Illinois Racial Equity Leadership Demonstration Project

Evaluation Final Report

Aisha Pittman Fields
Katina Kearney-Edwards
Lindsey Allard Agnamba

For the Illinois State Board of Education/Governor's
Office of Early Childhood Development

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INTRODUCTION

Evidence clearly and consistently reinforces the idea that children's earliest experiences provide the foundation for school and lifelong success. In recent decades, however, observers have also become increasingly aware that all young children do not have equal access to the early childhood experiences that support their healthy learning and development; these opportunity gaps could create significant disparities in children's kindergarten readiness and their long-term success in school and life.[1]

Early childhood educators serve an increasingly diverse population of young children. These educators can be more effective in the 21st century if their definitions of "high-quality early childhood education" prioritize an explicit focus on advancing racial equity.[2] In Illinois, the Early Learning Council[3] defines racial equity in early learning as: "A racially equitable society values and embraces all racial/ethnic identities. In such a society, one's racial/ethnic identity (particularly Black, Latino, Indigenous, and Asian) is not a factor in an individual's ability to prosper." Further, the Early Learning Council posits that "An early learning system that is racially equitable is driven by data and ensures that: every young child and family regardless of race, ethnicity, and social circumstance has everything s/he/they need to develop optimally; resources, opportunities, rewards, and burdens are fairly distributed across groups and communities so that those with the greatest challenges are adequately supported and not further disadvantaged; and systems and policies are designed, reframed, or eliminated to promote greater justice for children and families."

Illinois educators recognize the importance of providing equitable access to high quality early learning opportunities, and the state is one of many leveraging federal funds to develop the infrastructure and programming needed to facilitate healthy early childhood development and school readiness. In Illinois, professional learning and support for program leaders constitutes an essential component of the necessary infrastructure. Officials understand that the impact of leadership on children's outcomes is greatest in schools and programs where the learning needs of students are most acute—that

is, where institutional oppression based on race, language, and other social factors has significantly and negatively impacted children's success.[4] As a result, leaders must consider a focus on the importance of leadership when preparing ongoing professional learning to drive a culture of equitable programming, services, and interactions on behalf of young children, families, and early childhood professionals.[5,6]

In response, the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Governor's Office of Early Childhood Development (GOECD) has taken several steps toward interrupting and then addressing racially inequitable early learning systems and practices. In 2018, with the support of the Illinois Early Learning Council, ISBE and GOECD designed a demonstration project providing racial equity training to Preschool Development Grant-Expansion (PDG-E) grantee program administrators. ISBE and GOECD stated the goal of this work was to facilitate greater adoption of equitable practices in these programs, ensure that administrators and leaders have the concrete tools they need to disrupt racial inequities, and pave the way for new approaches to leadership in early learning.

Through an intensive training, coaching, and peer community of practice facilitated by School Readiness Consulting (SRC), a cohort of leaders experienced professional learning that focused on the following topics as identified by ISBE and GOECD during the project design phase (prior to issuing the Request for Proposals): 1) equity-focused hiring and staff development practices that would lead to a more diverse and racially conscious early education workforce; 2) culturally responsive and anti-racist approaches to family engagement; and 3) equity-informed and anti-bias classroom practices, including curriculum, instruction, and assessment. By reflecting on the demonstration project that occurred in 2018–2019 and the lessons from the related evaluation, program champions in the State of Illinois seek to better understand the impacts and limitations of their support, how they can inform ongoing and potential future initiatives to advance racial equity, and what additional supports and resources they need.

THE DEMONSTRATION: THE ILLINOIS RACIAL EQUITY LEADERS COHORT

The demonstration project had two purposes: 1) to facilitate the advancement of equitable practices in early learning programs, creating positive preschool environments where families' cultures, languages, and circumstances are respected and celebrated as key drivers of children's learning, and 2) to support administrators and leaders in the construction of the knowledge and tools to identify and disrupt racial inequities, which will pave the way for new approaches to leadership in early learning. To support this effort, SRC worked alongside ISBE and GOECD to establish a community of learning among a self-selected cohort of program leaders developed and engaged over the course of the demonstration project, spanning November 2018 through November 2019. Components of the cohort process included:

- **Recruitment and enrollment** of program leaders at expansion sites to participate in the Racial Equity Leaders Cohort.

- Three **learning cycles**, each one focused on one of the three aforementioned topics. The learning cycles included a workshop session, structured coaching calls

with a race and equity leader/facilitator from SRC, peer learning opportunities through community calls, and strategic pairing with a "learning buddy" (fellow program leader from the cohort). SCR oriented the learning cycles toward supporting leaders in the development of a Topic of Inquiry (TOI) as a guide to assist in planning, documenting, sharing, and building the leader's progress.

- Strategically timed **feedback loops** to understand participants' experiences in the cohort and evaluate their own learning and growth.

Recruitment and Enrollment

For the integral first step of the demonstration project, ISBE/GOECD and SRC recruited and selected a group of cohort participants to engage in a year of learning, reflection, and application. Then, to prioritize consistency and commitment among the cohort, ISBE/GOECD and SRC strongly specified to potential applicants that their decision to apply should be based on a commitment to see the cohort through to the end of 2019, and they should
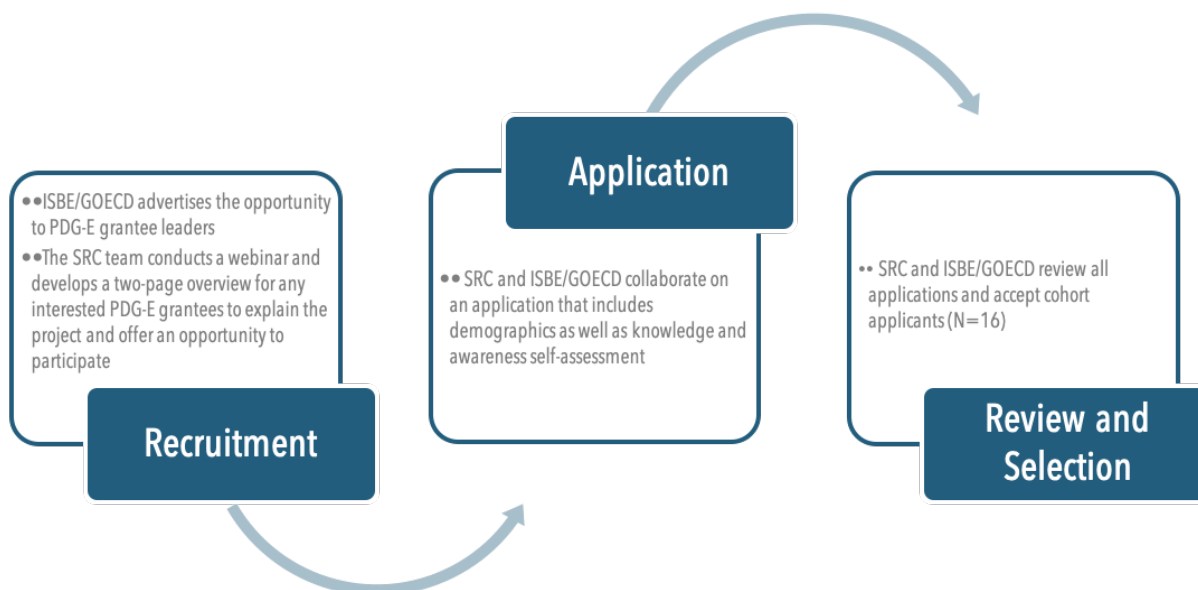

Figure 1. Cohort Selection Process.

prioritize attendance at all three pre-scheduled workshop sessions. The process of selecting a cohort included the following steps: recruitment, application, and review and selection. See Figure 1.

