

## **East Durham Children's Initiative**

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**Year 7 Evaluation Report: Executive Summary**

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**Submitted by  
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## Executive Summary: EDCI Year Seven Evaluation Report

The East Durham Children’s Initiative (EDCI) is a place-based, nonprofit organization that walks alongside children and families on their journey from cradle to college or career. EDCI focuses its efforts within a 120-block area of East Durham referred to as the EDCI Zone. Many children and youth in this area experience significant challenges that impede their ability to succeed at school and beyond. They also have great potential to excel given the right supports.

Established in 2010, EDCI’s vision is that all children in the EDCI Zone successfully graduate from high school, ready for college or career. To achieve this vision, EDCI provides children and families with a continuum of comprehensive and high-quality supports, extending from before birth through high school. EDCI’s pipeline of services includes a variety of opportunities provided by EDCI and more than 40 partner organizations. EDCI works collectively with stakeholders to bring together fragmented services in a way that is coordinated and guided by community needs. When opportunities do not exist, EDCI offers new programs to fill in the gaps.

EDCI has contracted with Duke University’s Center for Child and Family Policy (CCFP) since 2011 to plan and conduct its evaluation. The evaluation utilizes a process and outcomes-focused approach in order to provide EDCI leadership with information to:

- Determine the degree to which core programs are implemented as planned, reach the targeted population, and achieve improved outcomes for the participants; and
- Identify and address barriers to implementation in order to strengthen effectiveness.

Ultimately, this work is contributing to a longitudinal evaluation designed to measure long-term collective program effects at the individual child level and within the EDCI Zone community.

This report includes evaluation findings for EDCI’s seventh year of implementation (2017-18) and cumulative efforts since 2011. Listed below are the ten EDCI core pipeline programs included in the Year Seven Evaluation Report; these programs represent approximately 20% of all EDCI pipeline programs. EDCI core programs are identified as having the greatest potential reach and measurable impact in EDCI goals areas. EDCI also contributes significant resources towards several of these programs.

Durham Connects (0-3 months)	Healthy Families Durham/Jumpstart (0-3 years old)	EDCI LEAP Academy (3-5 years old)	Stepping Stones (5 years old)	EDCI Early Childhood Parent Advocate Program (0-5 years old)
Elementary School Parent Advocate Program (Pre-K-5 <sup>th</sup> Grade)	EDCI Middle School Youth Advocate Program (6 <sup>th</sup> -8 <sup>th</sup> Grades)	EDCI Summer Camps (High Hopes Pre-K- 7 <sup>th</sup> Grades) <sup>1</sup>	EDCI STEAM Summer Camp (2 <sup>nd</sup> - 6 <sup>th</sup> Grades)	EDCI Program Implementation and Community Engagement Team (0-18 years old)

<sup>1</sup> Only attendance and EDCI pipeline involvement is reported on this program in the Year 7 report, and can be found in Appendix I. Six years of program evaluation has consistently shown that if children attend this camp, summer learning loss with respect to literacy skills is prevented.

## Changes in the EDCI Zone

EDCI began implementation of coordinated services for EDCI Zone families in the fall of 2011. The Zone was originally selected as EDCI's target area after being identified as one of the most distressed areas in Durham. When American Community Survey data from 2012 was compared with 2010 baseline data, significant increases in the poverty rate (from 44% to 55%), and decreases in median household income (from \$25K to \$22K) were observed in the EDCI Zone. Data did not reveal similar changes for a Durham comparison neighborhood or Durham County as a whole. ACS data from 2015 has shown that the poverty rate has decreased, returning to baseline levels after a large increase in 2012. It is not entirely clear why a sharp increase in the poverty rate was observed for 2012. Given the high rate of transiency in the neighborhood, and recent changes related to gentrification, it will be important to continue to monitor the economic conditions of the EDCI Zone to see if the poverty rate holds steady or continues to show significant fluctuations. ACS data collected in 2016 for the EDCI and comparison neighborhoods, as well as Durham County as a whole, is currently being analyzed and will be shared as an addendum to this report in 2019.

## Key Findings

Data from the past fiscal year, as well as from the first six years of implementation, consistently point to four key areas of achievement by EDCI:

- Children engaged in EDCI early childhood services are more likely to arrive at school healthy and prepared for kindergarten;
- Greater and longer involvement in the EDCI pipeline over time leads to better outcomes;
- EDCI effectively utilizes program evaluation to monitor program implementation and improve outcomes; and
- Families feel a strong connection and sense of support from EDCI.

