexibility in how it funds the program. Total costs vary depending on eligibility, length of school day and year, teacher qualifications, and facilities.

When compared to all other alternatives, Educare offers the widest range of benefits across stakeholder groups, and is both financially and politically feasible.