The sixteen (16) cohort participants selected represented eleven (11) programs from across the state and a variety of regions, though notably almost 70 percent of participants were from the northeast, and there was no participation from the southern part of the state (see Appendix A).

The cohort participants represented programs such as school districts (68%) and child care centers (53%) as well as private child care programs, head start, and early head start. Participants' experience in leadership roles in early childhood ranged from less than one year (6.25%) to more than ten years (32%). See Appendix B for the application questions.

Families in the communities served by the cohort participants were diverse in many ways. It is important to note that the state limited program selection to PDG-E programs, using criteria related to the number of families and children experiencing multiple risk factors. SRC and ISBE asked participants to characterize the demographics of the families they served. Their communities ranged between 2%–30% Black or African American children and families, 14%–80% Hispanic, 2%–58% White, 0%–3% Indigenous, and 0%–3% Asian American. The majority of the families served by the programs of the leaders participating in the cohort were either reported to be below the federal poverty level (68%) or low to middle income (31%). The participating cohort members' communities reported a range of dual language learners, with a few communities reporting 10% or fewer, more than half reporting 30% or more, and nearly one-third reporting over 50%.

Learning Cycles

The Racial Equity Leaders Cohort participated in three learning cycles with the following shared intentions: 1) to build professional relationships through active participation in professional learning workshops and community calls; 2) to build awareness and knowledge of racial equity topics in early learning; 3) to make authentic personal and programmatic connections to racial equity topics; 4) to articulate and pursue individual topics of interest and calls to action through personalized coaching with SRC staff; and 5) to consider next steps and potential resources as individuals and as a learning community. The learning activities in each learning cycle are described in Figure 2 on page 5.

Workshop Sessions

Each workshop session (February, April, and November, 2019) was one day in duration and covered both the content around equity as well as opportunities for leaders to consider applying the content to their settings. The workshop sessions required in-person participation by all cohort members and took place at the Illinois Network of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies (INCCRRA) offices in Bloomington, Illinois. Workshop sessions involved a variety of modes of learning, including discussions, whole group and small group exercises, self assessment, and independent reading and application. See Appendix C for a comprehensive overview of workshop session outcomes and activities.

Topics of Inquiry

As part of the learning process, leaders first chose a specific Topic of Inquiry (TOI), a goal that the participant and coach determined together and was specific to racial equity work in the leader's context. The leaders then documented their learning in a way that meaningfully brought together artifacts of learning throughout the project, and they finished by producing a final resource reflecting the leader's learning and serving the leader as well as the entire program community (see Appendix D).

Leaders initiated TOIs during the first cycle; participants conducted a high-level observation of their program sites and completed an inventory of program-wide policies and practices. During the project, leaders worked with coaches and peers to refine, plan, and enact their TOIs to visualize their learning through concrete action. For example, projects included changing hiring procedures or policies, re-envisioning family engagement events, or leveraging

	LEARNING CYCLE 1 **FEBRUARY–MARCH 2019**	**LEARNING CYCLE 2** **APRIL–JUNE 2019**	**LEARNING CYCLE 3** **JULY–NOVEMBER 2019**
WORKSHOP	• Introduction to racial equity professional learning • Engaging your team in equity-focused practices • Establishing Topics of Inquiry and "learning buddies"	• Establishing strengths-based partnerships with families • Exploring opportunities for outreach and partnership • Reflecting together with "learning buddies"	• Exploring anti-bias leadership values • Anti-Bias curriculum, instruction, and assessment • Reflecting together with "learning buddies
COACHING	• Defining a goal • Envisioning and defining a successful outcome • Creating action steps	• Checking progress toward goals; revisiting action steps • Exploring challenges and solutions	• Celebrating achievement toward goals • Identifying next steps and potential resources
COMMUNITY CALLS	• Applying/making meaning of content • Discussing emerging questions/wonderings	• Applying/making meaning of content • Discussing emerging questions/wonderings	• Presenting Topics of Inquiry, achievements, and next steps • Establishing opportunities for ongoing partnership
EVALUATION	• Participant feedback • Request for baseline administrative data and/or samples	• Request for interim data and/or samples • Participant feedback	• Participant feedback • Request for data and/or samples

Figure 2. Learning Cycles.

anti-bias resources or professional learning for teachers to utilize in classroom practice.

Structured Coaching Sessions

The project included individualized coaching that occurred between a qualified race and equity leader/facilitator and the program leader during each learning cycle. SRC provided individualized coaching to each program leader and worked with leaders on their selected TOI and on issues specific to implementing racially equitable practices within the leader's program. SRC designed these sessions to help build leadership capacity, support individual learning, and enable administrative improvements that elevate racial equity within the program community and work to advance equity-focused instructional leadership.

Community Calls and Learning Buddies

A fourth key component of the project was the community of peer support that was built among the cohort of participants invited into the demonstration project. This cohort of leaders and administrators worked closely together, took risks, and assessed themselves and their programs using racial equity frameworks and tools. In order to facilitate peer support and build upon topics covered in the workshop sessions, participants engaged in an initial community call prior to the first session to orient members to the cohort, and they joined subsequent calls to discuss the content of each workshop session. These sessions focused on application of learning, development of and engagement with the TOI, and ongoing assessment of learning and challenges. SRC designed the

community calls to expand learning, reinforce relationships, and ultimately serve as the forum for participants to present their work and plan for sustainability. See Appendix C for additional information about the structure and objectives of each content-based community call.

During and after each workshop session, participants had opportunities to work with and gather feedback from a paired "learning buddy." SRC endeavored to select learning buddies who represented similar program types and regions, and SRC asked participants to sustain communication with their learning buddies using discussion prompts provided by SRC facilitators. The intent of the learning buddy system was to keep participants on track, build each other's learning capacity, and hold everyone accountable for their actions.

Feedback Loops

Following each major process milestone, SRC asked participants to provide feedback about their experience in the cohort using evaluation surveys and discussions with SRC racial equity leaders/facilitators. SRC leveraged participants' feedback to make targeted improvements and course corrections to maximize engagement and learning in addition to evaluating the overall project. See the subsequent section, *Evaluation of the Illinois Racial Equity Leaders Cohort Demonstration Project*, for participant feedback as part of the project evaluation.

EVALUATION OF THE RACIAL EQUITY LEADERSHIP DEMONSTRATION PROJECT

As an integral part of the demonstration project, SRC developed an evaluation method that utilized a variety of processes and activities to study the implementation and outcomes of the Racial Equity Leaders Cohort and to assess the overall effectiveness and feasibility of the demonstration project. The evaluation included an integration of information from both quantitative and qualitative data sources to evaluate both implementation and outcomes, provide a comprehensive overview of leaders' experiences, and capture any programmatic changes over time. The evaluation activities included:

- Baseline data collection through cohort application, surveys, documents, and other artifacts
- Post-participation data collection and analysis including surveys, interviews, and document review
- Analysis of administrative data to identify shifts in programmatic policies and practices

The central research questions in the inquiry are related to both outcomes and implementation.

Outcomes

Awareness

1. How did the learning activities lead to a deeper and more nuanced understanding among leaders of individual, organizational, and institutional inequities and their impact on early learning?
2. How did leaders' perspectives of children, families, and program staff shift to reflect awareness of the prevalence and impact of racial injustice?

Knowledge and Skills

1. What new knowledge and skills do leaders demonstrate (through program artifacts and administrative data, interviews and discussions, surveys, etc.) around equity-focused staff development, family engagement, and anti-bias education?
2. What concrete changes were leaders able to affect in their programs and/or larger spheres of influence?

Competence and Readiness

1. What was the impact of this cohort experience on leaders' self-perceived competence and readiness to lead for equity in early learning?
2. To what degree do leaders feel prepared to continue and build upon this work beyond their participation in the cohort?
3. How does this experience connect to and inform other aspects of their work?
4. What new opportunities arose as a result of their participation?