Highlights with respect to these four key achievements are outlined below.

### 1. Children Engaged in EDCI Early Childhood Services Are More Likely to Arrive at School Healthy and Prepared for Kindergarten

Children living in poverty start school at a disadvantage in terms of their early skills, behaviors, and health (Harper, Marcus, & Moore, 2003; Lacour & Tissington, 2011; Isaacs, 2012). Fewer than half of these children are ready for school at age five, compared to 75% of children from families with moderate and high-income levels (Isaacs, 2010). Research indicates that kindergarten readiness skills are predictive of 3<sup>rd</sup> grade achievement and may have lasting impacts on educational outcomes (Applied Survey Research, 2010).

EDCI's pipeline of early childhood services works to prevent achievement gaps at kindergarten entry by: 1) connecting families with appropriate early childhood and family support services; 2) helping parents improve their child's development and school readiness skills; 3) providing access to high-quality, affordable child care; and 4) increasing children's school readiness skills. Five early childhood services provided by EDCI and partners are included in this evaluation and the findings are highlighted as follows.

**Durham Connects is a universal nurse home-visiting program for families with newborns** implemented by the Center for Child and Family Health (CCFH). Durham Connects serves as a key portal of entry into EDCI's pipeline of services, with designated nurses assigned to work with families in the EDCI Zone. To date, 347 newborns and their families living in the EDCI Zone have received at least one home visit from a Durham Connects nurse (56% of all 618 eligible births in the Zone over the past seven fiscal years; 68% for 2017-18). Durham Connects provides families with in-home interventions and education designed to improve health

outcomes and reduce the potential risk for child maltreatment. On average families were connected to three community-based services. The most frequently referred services have consistently been Healthy Families Durham/Jumpstart and the Durham County Department of Social Services. The EDCI Parent Advocate program is the third most commonly referred service, highlighting a strong continuing connection to the EDCI pipeline starting at birth.

[Healthy Families Durham \(HFD\)/Jumpstart](#), also implemented by CCFH, is a weekly to bi-weekly home-visiting program for families with pregnant mothers and/or young children up to three-years-old. HFD/Jumpstart has served 241 families and 245 children living in the EDCI Zone and surrounding area over the past seven fiscal years. The HFD programs have been at or near full capacity during most of the past four years due to strong retention rates. The majority of participating families engage in the program for at least one year, and often longer. Similar to previous years, the majority of families have either successfully graduated or were still engaged in services at the end of the year (57%). The HFD/Jumpstart programs are meeting their intended outcomes with respect to improved parenting skills and home environments, and 98% of children have received their scheduled immunizations. Almost all families were successfully linked to additional community services and agencies (84%).

[The EDCI Early Childhood Parent Advocate \(EC PA\) Program](#), implemented by EDCI, helps to bridge the gap between other early childhood programs offered within the continuum of services and kindergarten entry. Over the past fiscal year, three EC PAs provided parent education and support to EDCI Zone families with children up to five years old through home- and office-based visits and parent groups. In Year 7, EC PAs attempted nearly 1,333 contacts with 115 families. The majority of contacts were made in person (77%), and 86% of those contacts had a primary purpose of providing early childhood supports and interventions. Over the past two and a half years, a parent survey was completed by 108 caregivers participating in the program with results indicating that the program model is implemented with a high degree of fidelity. EC PAs:

- Provide caregivers with early learning resources (99%),
- Model teaching and learning strategies (92%), and
- Provide guidance on behavior and discipline issues (76%).

Of the 108 families who completed a baseline survey, 80 families completed a second administration of the survey, and 58 completed a third survey, revealing positive change over time:

- Significant increases in the number of parents reporting that their Advocate modeled teaching and learning strategies that they can do with their children (92% at Time 1 versus 99% at time 2);
- Significant increases in the number of parents reporting that they read to their child three or more times per week (73% at Time 1 to 82% at Time 3); and
- Significant increases in the number of parents reporting that they sing with their children (79% at Time 1 to 92% at Time 3) three or more times per week.

