

DAY 13: Behind the Starting Line- Racialized Outcomes in Early Childhood

“We must acknowledge the broader diversity in and of the African American experience and celebrate that all Black children are born geniuses. Black students continue to pursue educational excellence despite the many unnecessary obstacles they face due to constructions and perceptions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientations in America.” — [David J. Johns](#)

From infancy through high school, children's educational outcomes are dependent on the quality of their learning experience. Quality [early childhood education](#), in particular, has been shown to have a significant positive effect on future success, because brain circuits are developing actively then. In fact, 85% of the brain's development happens before a child enters kindergarten. We know how important early childhood education is, however, in Washtenaw County due to a lack of funding, only 27% of eligible three year olds attend Head Start (the Federally funded early childhood education program that serves families with low incomes).

Social and emotional health are also key to children's development, we know that poverty, trauma and other [adverse childhood experiences \(ACES\)](#) can have sustained, negative impacts on children's ability to succeed. [Dr. Roy Wade](#) notes that “We see higher levels of childhood adversity among minority populations, but we need to acknowledge the role that historical inequities and disenfranchisement play in creating the environment in which such traumatic experiences are more likely to occur.”

Did you know? Inequities in education start early with lifelong impacts on children and communities. This gap in opportunity is not due to individual actions, but rather on present social and economic conditions.

- High quality childcare is costly – [an average married couple in Michigan spends 22% of their annual income on childcare](#). Reflect back on Day 12 and consider how the high cost of care acts as a barrier to a family living in poverty's access to high quality programs for their children.
- Until third grade, children are learning to read. After third grade, they are reading to learn. But in Ann Arbor Public Schools, at present only 9% of third grade Black boys are reading at grade level; in Ypsilanti Community Schools, it's 15%.
- Researchers have found that “the persistence of the educational achievement gap imposes on the United States the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession” ([McKinsey & Company 2009, 6](#)).

Today's Challenge:

Option 1: Listen to this [WEMU interview](#) to learn about how ‘The Collaborative-Ypsilanti YMCA Child Development Center’ is meeting the need for high quality, affordable early childhood education in our county. The Collaborative is a partnership between the YMCA, Eastern Michigan University, Ypsilanti Community Schools, and the Ypsilanti Housing Commission.

Option 2: Learn about [Washtenaw Success by 6](#), the early childhood organization of the county's Cradle to Career Collaborative, is working with over 40 organizations to ensure every child in our county enters school ready to succeed. If you are a parent or caregiver, check out their [free developmental screening](#), the Ages & Stages Questionnaires. Regular developmental screening can help ensure children are on track and identify opportunities for additional support.

Option 3: Read [this U.S. News article](#) on how 'Education Inequality Starts Early' for children in households with low incomes.

Option 4: Watch this [2-minute CBS News report](#) on how systemic racism persists in early childhood education, where black preschool students are disproportionately facing harsh punishments, like suspension.

Option 5: Have children? Attend a [Talking with Kids about Race and Racism](#) workshop. The next scheduled workshop is February 9. Can't make it? Email kids@changeworksllc.com to find out about future workshops or to learn more.

Share your reflections on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) and tag [@uwwashtenaw](#).