Implementation

Project Design and Participation

1. What was the demographic, regional, experiential, and leadership role composition of the self-selected cohort, and how did this contribute to or limit the success of the project to meet its stated outcomes?
2. Which project features did leaders find most impactful (workshops, coaching, peer support), what would they have liked to see added, and what could have been improved?
3. What challenges and barriers for participation existed among the cohort participants (e.g. geographic location, budgetary, staffing needs)
4. What barriers or concerns caused non-participating sites to opt-out?
5. What is the estimated direct cost to the state per participant for implementation of the Racial Equity Leaders Cohort?
6. In general, what indirect costs apply, including costs to the state (e.g., staff time to oversee implementation) and to participants (e.g., travel, time), and what is the impact on participating sites?

Relevance of Content and Activities

1. Which learning topics did the leaders find most relevant, and why?
2. How did the workshop content support immediate application and action within programs?
3. In what ways did coaching and peer support for the topics of inquiry provide the knowledge, skills, and practical strategies to address discriminatory and exclusionary policies and practices and advance a culture of equity within programs?

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

1. What aspects of the topic of inquiry implementation were most successful, and why?
2. What challenges (internal/programmatic, and external/systemic) did leaders face in applying their learning, and how did they respond to these challenges?
3. What additional supports or systemic shifts would better enable leaders to overcome these challenges?
4. What other lessons were learned about the implementation of the racial equity leaders cohort?

Methodology

SRC developed the implementation and outcome evaluation design and methods to be responsive to the goals and priorities of the Racial Equity Leaders Cohort demonstration project. Our goal was to illustrate the opportunities and barriers with implementation, and to measure, in the most authentic ways possible, the outcomes that participants achieved through their experience. To increase objectivity and neutrality, the evaluation team consisted of SRC members who were not involved in the project implementation and facilitation team. SRC selected these members because of their expertise in evaluation methodology, analysis, and racial equity professional learning content. SRC used existing programmatic data that was shared by the leaders, new data that SRC generated from interviews and surveys, and administrative data in participant portfolios that SRC collected and analyzed. Participants in the evaluation included cohort participants, ISBE and GOECD staff, and SRC project facilitators as key informants.

Interviews

As an integral part of the qualitative data collection, interviews provided an in-depth opportunity to understand the experiences of the state leaders, the cohort participants, and the SRC facilitators. SRC team members with experience and training in qualitative data collection conducted the interviews, which were each recorded and transcribed for analysis.

The SRC team guided the interviews using protocols for questions designed specifically for the evaluation of this project. The team completed the following interviews:

- The evaluation team interviewed key stakeholders and stakeholder groups (N=3) to gain a better understanding of the state context in which this work was taking place.
- SRC invited each cohort participant to participate in two interviews, one after the first workshop and the other after the third learning cycle had concluded. These interviews (N=13) aimed to assess the depth of

the leaders' experiences and the effectiveness of changes to their programmatic efforts.
- SRC interviewed project facilitators in an effort to understand their experiences and reflections on their work with cohort members (N=2).
- SRC, ISBE, and GOECD analyzed notes from regularly scheduled meetings for themes that emerged in agenda items and discussions (applying a similar type of analysis used with interviews).

Surveys

SRC administered the following surveys to the cohort participants and to leaders who expressed interest in the cohort but did not apply:

- To cohort applicants when they applied
- To expansion grantees who received the invitation to participate in the cohort but elected not to apply
- To cohort applicants prior to the start of the first learning cycle and at the completion of the third learning cycle (pre/post participation)
- To cohort participants after each of the three workshops (post workshop)

The surveys provided information to examine outcomes from the implementation of this project. SRC team members designed the survey questions using their experience in research and evaluation methods, and the surveys were responsive to the research questions stated above. SRC also used the surveys to define the racial, linguistic, regional, experiential, and leadership role composition of the cohort. The team distributed the surveys in two formats: paper surveys distributed during in-person workshops and online surveys completed over the course of the project.

Administrative Data

SRC coaches gathered existing data from the leaders that was related to their early childhood programs. These submitted artifacts allowed SRC to observe and document

implementation and impact over time as a result of this project. Some examples of the applicable materials included:

- Materials to illustrate hiring processes (such as job descriptions, postings, interview questions, and debrief protocols)

- Staff evaluation and other human resource practices

- Professional development processes and protocols

- Outreach and enrollment policies, practices, and materials

- Tools, resources, and other guidance to support equity-informed curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices

Analysis Methods

SRC used a qualitative analysis approach to dissect interview and administrative data using a method called direct content analysis, in which researchers analyzed interview responses using an initial list of topics as a framework.[7] They manually grouped the perspectives and practices expressed in the interviews by placing statements on a given topic together to draw out common themes. They then triangulated the perspectives, gleaned across interview responses and open-ended survey responses, to corroborate the common themes shared by combining feedback from multiple interview participants. SRC also used a quantitative analysis approach to analyze survey data, administrative data, and demographic and characteristics data of the program staff and children served. The results of the analysis yielded several thematic findings: seven related to implementation and three related to outcomes.

Limitations

SRC was unable to collect data directly from families and staff who participate in the programs led by the cohort participants. SRC was unable to interview every participant multiple times throughout the experience. Some participants left the cohort and did not respond to requests for a follow up interview. In addition, 16 invited programs did not submit an application, and only five programs responded to a survey to find out more about their reasons for not participating. Therefore, SRC has limited information about those who were invited to potentially participate in the project but chose not to apply.

It is important to describe the composition of the evaluation team. The evaluation team and the project team all are team members at a single organization, School Readiness Consulting. While a separate set of individuals from the project implementation team conducted the evaluation, all team members represent the same organization. While the team maintained a firewall during data collection and initial analysis, SRC did use the project implementation team to answer questions about and confirm the accuracy of data (cohort participant counts, timing of activities). SRC also confirmed themes and added detail, perspective, and specificity through structured interviews and discussions with the project implementation team about their experiences as the facilitation team.

Finally, and possibly most importantly, while this evaluation highlights several themes that consistently showed up across the data sources, and SRC drew insights directly from those themes, SRC believes it is important to approach the report conclusions and the insights generated with humility and caution. While the insights may point the state, as well as other stakeholders, in certain directions, all of the evaluation team members (a diverse team of early childhood evaluators, researchers, and practitioners) understand that their own perspectives have been influenced both by their own racial socialization and their proximity to racial equity training and development work in process.

KEY FINDINGS: OUTCOMES

SRC focused the outcomes evaluation on measuring the change over time and on the results of the leaders' participation in the project. This component of the report discusses the leaders' *awareness* of racial equity in early learning, their *knowledge and skills* to identify and make needed programmatic shifts, and their self-perceived *competence and readiness* to act as a leader for equity in early learning develop over time.

Awareness, Knowledge and Skills, and Competence and Readiness

KEY FINDING #1

Participants self-perceived ability to lead and apply new learning in their own context increased over the course of the cohort experience.

Participants initially reported feeling unable to lead and apply new learning in their own context (such as leading equity conversations, helping move fellow staff along the knowledge continuum). By the end of the cohort experience, participants overwhelmingly reported "agree" or "strongly agree" to feeling ready to lead conversations and actions regarding racial equity within their own programs. Over the course of the three-cycle cohort experience, participants' self-perceived ability increased to lead the staff in their programs to create more equitable conditions. Survey data from pre-participation surveys (Figure 3) show that only 3 participants began the cohort feeling prepared (N=16), 8 did not know, and 5 did not feel prepared. Survey data from post-participation surveys show that all participants who completed the survey (N=7) felt prepared to lead their program staff in creating more equitable opportunities (Figure 4).

