

About Dr. Kara H. Ahmed

Appointed in 2024, Dr. Kara H. Ahmed is leading the national Educare Network into its next chapter, strengthening the connection between research, policy, and practice to build systems where every child and family has access to excellence.

A nationally recognized expert in early childhood systems and leadership, Dr. Ahmed brings more than 20 years of experience advancing quality, coherence, and opportunity across diverse educational settings. As Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood Education for New York City Public Schools - the nation's largest school system - she oversaw a comprehensive birth-to-five mixed-delivery portfolio serving approximately 140,000 children across all five boroughs. Her leadership supported early childhood classrooms, family child-care providers, program and school leaders, educators, and a multidisciplinary workforce. She built structures for continuous improvement and strengthened educator pipelines through university partnerships, expanding access to high-quality early learning opportunities citywide.

Previously, Dr. Ahmed served as Principal of *Living for the Young Family through Education* (LYFE), a New York City Public Schools' program, with more than 30 locations, that provides high-quality early childhood education for the children of student parents, making it possible for student parents to stay on path to graduation while parenting. She led groundbreaking reforms supporting student parents, their children, and their families. She extended LYFE's reach from six weeks to three years of age, implemented a research-based curriculum, and launched systemwide professional learning. Under her leadership, LYFE became recognized nationally as a model for integrated early education and family partnerships.

Dr. Ahmed's earlier roles include serving as Early Childhood Supervisor for New Brunswick Public Schools, where she led the implementation of preschool inclusion for children with disabilities. She also worked for William Paterson University to support the New Jersey Department of Education's preschool education policy and programming across more than 25 school districts and provided strategic consulting to districts focused on leadership development and teacher capacity-building. A former early childhood teacher and recipient of the New Jersey Governor's Teacher of the Year Award in only her second year of teaching, Dr. Ahmed's career reflects her unwavering belief in the transformative power of early education.

Dr. Ahmed has taught graduate courses at Teachers College, Columbia University. Her publications include *26 and Counting: Examining the Early Launch to Learning Initiative (ELLI)*, New Jersey's effort to create a universal preschool system (Ed.D. Dissertation, Teachers College, Columbia University, United States - New York, 2009).

She has received numerous honors, including a 2019 *NYC Daily News* Hometown Hero nomination, the 2015 Champions for Children Organizational Leadership Award from the Center for Children's Initiatives, and the 2011 Outstanding Dissertation Award from the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE)/Pearson. She has shared her expertise nationally as a key panelist and featured speaker, including at the 2016 National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, NASLEE's 2023 Roundtable, a live podcast at SXSW EDU in 2024, and events reaching more than 1,000 educators worldwide.

Dr. Ahmed holds a Bachelor of Arts from Fordham University and both a Master of Arts in Education Leadership and a Doctor of Education in Education Policy from Teachers College, Columbia University.