



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Kansas Advocates

**For Equity, Education, and Health
Synthesis Report**

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Executive Summary

In 2021, the Kansas Health Fund (KHF) and United Methodist Health Ministry Fund (herein the Health Fund) partnered to launch the Kansas Advocates for Equity, Education, and Health (KAEEH), a three-year initiative to support four organizations in co-creating and implementing a shared advocacy agenda designed to reduce barriers to academic success and improve educational outcomes. The initiative focused on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families and children ages birth through eight, and prioritized community engagement and partnerships.

KAEEH Goals:

- Create more supportive environments that reduce barriers and prepare all Kansas children for a successful learning experience;
- Aid Kansas schools, early childhood care, and education providers in designing and delivering equitable education opportunities for children and families, using a whole-child, two-generation approach to improve educational outcomes.

Throughout the initiative, organizations received technical assistance to build capacity and support policy and programmatic efforts. Thrive Allen County, Kansas Breastfeeding Coalition, Storytime Village, and MORE2 are the four selected organizations or grantees.

To capture each grantee's strategies and approaches to developing advocacy agendas, [EduDream](#) conducted a **developmental evaluation** that involved describing and documenting the grantees' efforts taken to affect policy, systems, and environmental (PSE) changes, successes and challenges. EduDream began serving as the strategic learning and evaluation partner prior to the official start date of the initiative, which helped the evaluation team establish a collaborative working relationship with the technical assistance provider and trust with grantees. Throughout the evaluation, EduDream applied [Culturally Responsive and Equitable Evaluation \(CREE\) principles](#). We began with engaging grantees to co-create the evaluation plan, which included questions, data sources, and a data collection plan. With ongoing feedback from the funders and grantees, EduDream adjusted data collection tools and methods to reflect learnings and areas identified for further exploration.

Evaluation Findings

The following findings emerged from the three-year evaluation effort, informed by several data collection methods such as one-on-one bi-annual grantee interviews, monthly grantee learning logs, document reviews, and other facilitated conversations and interviews with key stakeholders, including funders and technical assistance providers. The findings are in accordance with the research questions that guided the evaluation.

RQ1: What is each grantee's process for developing advocacy agendas that reflect equity in educational and health outcomes?

- **Finding 1a:** As they developed their advocacy agendas, grantees prioritized building partnerships with various partners, including legislators, grassroots organizations, and state-level stakeholders. Over the three years, their approach to partnership building shifted from focusing on building awareness to developing working relationships with partners.
- **Finding 1b:** Throughout 2022, grantees reported needing additional support to reach and engage organizational leaders, as well as informational resources regarding advocacy to move their agendas forward.
- **Finding 1c:** While all grantees relied heavily on community input and partner support to help narrow their advocacy agenda, some also leveraged research.

RQ2: What approaches did grantees take to staffing, capacity, and infrastructure (i.e., hiring, funding, or resources/support)?

- **Finding 2a:** Although grantees encountered hiring delays and staff turnover during the planning year, by early 2022, all grantees reported onboarding new hires and attributed increased capacity to the KAEH grant.
- **Finding 2b:** Despite increasing staffing capacity from year 1 to year 2 of the initiative (Finding 2a), grantees continued to experience staffing challenges throughout the Initiative due to lack of time and infrastructure to efficiently and strategically support the recruitment process.

RQ3: What are grantee coalition structures and functions, and how do they evolve over time?

- **Finding 3a:** Grantees differed in their approaches to coalition-building, indicating a need for a shared understanding of coalitions' roles and functions.
- **Finding 3b:** Grantees faced challenges maintaining active partnerships, but they addressed this challenge by developing deep working relationships with key partners.

RQ4: To what extent did grantees make progress in implementing their advocacy agenda?

- **Finding 4a:** While grantee progress in developing their advocacy agenda was slow at the beginning, grantees showed significant progress in the final year of the initiative.
- **Finding 4b:** Grantees reported challenges in implementing their advocacy agendas, capacity constraints, sustainability concerns, and ability to engage stakeholders due to broad advocacy goals and limited capacity.

RQ5: What anticipated outcomes were achieved?

- **Finding 5a:** Grantees reported varying levels of success in reaching BIPOC families and achieving the initiative's first goal, which is to support BIPOC families in ways that create environments for young children that result in increased social, emotional, and academic preparedness for starting school.
- **Finding 5b:** Grantees reported success in aligning their efforts to address the initiative's second goal, which is to help early care and education providers and school districts reimagine their work so that more children ages birth to eight reach their educational potential.
- **Finding 5c:** Grantees reported success in aligning their efforts to address the initiative's third goal to support access to healthcare and support services for families, so children have the healthiest start in life possible.

The KAEEH initiative was designed as a three-year initiative with three ambitious goals, which, as a whole led to more equitable health and educational outcomes for all children and families in Kansas. Grantees and funders agree that while the KAEEH Initiative was successful in helping grantees build advocacy agendas to reduce barriers to academic success and improve educational outcomes, there remains work to be done to achieve its three goals.