Participants initially reported feeling unable to lead and apply new learning in their own context (such as leading equity conversations, helping move fellow staff along the knowledge continuum).
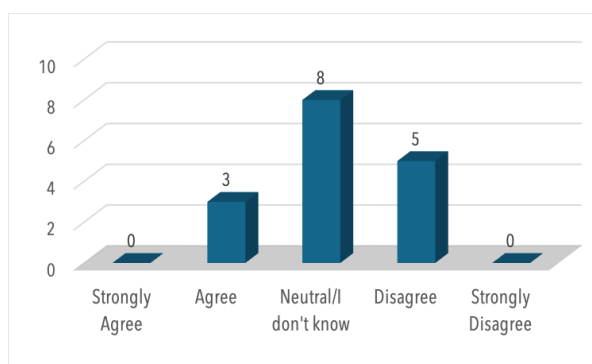

Figure 3. Pre-participation: I feel prepared to lead my team in creating more equitable conditions for staff in my program(s) (n=16)
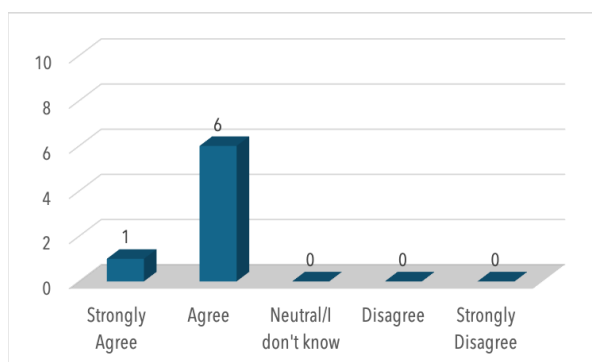

Figure 4. Post-Participation: I feel prepared to lead my team in creating more equitable conditions for staff in my program(s) (n=7)

Data from the participant interviews also suggested an increase in the participants perceived ability to lead programs from a racial equity perspective. Examples of leading cited by the participants included thinking differently, using the strategies and activities from the cohort, advocating for families, and rethinking staff recruitment and hiring.

"Some practices that we have even in our schools and our districts, that are not equitable or fair. I don't think if we had, if we did, if we didn't do this, I probably wouldn't have thought about different ways."–Cohort Participant

In addition, a few participants discussed how their participation in the cohort allowed them to reflect upon and question practices at their district/community level in a way they would not have previously done.

"…at the same time, our district was really, as far as district administration, really started discussing racial equity as well. And so it became a district initiative too, which was great. However, I kind of put the brakes on a little bit because I wanted to make sure we were talking about the same things. I didn't want to kind of start going down one path. I kind of started inserting myself in some of those district discussions for that reason…"–Cohort Participant

Survey data also suggested that participants felt that they increased their knowledge to lead programs toward becoming an Anti-Bias early learning community (Figure 5, Figure 6). During interviews, participants discussed their change in perspective and challenged some of their own biases regarding recruiting and hiring diverse staff. "You know, you always hear, 'Oh, you need a diverse staff.' But we dug quite a bit deeper and the thing that stuck out to me was sometimes you might have, for instance, three
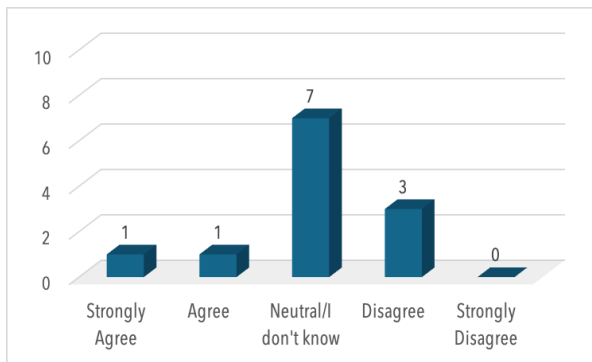
Figure 5. Pre-Participation: I feel I have the knowledge and skills to lead my program to become an Anti-Bias early learning community (n=12)
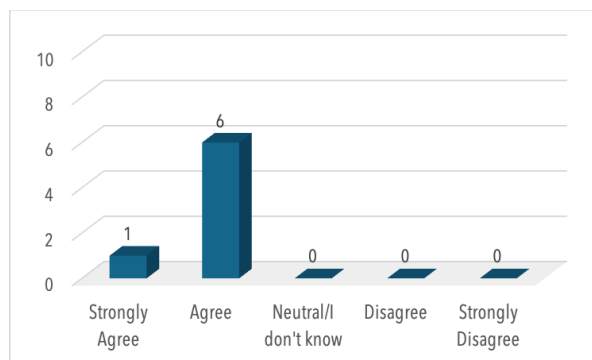
Figure 6. Post-Participation: I feel I have the knowledge and skills to lead my program to become an Anti-Bias early learning community (n=7)

candidates that kind of are all … even if you have a rubric, are all kind of equal. The activity gave me a different way of looking at it as far as biases. Because typically, if you have three candidates that you believe are equal, what you're going to do is you're probably going to look at yourself, like, 'Who do I connect with?' But to take a step back and really think about it through that racial equity lens, because that may not necessarily be the best choice, someone that's just like you, just because you connect …. But maybe that's not the best thing. That's one thing that really stuck out with me, that I want to share with the building principals that I work with."—Cohort Participant

In juxtaposition to the self-reported data by participants through interviews and surveys, SRC found inconsistencies with the perspectives of the project facilitators. While participants reported feeling prepared to lead new learning in their contexts, facilitators identified that participants needed significant continued learning to explore their own identities, including power relationships within their programs, in relation to racial inequity. "What their ratings at the end tell me is that there is really a self-awareness component that we were not able to get to with them. Because our content was very tactically focused, there was not a strong focus on [their own positionality], and I'm not sure even if there had been if that was the right amount of time and touch to approach this learning."—Cohort Facilitator

In addition, SRC did not include comments from the participants' program staff and families to validate the participants' self-assessment of competence at facilitating conversations and leading for equity in new ways in their own programs.

KEY FINDING #2
Participants reported changing paradigms about family partnerships, including a transformation to seeing families as leaders, contributors, and possessing funds of knowledge.

During post-workshop surveys and interviews, it was clear to SRC that participants felt their perceptions of the families with young children served by their organization/district had shifted and was impacted by their work throughout the learning cycles. Participants most frequently named family engagement topics, such as incorporating families into goals, creating environments that are welcoming to all families, restructuring parent workshops and events, and including parents as leaders and decision-makers as "new skills or actions that they learned during the training that they would begin implementing in their program."

"I believe the biggest change has been my viewpoint of wanting to intentionally recruit families to ensure that we're getting to the people who need us most...we are working through our inclusion team to benefit children with special needs and challenges. So we were in the process of creating a new program vision statement. So we were able to wrap our feelings about racial equity into that and really come up with a great, in our opinion, vision for us to move forward. Again to guarantee equity for everyone."–Cohort Participant

In addition, participants rated activities and discussions that related to family engagement as "most impactful" throughout the training series, including discussions about the strengths of families, funds of knowledge, and other paradigm-shifting discussions that illuminated racially inequitable practices and policies in family engagement. "Obviously I feel like we're in the infancy stages of how we're going to address this issue and the topic so that these families are fully included. We feel like we don't see a strong presence as far as activities and events go. But when we reflect on ourselves, we also are not providing these families opportunities with information that's in their languages and understanding of what their barriers are. I think we've started with a lot of assumptions for this project on why it is…"—Cohort Participant

"And so I think through this program we were able to really think critically, dig a little bit deeper to say, 'Are there other resources out there? Is there a family member in the community that can help to support this?' I think it's kind of brought awareness to, instead of just saying, 'We're roadblocked, we can't get past this.' Nobody else can. And because there's not a quick fix for it. And so I think now for us to be just doing everything a little bit differently as we planned for next year, every single event we stop and kind of have that conversation about, okay, so here's where a challenge has come up in the past. Now what are we going to do differently?"—Cohort Participant

KEY FINDING #3
While self-reporting a greater sense of feeling able to lead, cohort participants identified a critical need for more time and resources to continue their learning and development as leaders for racial equity.

