The events of the past year—the pandemic, wildfires, political division, and a national reckoning for racial justice—have been inflection points that underscored the urgent need to bring increased resources and support to the children and families of East San José.

We know that for children to flourish, their families and communities must thrive. A rich brocade of diverse and committed partners came together at Educare, creating a community hub for resources of all kinds, including free high-quality early childhood education, vaccinations, formula, home learning kits, fresh produce, and much more.

We offered virtual and in-person learning for our students, which came with significant challenges. Teachers rose to the occasion, engaging the children with projects that could be easily adapted to available resources. Our staff then navigated the complexities of reopening safely, providing a model for others to follow.

We are excited to announce we opened our first TK classroom at Educare, in conjunction with founding partner Franklin McKinley School District (FMSD). This year, our TK students are learning onsite, and we are expanding our early learning alignment with FMSD. The quality we provide for TK students and families can be a model for the state as universal TK is rolled out.

This year, more than ever, the children and families we serve needed our partnership and adaptability. Thanks to our supporters, we were able to be agile and responsive to best meet families’ needs, including hybrid learning, emotional support, online family classes, essential resources, and safe community events, like drive-through pizza nights.

Thank you for your partnership in helping families thrive!

In solidarity,

Shawn Gerth  
Executive Director

Photo disclaimer: All state and county health guidelines continue to be followed at ECSV, including face masks and social distancing. Some photos included may be from prior to the pandemic.
The Importance of Early Learning

Educare was founded on the tenet that your zip code should not determine your destiny or limit your potential.

The science is clear – the first five years have a lasting impact on life outcomes. In fact, 90% of a child’s brain develops within the first five years of life. Children’s brains are wired to learn as much as they can. Educare is designed to support optimal cognitive, physical and social-emotional development.

Strong language abilities, social-emotional skills and parent-child relationships at an early age are all predictive of a child’s future success in school and life.

In fact, a recent research study following the long-term impacts of high-quality preschool found that educational and behavioral outcomes improved, including reduced instances of suspensions and incarceration, and increased SAT test taking and scores, high school graduation, on-time college enrollment, four-year college attendance, and estimates of college graduation.

Educare exists to transform the life outcomes of the children and families we serve.

The Educare Difference

Based on current research in early childhood education, social work and related fields, Educare has four pillars to support children, birth to age 5, in becoming academically, socially and emotionally prepared for kindergarten: High-Quality Teaching Practices, Intensive Family Engagement, Embedded Professional Development, and Data Utilization.

These core features, together with the Reggio Emilia-inspired approach, work in concert to drive positive outcomes for children and families, focusing on preventing the persistent achievement gap for low-income children from taking root in the early years of a child’s life.

Rigorous research shows that Educare’s pillars work:

- Students, including multilingual children, outperform their low-income peers on vocabulary assessments.
- Children who enter Educare at younger ages have higher levels of vocabulary skills at kindergarten entry than children who start Educare later.
- Dual-language learners benefit even more from earlier entry and longer involvement in Educare, demonstrating stronger gains in English language ability.
- More time in Educare is associated with higher ratings of social-emotional skills, including teacher-rated self-control and initiative, among most children.

What is the Reggio Emilia-Inspired Approach?

ECSV is inspired by the Reggio Emilia philosophy of education that originated in Northern Italy. This educational philosophy is an innovative approach, which values the child as strong, capable and resilient, rich with wonder and knowledge.

Grounded in the belief that children have the right to the opportunities to reach their potential, the approach has self-directed learning and exploration at its core. While using this philosophy for inspiration, ECSV creates our approach to fit the children and families we serve.
The Home–School Connection

We recognize parents as their children’s first teachers, partnering with them to support their children’s early learning and wellbeing. This challenging year was no exception. With the changing circumstances and guidelines during the pandemic, we provided online and in-person learning for our students. Focused on learning continuity and student and family wellness, our teachers brought their creativity and passion during a stressful time.