The EC PA home visiting model appears to be having a significant and lasting impact:

- [Ages and Stages Questionnaire data](#) showed that 96% of children working with an EC PA over the past three fiscal years demonstrated developmentally and age appropriate skills with respect to: communication, gross motor, fine motor, and peer/social interaction skills.
- [Y.E. Smith teacher survey data](#) showed that compared to children who were not enrolled in the PA program prior to kindergarten (n=59), children engaged with a PA prior to the start of kindergarten (n=40):

- Were rated as having significantly better behavior and literacy skills by the end of the school year.
  - 81% were rated average or above average compared to 60% of children not enrolled in the PA program prior to kindergarten.
- Had higher attendance rates.
- Had higher levels of parent involvement at school (i.e., attend scheduled and informal conferences and meetings, return teacher communication, and volunteer in the classroom).

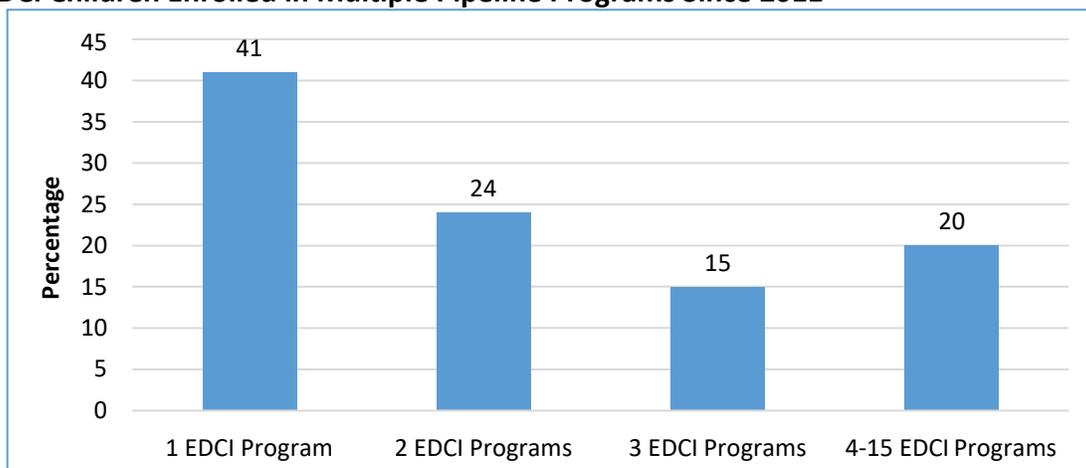
Many children who work with an EC PA, or who have participated in HFD/Jumpstart and/or Durham Connects, have also enrolled in [EDCI LEAP Academy](#), a high-quality bilingual preschool for children three- to five-years old living in the EDCI Zone. Of the 32 children enrolled in 2017-18, 24 children participated in the school readiness pre- and post-assessment (86 children have participated over the past four fiscal years). Of those 24, 50% were rising kindergartners. Evaluation results found 90% of all rising kindergartners to be ready for success in kindergarten and beyond as measured by the Kindergarten Observation Form (91% of all EDCI LEAP Academy rising kindergartners were rated as “ready” over the past four years). Those children not yet matriculating to kindergarten all demonstrated improvements in key domains of early learning including kindergarten academics, social expression skills, self-regulation skills, and motor skills.

[Stepping Stones](#) is a kindergarten readiness program offered during the summer that is designed to help prepare children for successful school entry. This three-week program offered at Y.E. Smith Elementary, in partnership with Duke University’s Office of Durham and Regional Affairs, has served 191 children over the past seven fiscal years. In 2018, the 21 participating children made significant improvements in all four key areas of school readiness, with 84% rated by their incoming teacher as being ready for kindergarten at the end of the program. Like Durham Connects and HFD/Jumpstart, Stepping Stones is an example of how local organizations have collaborated with EDCI to provide programs that support school readiness and meet a need in the community.

## 2. Greater Involvement in the EDCI Pipeline over Time Leads to Better Outcomes

The theory of change guiding EDCI is that engaging children and families in multiple pipeline programs, over time, will lead to better outcomes. During the first seven years of EDCI implementation (July 2011 – June 2018), 1,803 unique children, from 931 unique families, have consented to enroll in EDCI and participated in one or more EDCI programs. More than one-third of enrolled children since 2011 have participated in three or more EDCI programs (35%; n=638).