Throughout the cohort experience, participants consistently reported a desire to continue and deepen their own learning, to bring new awareness and learning to their own contexts, and to benefit from additional resources and support to sustain the work around racial equity as professionals and leaders.

"I mean, this was kind of like the tip of the iceberg, right? This was only three times we got to meet and it was limited. I think they gave us a lot for the amount of time that they had. They definitely gave …. They kind of armed us with resources if we wanted to learn more."–Cohort Participant

Participants reported a desire to "do more and learn more" when asked about the next steps and actions for moving forward in their work around racial equity leadership.

"And so I think what would help is if we had some kind of equity audit, or equity like …. That always helps me to have a pre kind of assessment that I could use with my staff to kinda help understand where we're at and identify a goal. So the state should make sure that the cohort lasts for a while. Long enough for us to, you know, really achieve this goal and see it last, you know?"–Cohort Participant

Cohort participants reported a desire to grow the work in their own home contexts, but they detailed a need for additional resources, structure, expertise, and facilitation. They described the need for "a deep dive" into communities and utilization of tools and processes, such as the equity audit the participants completed during the cohort experience, awareness practices for staff and leaders, consultants, or staff positions that focus specifically on equity. They also described a desire for ongoing learning for the leaders themselves, including coaching and time to review policies and reflect on practices.

"But when it goes down to really specific things or reasons why I need to just be better educated on equity so that I feel more confident speaking about it. Because again, I feel like it's just in the infancy stages for us. So I just think time and knowledge."– Cohort Participant

KEY FINDINGS: IMPLEMENTATION

Project Design and Participation

KEY FINDING #1
Limited diversity among the participants may have affected the depth of peer conversations and group self-assessment as well as the completion of the cohort by participants of color.

The demonstration cohort was comprised of overwhelmingly white, English-speaking participants (Figure 7), which may have affected the types of conversations that occurred in the cohort and the ability to share experiences across racial differences. This particularly seemed to be an issue when participants were talking in peer opportunities. While the participants in the pilot cohort represented several types of early childhood programs across the State of Illinois, the 16 participants that attended the first session were all women, three were women of color, and all spoke English as a first language. During the final three sessions, none of the participants of color were in attendance. The lack of racial, ethnic, and

linguistic diversity may have limited the conversations during community calls. "I know it was created as a safe place, but it was kind of difficult to know how much I could say, what kind of questions I could ask, not wanting to come across as insensitive or uneducated."—Cohort Participant

Figure 7. Participant Self-identified Race/ethnicity

"I don't know that we were as thoughtful as we could have been about reaching out to particular communities, we put it there as a call for one person from each program, so the cohort ended up with individuals representing their programs who had varying levels of agency within their programs and communities. On reflection, it may have been smarter to think about having people apply as leadership teams from each organization or community. I don't exactly know what we could have or should have done differently, but we ended up with a cohort that was primarily white women, and I wonder if there was more we could have done to balance out the racial identities of the cohort. More generally, I would like to know more about what made this more appealing to the group that applied. Despite the non-participant survey, we did not learn enough about why potential applicants did not apply."—Cohort Facilitator
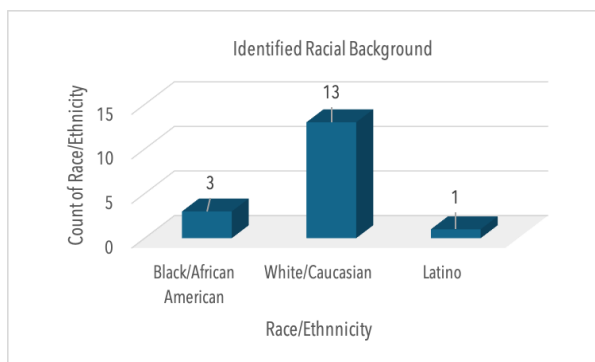
Some participants identified levels of awareness of racial inequities of peers as a limiting factor for the cohort, which may have affected the participants' ability to engage in open dialogue with peers. "I think, and I don't want to sound elitist in any way, but I think that all of the group that is in this we all are at different readiness levels. And I wish almost we took some kind of pre-assessment to see where we're at, and then we were in differentiated groups. If this is something like a brand new concept to you maybe you're in one group. And then if you've been working on equity issues, and been evaluating this in your program prior to this experience, then you're in one group. Or if you're leading equity things in your district, or your work, then maybe you should be in this other group. And so, to me, that's been hard."—Cohort Participant

KEY FINDING #2
Participants identified professional learning sessions and coaching as the most impactful component of the cohort experience.

Participants said professional learning sessions and coaching had the most impact, and community calls/peer support had the least impact. Data surveys, mid-point interviews, and post-participation interviews consistently identified professional learning sessions and coaching from cohort facilitators as the most impactful components of the cohort experience. During the three in-person learning sessions, participants identified facilitators as being knowledgeable about the subject manner (Figure 8).

Participants reported that the workshops provided an opportunity to learn new ideas and skills, discuss in small groups, then help make connections to their school and community context. "The workshops. It happens at the workshops with our facilitators and then amongst our, you know, small table groups at the workshop. But then again, we go into it with even on a more, you know, I guess to our, the context of our school, particular schools with our coach. So we're kind of taking all those things that we're learning in the workshop and then we're thinking about

The instructor was knowledgeable about the subject matter
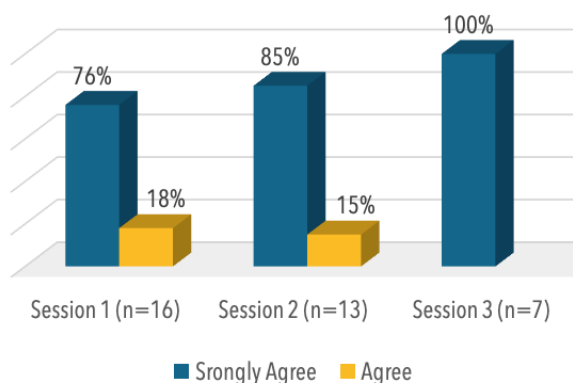
Figure 8. Participant Survey of Instructor Knowledge

those things on base to arc, the context of our school."—Cohort Participant

Participants appreciated the opportunity to have one-on-one conversations with coaches to make connections from the workshops to their school context, as they engaged in planning around their Topic of Inquiry. Coaching sessions provided to participants a space to have supportive conversations to help participants grow in their practice around racial equity, assess current practices, and break down large goals into realistic steps for their Topic of Inquiry. "…the individual calls that we had with our leader helped because she really made us kind of stop and say, you know, she just kind of reflect and tell us, 'Well you know, this is what I'm hearing you say. Is this something that you feel is a need?'" Participants identified coaches as supportive experts who challenged their thinking.