One of the many challenges of the pandemic was the risk of lost learning during such a vital stage of development, particularly the interpersonal skills that come from children playing together, sharing, and talking. Teachers and family engagement specialists coached parents with strategies to support their children’s development at home. From yoga to themed days to show-and-tell, teachers centered lesson time on engaging students and families through a variety of activities.

Growing Minds

The gardens are flourishing at Educare this year. We:
• installed 14 raised garden beds in our larger garden area and a new sustainable garden,
• installed 16 garden beds in the “backyards” of the classrooms, and
• partnered with Valley Verde to provide family gardening workshops and install home gardens for 20 families.

Children learned how to grow organic vegetables, fruits, flowers and succulents, experiencing hands-on STEAM lessons, mindfulness, and self-directed nature exploration. Not only do the vegetable gardens offer an amazing educational opportunity, but they also allow families to receive fresh, culturally-relevant, organic vegetables.

The Why

With parents often working multiple jobs or attending school and the demands of financial security, children experiencing poverty show gaps in their early vocabulary development. These early differences have lasting effects on a child’s academic success later in life. We provide support to families to build on the vocabulary development they receive in our classrooms.

The Why

Outdoor learning opportunities offer many benefits to children, including stress reduction, stimulation of scientific observation and language development, motivating children to become stewards of our land, encouragement of responsibilities and social skills. With 45% of ECSV families indicating that their households are food insecure, the gardens provide essential fresh produce for our families.

45% of ECSV families indicate that their households are food insecure.
Supporting Multilingual Learners

86% of ECSV students are multilingual learners. By creating the structures to support best practices in a variety of early learning settings, ECSV is serving as a model program to improve outcomes for multilingual learners.

Important components include:

- **Family Engagement** - Parents are the most important partners we have. They make important contributions to the cultural and linguistic richness of our classrooms and provide daily support necessary for home language growth and development.

- **Environmental Supports** - This includes all the ways that our environments promote an atmosphere of inclusiveness and support learning in all languages, such as learning materials, classroom organization, representation throughout the classroom, and the daily schedule.

- **Instructional Supports** - Teachers use a variety of strategies to promote oral language abilities and social-emotional development, such as songs, chants, gestures, and experiential learning.

We hosted a five-part series focused on supporting young multilingual learners and their families to 90 participants, led by Dr. Carola Oliva-Olsen, with professional translation in Spanish and Vietnamese.

The Why

While California has adopted educational policies aligned with current research on the benefits of early bilingualism, many multilingual learners still experience achievement gaps.

Research confirms that learning more than one language in the early years carries significant academic, social and cognitive advantages. With 1.4 million multilingual learners in California alone, early childhood educators need to adopt new strategies to help them realize their potential.

The Art in Learning

In the early years, as verbal and written language skills are developing, art is one way children express themselves, explore the world around them, and develop their abilities. Whether it is painting, making, or drawing, art is a regular part of children’s day at Educare. One class explored using dirt as a medium on paper, while another used clay. Children learned about the ocean through painting and making their own aquariums. They express their feelings, ideas, interests and stories through art, including self drawings and portrayals of their family and life.

In addition to partnering with ECSV for our satellite children’s museum, the Children’s Discovery Museum did a virtual art workshop with students around a Pete the Cat book. Students received the book and art supplies to do the project at home.

The Why

Art is an integral part of Educare’s Reggio-inspired approach, founded on the belief that children use 100 languages to express themselves. As language skills develop, art is one of their 100 languages. Art, in its many forms, also supports motor skill development, problem solving, and teamwork.
Fabric of the Community

Recognizing that children’s wellbeing is inextricably connected to their families’ and community’s health, ECSV is designed to be a center for community life. Funded by FIRST 5 Santa Clara County and operated by Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County, ECSV’s Family Resource Center (FRC) supports the health and wellness of children, parents and caregivers. From parenting and enrichment classes to distributing fresh produce to community events, our FRC partners with families and community organizations to be a hub of education and resources.

