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# Sharing Knowledge for Better Implementation from Beginning to End

Overview of the NYC Early Childhood Research Network: A Model for Integrating Research, Policy, and Practice

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## **We can close the gap between research, policy, and practice.**

Much attention has been paid to examining the effectiveness of early care and education (ECE) programs. Yet, little research examines how to implement such programs and help policymakers utilize research to inform on-the-ground operations in real time. This has left researchers conducting studies in silos, schools and programs applying for funding with distinct and varying mandates, and policymakers carrying out agendas based on limited information. The Foundation for Child Development (the Foundation) used New York City's (NYC) implementation of universal full-day prekindergarten as an opportunity to solve the problem, creating the NYC Early Childhood Research Network (the Network).

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## **NYC Early Childhood Research Network is a model for bringing researchers and policymakers together to define and produce better outcomes.**

The Foundation funded the Network to rally researchers and policymakers from NYC public agencies around a single mission that focuses on continuous quality improvement, implementation, and scale-up of high-quality ECE programs.

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## **Knowledge is more powerful when it's networked from beginning to end.**

Creating a collaborative, multi-discipline research network helps researchers and policymakers implement effective programs by setting mutual goals, outlining common definitions, defining metrics and protocols, collecting the right data, and sharing multiple perspectives and experiences from beginning to end. This global view is often not seen until programs are scaled and flaws become evident, often hindering the growth and health of promising philanthropic and government investments. It is far better to work collaboratively on the critical knowledge necessary for innovation, implementation, and continuous improvement as programs are brought to scale than it is to remediate problems created by working in silos.

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## **Two years into this research-to-impact approach, the NYC Early Childhood Research Network has aligned efforts and voices around implementing high-quality early childhood education.**

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Outcomes of this effort include: greater cooperation across sectors, coordination in research agendas, collaboration extending to the future, and enhanced capacity for understanding program implementation. While the outcomes of this effort are still evolving, the collaboration, cohesion, and efficiency of this effort stand as a success story in and of itself. The Network has transformed the way different institutions and cultures in NYC work together to better serve the needs of young children.

**“There is a shared interest in the Foundation for Child Development, the NYC Department of Education, and the Network researchers to use [the Network] for implementation—to reflect and inform what we are doing throughout the process. There are more eyes and ears bringing info to me about the PreK programs on an ongoing basis and that is helpful.”**

— SOPHIA PAPPAS, FORMER CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER, DIVISION OF EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION,  
NYC DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

**“The Network gives me a chance to communicate to researchers who provide the evidence base that I depend on.”**

— KELVIN CHAN, FORMER DIRECTOR OF EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT, BUREAU OF CHILD CARE, NYC DEPARTMENT  
OF HEALTH AND MENTAL HYGIENE

**“Hearing from the NYC Department of Education, the NYC Administration for Children’s Services, and the NYC Department of Health and Mental Hygiene affected my thinking about what they are trying to do. It’s pulling back the curtain a little. Normally, we would be on the outside and looking in; now we see what they are trying to do, and it feels like we are working together with a better understanding.”**

— JEANNE REID, RESEARCH SCIENTIST, NATIONAL CENTER FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES AT TEACHERS COLLEGE,  
COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY

The **FOUNDATION FOR CHILD DEVELOPMENT** is a national private philanthropy based in New York City that supports research to help researchers, policymakers, and advocates develop high-quality, evidence-based early childhood systems to serve the needs of all children. The Foundation focuses on identifying areas of child well-being where there is little to no research in order to fill those gaps, build new fields of knowledge, and promote policies and practices that improve the lives of young children and their families.