"It really helped to have the coach's expertise and outside viewpoints for … Topic of Inquiry. She helped definitely guide what ….Thoughts around outcomes, administrative outcomes and artifacts."– Cohort Participant

"I said to our coach, 'I can't let go of you. I need to tell you what's going on, I need to talk to you later.' You know, when we talk about, 'Is there anything I wish I had the opportunity to explore more.' I want a mentor, I'd love to have a mentor. I'd love to have my own coach in this area ongoing, because without that mentor we all get busy. I don't want to stop doing any of the things that are important to this work, and it would be helpful to have to have a mentor, to continue [this work]."–Cohort Participant

While participants consistently expressed the impact of the in-person sessions and the coaching support, the majority of the participants stated the community conversation with peers as being the least effective component of the cohort experience. Participants identified a variety of reasons that the community calls were least effective. Several participants stated that the calls were difficult because all participants did not actively engage in the conversations; others reported that the specific goals and Topics of Inquiry with their respective peers did not connect within the context of their own educational setting. For example, one participant reported that her peer was in a larger school district with multiple sites, while she was in a community-based program with a few classrooms. "It was difficult to impossible to find a same size, makeup district within the cohort. I've been paired with different people, but there really wasn't another fit for me in terms of size of program, and all of that kind of thing. So it was difficult at times to try to get that peer support. In the first round of calls we had cohort peer calls. But that was not helpful at all, I mean, the lady I was paired with has a situation that's so different from mine that that call was really…. She didn't have the time to do the work prior, and she really didn't have time for the call…. So that's the feedback there, it's really helpful to find somebody with the same kind of…like a sister, you know? A sister who's kind of like you, but a sister program that's kind of like us, a closer match to that. There were a lot of very big programs that were represented in the cohort. That's hard for us to compare to." In contrast with

these experiences, some participants identified the community call as being helpful.

"I mean, our biggest similarity is that we're all working with young children and focusing on equity. We have that connection. I don't think the way it was structured hindered the process. I think that the goal of the peer support was have another early childhood person to talk to and share ideas, kind of challenge each other. I feel that like the community calls that I had at least were beneficial."–Cohort Participant

In addition, the facilitators discussed how the structure of the community calls changed over the course of the cohort, in attempts to increase participation and dialogue over the video platform space. While initially designed to be an extension of the content that was covered in the workshop and a space for sharing and discussion, the design of the calls for the second and third cycles became more content focused with structured conversations.

"The video platform for community calls was a struggle, not sure of all the reasons. We found that the less we tried to make it interactive, the more people were willing to engage and it seemed like they valued the community call being a source of information rather than a peer support platform." –Cohort Participant

KEY FINDING #3
Logistics and alignment of Topics of Inquiry (TOI) with district/program realities and contexts were challenging.

Participants identified logistics (timing and location of training) and alignment of Topics of Inquiry (TOI) with district and program realities as a challenge of the cohort experience. Survey and interview data suggest that many participants found the timing of the start and end of the cohort experience to be challenging, as these did not coincide with the start and end of their academic school year. In addition, while participants stated they enjoyed the sessions and experience overall, it was challenging to devote the time needed to travel to in-person sessions and complete any pre- or post- session work on top of the demands and priorities at their respective programs. "But I knew it was going to be challenging for me to be in it 100% because of all the other new projects that we had going on."—Cohort Participant

Specifically, due to the start of the cohort in January and the end of cohort in November, participants identified as difficult the ability to collect any baseline data for their Topic of Inquiry, plan appropriate changes, and implement those changes during the middle of a school year. Many participants suggested that the cohort should be planned in a manner that would allow for planning and professional learning time with their staff during the summer, before a new school year began. "From the original February meeting to the April meeting, to now, it was a little bit of a challenge with the timeline for me, for collecting baseline data. We serve like a thousand kids, and I held listening tours with the parents. And we had a limited time to capture their experience before the end of the school year. And logistically to invite a thousand people, and make sure that they're heard and they have meaningful participation, it takes a lot of work you know."—Cohort Participant

While the timing was limited and difficult, the participants consistently reported that the content was important to them, and they did their best to actively participate in the

cohort experience and keep their TOI at the forefront of their work.

More specifically related to the TOI and alignment to their individual program context, the participants saw their goals as an opportunity and challenge. The TOI provided an opportunity for participants to center social justice and racial equity work, prioritize conversations of inequities and anti-bias education in their work spaces, and focus on taking the perspectives of program staff and families. The challenges of the TOI included the (mis)alignment with district priorities, the rhythm of implementation, and the impact of a single participant from a large school district program. "Because I work for a larger school district, a lot of the things that we talked about, especially at that first meeting, are really things that are outside of my circle of influence I guess you could say, and it's handled at the district level. So, when we were talking about human resources and we were talking about ... I can't think of it. I can picture it, I can't think of it. So, your policies and that level, it's really not something that I can influence. My level of influence is really limited to early childhood."—Cohort Participant

Participants also identified that while the content of the sessions aligned with work going on at the district level, implementing the TOI and other strategies could be challenging for programs and individuals who are at different levels of understanding and action as it relates to issues of inequities. "Because again, our district is also doing it and so we have seen the effects of different emotional states with equity and topics. And I think sometimes people shut down on things that probably could be a valuable discussion just because it's uncomfortable."—Cohort Participant

"Another team who was exploring racial equity within our K through 12 system. And so I was able to connect with them and kind of gather some of the information that they had received and that they were working on, and then connect it into what I was working on. And so sometimes some of our barriers is just making sure that we're even aligning within our own district and making sure that what's going on in the early childhood world is also connected to what's going on in K through 12."—Cohort Participant

KEY FINDING #4

Clarity of expectations at the beginning of a professional learning cohort experience is vital to recruitment, active participation, and implementation of change at the program level.

There was a missed opportunity on the front end for clarity of expectations about time commitment and the opportunity to participate with a team from your site. Participants overwhelmingly identified the need for specific and clear expectations during the recruitment and launch of the cohort. While travel experiences were not a surprise to participants, the following costs were not clarified during the recruitment phase or during the launch of the program: to be away from their program for in-person sessions, to complete the pre- and post-work, to engage in the coaching and TOI work, and to join the community calls. Related to the time commitment, data from participants and facilitators identified the need to make expectations for active engagement clear during recruitment and launch of the cohort. While participants were aware of the time for in-person sessions, the time for community calls and the individual work related to their topic of inquiry was not clear. "While it's always difficult to be away from your daily work, I feel like my topic of inquiry kind of evolved throughout the process."—Cohort Participant

Facilitators of the cohort stated that they received feedback from participants regarding the need for a more accurate sense of the time commitment beyond the three workshops and the "mental commitment." Although SRC explained all components of the cohort experience, the facilitators reported a need to be more explicit about the work that was required for the overall cohort experience.

In addition, participants and facilitators identified the need to build more content knowledge before identifying a TOI at the beginning of the cohort experience.

"And I think that if I had started with a better idea and more information about how equity has played a role

"I think it would have been more helpful to get some of that training and information ahead of time, before we jumped into the topic of inquiry. But I feel like because our timeframe was so short, we were trying to do a whole bunch of pieces at the same time and I think that was a challenge too. If we had been given the information and maybe some of the long term pieces ahead of time before we started on the topic of inquiry, maybe that would have helped with that piece."–Cohort Participant

within our educational system, I think my topic of inquiry may not have changed and evolved as much as it did. I think I might've come up with more right at the very beginning."—Cohort Participant

Facilitators identified that better guidance about applying as an individual rather than a small, cross-racial team from a program could have greatly increased the participants' ability to make substantial change related to their TOI. One participant also identified this area of a lack of clarity. "Perhaps that's my mis-reading or not reading close enough with the application part. I don't feel like it was clear that we could have applied as a duo. Like my family support person could've come with me … sometimes it's quite helpful to talk about your own situation within the context of an in-person workshop like that."—Cohort Participant

Relevance of Content and Activities

KEY FINDING #5

Topic areas that were rated highly among participants included those related to strength-based family engagement models, reflection on biases and experience, and frameworks to examine racial equity as critical topics.

Participants rated the following as critical topics offered in the workshops: family strengths and engagement; program policies; assessment of their own biases and the experiences of others; and frameworks to examine racial equity. Data from mid- and post-participation interviews suggest that participants identified content specific to models of strength-based family engagement and policies as some of the most impactful to their experience within the cohort. Although the second cycle workshop focused on family engagement and on identifying families' funds of knowledge, participants consistently identified the experiences of rethinking how to recruit, listen to, engage, and connect with families in different ways than their programs were currently reaching out to families as some

of the most impactful of the cohort during post-participation interviews.