RESOURCES PARTNERS
- Anthem
- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
- Children’s Discovery Museum
- City of San José
- CVS
- FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
- Franklin-McKinley School District
- Loaves and Fishes
- McLaughlin Area Tenant Association
- Office of Councilmember Maya Esparza, D7
- San José Fire Department
- San José Parks and Recreation
- San José Police Department
- San José Public Library
- Santa Clara County Office of Education
- Santee Association
- Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
- Spade & Plow Organic Farms
- Valley Medical Center Foundation
- Valley Verde
- VeggieLution
- Anthem
- Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County
- Children’s Discovery Museum
- City of San José
- CVS
- FIRST 5 Santa Clara County
- Franklin-McKinley School District
- Loaves and Fishes
- McLaughlin Area Tenant Association
- Office of Councilmember Maya Esparza, D7
- San José Fire Department
- San José Parks and Recreation
- San José Police Department
- San José Public Library
- Santa Clara County Office of Education
- Santee Association
- Second Harvest of Silicon Valley
- Spade & Plow Organic Farms
- Valley Medical Center Foundation
- Valley Verde
- VeggieLution

“I just want to thank the whole Educare Family Resource Center team for all the services that they provide to the community and for all the time they spend supporting my family. Since the first day we arrived at the Educare Center, the whole team was welcoming... As a parent, you really appreciate when someone dedicates time to your kids and gives them what they need to succeed.”

Hector Santiago

Influencing the Field

Educare Schools across the nation are designed to be models for early learning in their communities. ECSV is no different, serving as an example of high-quality early childhood education and seeking to influence the field to improve outcomes for children and families.

We are proud that our Mentor Coach, Thena Gee, along with Dr. Carola Oliva-Olson, presented virtually on Preparing the Workforce to Serve Dual Language Learners: New Models from Communities in California, as part of the national QRIS 2020 BUILD Initiative Conference.

Embedded professional development is one of the cornerstones of the Educare difference. We continued it with vigor this year while moving it online. We conducted sessions simultaneously in English, Spanish, and Vietnamese, and offered learning opportunities to partner educators and community childcare providers, promoting greater equity, inclusion, and access to high-quality content.
“I am proud that ECSV has managed to identify the needs of the children and families we serve and pivot our approach during the pandemic to best support the needs of the community. I am proud of the creative ways ECSV has delivered its services and the impact we make in the growth of the children in the community.”

Our Team

2020-2021 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jeff Sunshine, Chair 2021, Secretary 2020
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Mary Ann Dewan, Vice Chair
Santa Clara County Office of Education

Juan Cruz, Treasurer
Franklin-McKinley School District

Shannon Hunt-Scott, Secretary 2021, Chair 2020
The Scott Foundation

Michael Burke
The Buffett Early Childhood Fund

Chris D. Funk
East Side Union High School District

Greg Kepferle
Catholic Charities of Santa Clara County

Camille Maben
First 5 California

Meera Mani
The David and Lucile Packard Foundation

Scott Moore
Kidango

Jolene Smith
FIRST 5 Santa Clara County

Jason Vann
Franklin-McKinley School District

Patricia Villegas
PV Consulting

LEADERSHIP
Shawn Gerth
Executive Director

For a full list of staff, visit Our Team.

PARTNERS
To see our current partners, visit Educaresv.org/partners.

Educare Network
Public Policy Priorities

1. UNIVERSAL CHILD CARE & EARLY LEARNING
Ensure families have access to high-quality, culturally-responsive, equitable early learning and care at no or low cost, in the setting they most prefer, during the time they need care.

2. STABLE & SUPPORTED FAMILIES
Ensure young children and their families have adequate finances and resources to access the housing, care, services and supports needed to thrive.

3. THRIVING EARLY CHILDHOOD WORKFORCE
Ensure early childhood teachers and staff are skilled, well-compensated and supported while promoting young children’s learning, health and development.

4. HEALTHY & SUPPORTED CHILDREN
Ensure young children have consistent access to the physical and mental health supports and services they need to thrive.

5. STRONG EARLY CHILDHOOD SYSTEMS IN EVERY COMMUNITY
Ensure families experience continuity of care and responsive services as a result of aligned systems and policies.