**Percent of EDCI Children Enrolled in Multiple Pipeline Programs Since 2011**



During the seventh fiscal year (July 1, 2017 - June 30, 2018), EDCI served 855 unique children, from 431 families, or 47% of all children enrolled in EDCI since 2011. Approximately 436 children (51%) engaged in the past fiscal year have participated in three or more EDCI programs since enrolling in the initiative, demonstrating increasing levels of engagement in the pipeline over time. Importantly, many EDCI and partner programs have continued to increase the number of families linked with other pipeline services. The table below provides percentages of the total number of consented children by program that have been involved in at least one other EDCI pipeline program, as well as the 2017-18 fiscal year percentages.

**Percent of EDCI Consented Children Participating in at Least One Other EDCI Pipeline Program**

<b>EDCI Program</b>	<b>Total Consented Number</b>	<b>2011-18 % Ever Enrolled in 1+ Program</b>	<b>Total Consented Number Y7</b>	<b>2017-18 % Ever Enrolled in 1+ Program</b>
Durham Connects	302	62%	55	46%
HFD/Jumpstart	196	78%	66	86%
EDCI LEAP Academy	84	87%	30	83%
Stepping Stones	166	85%	11	82%
EDCI Parent Advocate Programs	1,153	72%	492	83%
EDCI MSYA Program	45	78%	33	76%
EDCI Out of School Learning Programs (STEAM Summer, Saturdays, and Spring Break, YMCA Camp High Hopes, BELL)	563	88%	160	87%

EDCI has collaborated with several organizations, including Durham Public Schools, and implemented programs of its own to help ensure EDCI Zone elementary school students are academically proficient by:

- 1) Connecting families with appropriate student enrichment and family support services,
- 2) Helping parents improve children’s’ learning environments at home and school,
- 3) Increasing parents’ engagement in their children’s education,
- 4) Providing high quality in- and out-of-school learning opportunities, and
- 5) Preventing summer learning loss.

Educational data was examined for the first six school years that EDCI was operational (2011-12 – 2016-17). Data from the North Carolina Education Research Data Center was utilized to create a comparison group of similar DPS students. Results from these analyses revealed a significant and positive impact of EDCI participation on attendance rates over time. Specifically, the longer students are enrolled in EDCI, the more likely their attendance rates are to mirror DPS comparison group students. Thus, EDCI involvement over time appears to be helping to close the gap with respect to truancy. When examining outcomes among EDCI participants only, the longer students were enrolled in EDCI, the better their early literacy scores were, and the lower their truancy rates were. Children enrolled in EDCI for three consecutive years or more (i.e., were enrolled in at least one EDCI pipeline program for each year) appear to have received the most benefit as they exhibited significantly better early literacy scores and significantly better attendance rates than those children enrolled for a duration of one or two years. This is the second year in a row that these findings have been observed with NCERDC data, revealing a stable and significant effect for EDCI involvement on early literacy and attendance outcomes. Moreover, across two kindergarten cohorts at Y.E. Smith (i.e., 2015-16 and 2016-

17, but not 2017-18) multiple program enrollment significantly predicted both attendance and tardiness rates. The more EDCI pipeline programs kindergartners had been enrolled in, the lower their truancy and tardiness rates were. These findings, in conjunction with the other data presented within this report and in previous reports, indicate that children participating in EDCI pipeline programs are benefitting in a number of important ways including:

- Increased school readiness
- Improved literacy skills
- Prevention of summer learning loss; and
- Better attendance and early literacy scores the longer children are enrolled in EDCI.

### **3. EDCI Empowers Parents and Caregivers to Actively Engage in their Children’s Academic Success and Helps Students to Move Students Toward Academic Proficiency.**

Evaluation data show a number of areas where the [EDCI Elementary School Parent Advocate \(ES PA\) Program](#) has continued to be successful with respect to reaching its target population of students and their families attending many elementary schools located in the Zone. The program has also implemented many strategies aimed at improving parental engagement in children’s education. ES PAs empower parents with the skills and resources needed to be active participants in their children’s education. ES PAs use home, school, and office-based visits and workshops to provide families with support in areas such as attendance and truancy issues, home-school communication, and access to community resources. At the end of the 2017-18 school year, ES PAs had attempted or completed 716 contacts with 114 unique families. Contact data showed that staff had an 85% success rate in reaching families, and 34% of all successfully completed contacts were made in-person. Fifty percent of in-person, completed contacts had a primary purpose of providing elementary school supports and interventions. A parent survey completed by 110 families regarding their experience with the ES PA program indicated that Advocates are helping to support caregiver engagement in their children’s education. Nearly all parents surveyed (97%) said their ES PA had given them helpful information/advice to improve their child’s education. Of the 110 families who completed a baseline survey, 66 families completed a second administration of the survey, and 31 completed a third survey, revealing positive change over time:

- Significant increases in parental confidence in communicating with their child’s teacher.
- Increased numbers of parents reporting:
  - Their ES PA provided learning resources and guidance on developing important routines for their children.
  - Their ES PA modeled strategies to help their child with homework, and with parent-teacher conferences.