In addition, most of the cohort participants chose some aspect of family engagement as their TOI. "I think probably the funds of knowledge in the home. Just the parent connection and what are we thinking about parents and how are we viewing parents. How are we viewing their situation as either an asset or a deficit?"—Cohort Participant

Participants discussed how their understanding of a strength-based perspective shifted their thinking about families, their challenges and success, how to rethink program expectations of families, as well as how to meet families' needs and interest.

> "One of the greatest things that I learned from one coach is we can make assumptions about what perhaps like, say concepts like family engagement and things like that mean to parents. But until we actually ask that question, we really don't know.–Cohort Participant

> "Well, the focus of our topic of inquiry was family engagement, and the lack of engagement by certain families. We just couldn't seem to get everybody, and I had a conversation really just a week ago with our family engagement person about, we need to make a radical shift in what we're doing. Prior to this cohort, and myself and the family engagement person working through our own brains, trying to problem-solve and get a better understanding of why families aren't coming. I said, 'You know, I really feel like we need a wider paradigm shift with our staff.' I feel strongly she echoed that as well, that it really still is, 'Let's talk to parents about this thing,' instead of, 'This concept, this is what we feel they need to know,' as opposed to really delving into family strengths and funds of knowledge, and moving from that family strength and funds of knowledge base instead."–Cohort Participant

"But when we reflect on ourselves, we also are not providing these families opportunities with information that's in their languages and understanding of what their barriers are. I think we've started with a lot of assumptions for this project on why it is."—Cohort Participant

Participants also identified the opportunity to consider their own experiences and biases as keys to their learning process. "Ability to see things from different perspectives, leads to conversations focused on understanding others and adapting."—Cohort Participant

Specifically, participants identified the need to work with their staff around implicit biases, and discover how they can impact relationships with children and families. "So this cohort highlighted for me the importance of doing implicit bias training with the staff and on a routine basis I've set myself a schedule of bringing articles to the whole staff to highlight issues in racial equity in programs."—Cohort Participant

Participants also identified the ability to understand the historical context of racial inequities and opportunities to revise vision statements as key content during their cohort experience.

"So when we're talking about our families, when we're talking about children, I'm really putting the focus on what they can do. I'm thinking from their lens. So instead of like, if we have a child that comes late to school every day. Instead of saying, 'She's late every day, her parents don't care.' We really are processing through, 'Why is she late every day? Does she not have a ride? Is the parent just getting home?' So really finding out the families' stories…the way I'm communicating is I am really focusing in on making sure the staff that I'm interacting with understand that we're looking at strengths of families…We're really looking at what they can bring to the table and we're looking at how we can work together as a team."–Cohort Participant

"The racial equity piece is something that I've been interested in for a while and I think another significant, maybe not a particular moment, but just the significance of this project is it was nice to have a framework to work within to think about the ideas I've had in the past and to kind of really start to apply some research to it and to create a plan and get some coaching and follow through with a plan."—Cohort Participant

KEY FINDING #6

Participants valued the applicability of workshop content reflecting program goals and areas for growth, and they appreciated strategies and resources that they could take back to their own programs.

Participants consistently identified the relevancy of the content of the workshops and how they were able to immediately share the information, activities, articles, and other resources with their staff. Most of the participants stated that the majority of their staff were receptive to the information and resources shared during staff meetings and professional learning sessions. One key takeaway from many participants was awareness.

"But honestly I think it's just awareness. I think many people on this topic are fairly naive, including myself, especially before joining this particular program. I wouldn't say I was completely naive on it and I think I feel internally, like I try to learn and embrace cultures and be respectful and inclusive. But even myself have learned through the process that I am part of the problem at times just with very little things that are subtle that I've never even thought twice about. And so honestly, just awareness and respect for people as a whole."
–Cohort Participant

The content provided during the cohort allowed participants to review and then make connections to their own program, program staff, and families.

"I appreciated it. I learned a lot, sparked a fire here. Again, it's driving my professional development this year for my staff. I think that speaks volumes of what they did and what they got like myself as an individual thinking about. Then I've brought it back to 30 people and now they're doing it."–Cohort Participant

Successes, Challenges, and Lessons Learned

KEY FINDING #7

Participants, facilitators, and stakeholders recognized the value of learning and support for participants' thinking and leadership, but reported a desire to continue their own learning, build expertise within districts and state supports, and develop the capacity to bring the learning to their own contexts.

While participants identified changes to their perspectives, approach with families, and awareness regarding others' experiences related to racial inequities as an ECE leader, they requested more time, resources, and expertise to continue their development as racial equity leaders in the early childhood field. Participants identified several ways they would like to continue to develop their knowledge, skills, and confidence to lead for racial equity: having a model program to visit, financial support at the state and federal level, and continued coaching or mentoring from an expert. In addition to a model and additional support, one participant suggested having some sort of "equity audit" to identify areas of growth, set a goal, and work toward the equity goal as a program. Overwhelmingly, the participants indicated a need for their cohort to continue, and they encouraged the state to plan for additional cohorts in the future.

Participants had several ideas for how to build capacity within program contexts and throughout the state.

"We had asked at the end, we were like, oh, it would be neat if we all could meet again in like six months or a year or something and kind of touch base and say, 'Hey, where are we now?' We'd had the topic of inquiry and we all kind of got to different levels in it. Some people did more, some people did less, some people had plans but just hadn't implemented them. We were all in different places. It would be nice to have a follow up or reconnect with people again."–Cohort Participant

In addition, state stakeholders discussed the importance of including early childhood technical assistance providers, coaches, and other leaders who support programs to access similar experiences and professional learning, as a way to build consistent language throughout the early childhood landscape in Illinois, as well as to provide additional layers of support to local leaders who are endeavoring to embark on or sustain racial equity work within their own contexts.

"I feel like it would be even more effective if it were getting hit at different angles. So, you're getting hit at the program level, you're getting hit at building levels, you're getting hit at district levels. I think that would make it more powerful: some sort of incentive."–Cohort Participant

Specifically, to support future cohorts, participants indicated a need for the coach to have more context about their respective programs and to visit their program to have a better sense of the opportunities and challenges.

"I wish that my coach could come here and have more context. And so I think moving forward, if our state chooses to do more equity work and more cohorts, having coaches that could come in is always so valuable…we've got [to have] somebody who has an early childhood lens, understands what the state wants, and can help translate it into our program."–Cohort Participant

Ideas for future cohorts also included extending the time of the cohort experience, which would provide more time for the leaders to plan for and realistically implement goals for their programs. "So the state should make sure that the cohort lasts for a while. Long enough for us, to you know, really achieve this goal and see it last, you know?"—Cohort Participant

INSIGHTS TO GUIDE FUTURE EFFORTS

In this section, SRC presents a summary of key findings and insights for consideration to inform future policy implementation and evaluation. These key findings provide important information that can help Illinois discern how to continue to develop racial equity professional learning efforts that best fit the needs and realities of leaders throughout the early childhood system, while also building the capacity of the 0–5 ecosystem to address racial inequities through practice and policy. These insights encourage Illinois to build upon its longstanding commitment to strengthen early childhood programs and systems and promote positive outcomes for children and families, and it affirms that the path to a thriving and prosperous Illinois begins with investment in equity for all young children, families, and communities.

Key Findings

OUTCOMES

1. Participants' self-perceived ability to lead and apply new learning in their own contexts increased during the cohort experience.
2. Participants reported changing paradigms about family partnerships, including a transformation to seeing families as leaders, contributors, and possessors of funds of knowledge.
3. While self-reporting a greater sense of feeling able to lead, cohort participants identified a critical need for more time and resources to continue their learning and development as leaders for racial equity.

