About Dr. Kara H. Ahmed

Dr. Kara H. Ahmed leads the national Educare Network, advancing excellence in early childhood education, expanding opportunity, and influencing the public policies and systems that shape the experiences of young children and families across the country. Beginning her career as an early childhood teacher, Dr. Ahmed brings more than 20 years of experience leading transformative change across schools, communities, and public education systems.

Before joining Educare in 2024, she served as Deputy Chancellor of Early Childhood Education for New York City Public Schools, the nation's largest school system, where she oversaw a comprehensive birth-to-five mixed-delivery portfolio serving approximately 140,000 children across all five boroughs. Her leadership encompassed a diverse early childhood system, including center-based classrooms, family child care providers, program and school leaders, educators, and a multidisciplinary workforce. She established structures for continuous improvement and strengthened educator pathways through university partnerships, expanding access to 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. Under her leadership, LYFE advanced innovative approaches to supporting student parents and their children, helping parents remain on track to graduate while raising their families. She expanded the program's reach to serve children from six weeks through three years of age, implemented a research-based curriculum, and launched systemwide professional learning. Her leadership helped establish LYFE as a nationally recognized model for integrating early education and family partnerships.

Earlier in her career, Dr. Ahmed served as an 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, providing strategic consulting to districts focused on leadership development and teacher capacity-building.

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).

Dr. Ahmed's work has been recognized throughout her career, beginning with her selection as a recipient of the New Jersey Governor's Teacher of the Year Award in only her second year of teaching, an early reflection of her unwavering commitment to early childhood education and its transformative potential. Her subsequent recognition includes the 2011 Outstanding Dissertation Award from the National Association of Early Childhood Teacher Educators (NAECTE)/Pearson, the 2015 Champions for Children Organizational Leadership Award from the Center for Children's Initiatives, a 2019 New York Daily News Hometown Hero nomination, and recognition among PoliticsNY and amNY Metro's Power Women in Government & Public Service while serving as Deputy Chancellor.

Dr. Ahmed has shared her expertise nationally as a featured speaker and panelist, including at the 2016 National Institute for Early Childhood Professional Development, NASLEE's 2023 Roundtable, and a live podcast at SXSW EDU in 2024, as well as 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.