Additionally, data from the Y.E. Smith teacher surveys showed that, compared to children/parents not involved in the PA program, children whose parents were engaged with a PA during the school year had significantly better behavior ratings, and were significantly more likely to attend regularly scheduled conferences and meetings, return teacher communication, and volunteer at their child’s school. These results provide further evidence of increased parent involvement because of engagement in the PA program.

[EDCI Summer Camp Programming](#) has traditionally been offered to Zone families through partnerships with the YMCA and BELL. However, in 2017, EDCI expanded its summer camp offerings and began to implement its own [STEAM Summer Camp](#) programming. In 2018, EDCI offered this six-week camp in partnership with DPS and Eastway Elementary to over 109 EDCI Zone children. EDCI’s primary goal for the camps is to prevent summer learning loss among EDCI Zone students. Attendance rates for EDCI STEAM Summer Camp were high (83% of all campers attended more than half of the available camp days). At the conclusion of camp, a significant increase in sentence reading fluency (SRF) skills was found. Moreover, children’s attendance at

camp was a significant predictor for SRF gains. These are exciting findings as research has demonstrated a detrimental cumulative effect of summer learning loss on academic achievement for low-income children.

#### 4. Enrolled Families Feel a Strong Connection and Sense of Support from EDCI

The [EDCI Program Implementation and Community Engagement Team \(PICE\)](#) focuses on implementing a variety of community-based programs for Zone children and families such as STEAM-based, out-of-school programs, sports/recreation activities, and EDCI Summer Lunch. Given the economic hardships that EDCI Zone families face, the presence and support that EDCI offers has the potential to alleviate some anxiety and stress for caregivers, as well as improve life outcomes for both parents and children. Over the past three fiscal years, EDCI and eleven collaborative partners were awarded a collective impact grant from the United Way of the Greater Triangle. This grant helped to expand EDCI's two generational approach (i.e., providing parallel services to both caregivers and children) by strengthening EDCI's pipeline in the areas of early childhood, out-of-school learning, parent engagement, family empowerment and economic development. Continued data collection shows that many families participating in EDCI's evaluated programs are also enrolled in these additional partner services (e.g., Dress for Success, English for Speakers of Other Languages classes, CCSA prioritized child care scholarships).

In addition, EDCI planned and implemented numerous parent and community outreach events throughout the year with the support of partners. Some of these events include Holiday Zone, Parent and Community Advisory Council meetings, Parent Cafés and Workshops, Parent Appreciation Event, End-of-Year and End-of-Summer Celebrations, and Tigers Save Childhood Savings Account Deposit events. These outreach events, in combination with EDCI programs and staff efforts, are translating into increased neighborhood engagement and a greater sense of community among participants. Over the past fiscal year, the majority of 218 parent survey respondents reported that EDCI and/or their EDCI Parent Advocate have helped to increase their community connections and engagement in East Durham:

- 50% reported participating in community events;
- 55% reported meeting new people in their neighborhood through EDCI; and
- 81% reported telling a friend or neighbor about EDCI programs and services.

In conclusion, during the past seven years of implementation, EDCI has demonstrated extraordinary reach and achieved many positive outcomes within the most economically distressed neighborhood in Durham, NC. It is still important to note, however, that many program effects will take years to reach their maximum impact with respect to educational and life outcomes for participating children and families. This is especially true for those young children served by EDCI's early childhood services. Program data from the past seven years highlight continued areas of need including additional programming to serve more children in high quality in-school, after-school and summer interventions. In addition, in order for the EDCI Parent and Youth Advocate Programs to reach more children, youth, and families, additional resources will be necessary. The commitment of EDCI to the community is salient and is recognized and valued by those they serve. This unique partnership with families further underscores the unique potential for EDCI to lead continued, positive change in East Durham and beyond.