IMPLEMENTATION

1. Limited diversity among participants may have affected the depth of peer conversations and group self-assessment as well as the completion of the cohort by participants of color.
2. Participants identified professional learning sessions and coaching as the most impactful components of the cohort experience.
3. Logistics and alignment of Topics of Inquiry (TOI) with district/program realities and contexts were challenging.
4. Clarity of expectations at the beginning of a professional learning cohort experience are vital to recruitment, active participation, and implementation of change at the program level.
5. Participants rated highly the following topic areas: those related to strength-based family engagement models, reflection on biases and experience, and frameworks to examine racial equity as critical topics.

Summary of Key Findings

The results of this inquiry show significant promise for ongoing professional development and learning for leaders in relation to a racial equity agenda. The state investment in this demonstration project and exploration of this important topic helped to highlight:

*   The positive impact that racial equity professional development can have on leaders' readiness to change paradigms, take action, and lead on issues of racial equity (Outcomes – Key Finding 1, 2, 3)
*   Several elements of this professional development that may be identified as critical for participant engagement and success (Implementation – Key Findings 2, 5, 6)
*   Lessons about how to best recruit for and structure a professional learning cohort in the future, which can be used to plan for racial equity work moving forward (Implementation – Key Finding 1, 3, 4)
*   Support that is still needed to further embed conversations and work for racial equity (Outcomes –Key Finding 3, Implementation-Key Finding 7)

6. Participants valued the applicability of workshop content that reflected program goals and areas for growth, and they appreciated strategies and resources they could take back to their own programs.
7. Participants, facilitators, and stakeholders recognized the value of learning and support for participants' thinking and leadership, but they reported a desire to continue their own learning, build expertise within districts and state supports, and develop the capacity to bring the learning to their own contexts.

Insights

Informed by key findings from the evaluation, SRC offers these insights to ISBE, the GOECD, and other stakeholders within and outside of Illinois as critical learnings from the Racial Equity Demonstration Project.

Learning and Outcomes

1. While participants reported experiencing transformational growth and a new sense of ability to lead racial equity efforts in their own home contexts, the study team cautions against overemphasizing these results. In racial equity work, there is a need for each individual to see themselves in a continuous learning process and for individual leaders to have supportive ways to tie into their leadership teams and widen the leadership circle within their own districts or programs. In a future cohort, we suggest building in a deeper "internalizing" component to include additional historical context and help participants relate to their own racial socialization to create both personal and internalized transformation.
2. When setting up the "cycles of learning," the study team should include more content and structure on peer calls up front, as participants within the cohort build relationships and become familiar with engaging in conversations about racial equity in cross-racial groups. Over time, these calls can become more participant led and include additional opportunities for peer learning and sharing experiences, challenges, and successes.
3. The study team should define the intentions of the TOI more clearly up front with the goal of having leaders make programmatic shifts in their respective programs. To do so, cohort planners and facilitators should manage the level of prerequisite knowledge, or

they should manage the sequence of content delivery and planning for the TOI.
4. The state should consider additional support for cohort participants to facilitate conversations about racial equity in their programs. This could include but need not be limited to developing a cadre of race and equity leaders within the state who could not only work with a cohort but also work within the home contexts of the districts. Additionally, including state level technical assistance providers in a parallel training could prepare them to further support cohort participants in their efforts to create racial equity discussions and agendas within their home contexts.

Recruitment and Logistics

1. During recruitment (and also as the cohort progresses), the study team should focus on recruiting cross-racial teams from communities and encourage participants to apply as teams. Additionally, the study team should place a special focus on retaining participants of color within the group.
2. When advertising/recruiting for this cohort, all expectations should be clear, particularly about the time commitment for each component (pre-work, Topic of Inquiry work, coaching participation, etc.). Clear expectations inform participants as they plan for participation, and this may possibly increase engagement throughout the cohort.

3. The coaching component should likely have more "proximity" during the coaching experience, and coaches should have the opportunity, when possible, to conduct some of the coaching on site within each participant's context.

4. When planning for state-wide meetings, the study team should consider logistics and regional possibilities. Participants could weigh in on location and dates in advance as a way to create buy-in for the travel and time commitment.

Future Evaluation

1. In future evaluations, additional feedback from the staff and families who interact with leaders could illustrate the potential shifts in the leaders' behavior. Feedback from community members, families, and staff also sends messaging about whose voice matters —even if it doesn't "help" to measure outcomes.

ISBE and GOECD's effort to support and grow a cohort of early childhood racial equity leaders is critical to increasing the diversity and preparation of the program staff who work with the diverse children and families in the State of Illinois. The need for more time, resources, and support was a strong message heard from the participants in the demonstration Racial Equity Leaders Cohort. Several strengths from the demonstration program included content, resources, and applicable and relevant information that the participants were able to use with their program staff, and highly capable and resourceful racial equity leaders. These are strengths that should be replicated for future cohort experiences. As continued work around racial equity and professional learning for early childhood leaders moves forward, the considerations highlighted in this Insights to Guide Future Efforts section provide a starting place for the development of high-quality, impactful, and relevant professional learning experiences for early childhood leaders.

"So we were in the process of creating a new program vision statement. So, we were able to wrap our feelings about racial equity into that and really come up with a great, in our opinion, vision for us to move forward. Again, to guarantee equity for everyone."–Cohort Participant

APPENDIXES

Appendix A

Illinois Racial Equity Leaders Cohort 2019 List of Program Participants

Berwyn South District 100

Children's Home & Aid

Collinsville USD

East Aurora District 131

Green Bay Early Childhood Center

McLean County Unit 5

Rock Island Regional Office of Education

Rockford Public School District

School District 300

West Aurora SD 129

West Chicago District 33

Appendix B

Illinois Racial Equity Leaders Cohort 2019–ISBE Racial Equity Leaders Cohort Application

12/20/2019   ISBE Equity Leaders Cohort Application

ISBE Equity Leaders Cohort Application

Thank you for applying to participate in the Equity Leaders Cohort, sponsored by the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE) and the Office of the Governor and facilitated by School Readiness Consulting (SRC). We're glad that you're interested in joining us on this journey!

Please take a few moments to help us get to know a little bit about you. Your answers will help ISBE leaders and the SRC facilitators understand who you are, what population of children and families you serve, and what ideas and experiences you are bringing into this conversation. We are asking you to respond as genuinely and concisely as possible. Your responses will help us to bring together leaders to create a well-rounded professional learning community reflecting a variety of settings and other characteristics.

Thank you in advance for your thoughtful responses!

* Required

1. **Email address** *

   _____

2. **Please check the boxes below to confirm that if selected to participate, you will personally attend each of three full-day workshop sessions, and that you understand this may require travel (including overnight) within the state of Illinois.** *
   Check all that apply.

   ☐ Tuesday, February 19

   ☐ Tuesday, April 23

   ☐ Tuesday, November 8

Background Information
We'd like to learn more about you.

3. **Your Name (First and Last):**

   _____

4. **Email Address:**

   _____

5. **Program/Site Name:**

   _____

6. **Your Role/Position:**

   _____

https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1pBXs2pD85x-PaR3p9pS2zdRHvNV3X0Pqq3oobDO9A38/edit   1/6

7. **How many years have you been working as a leader in early childhood?**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Less than 1 year
- ◯ 1-3 years
- ◯ 4-6 years
- ◯ 7-10 years
- ◯ More than 10 years

8. **How do you identify your race?**

_____

9. **What is your primary spoken language?**

_____

Program Information
We'd like to learn more about the early childhood program that you lead. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

10. **Please share your program address (include street, city, state and zip code):** *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

11. **Please select the state geographic region where your program is located (a reference map is provided below):**
Mark only one oval.

- ◯ Northwest
- ◯ Northeast
- ◯ East-Central
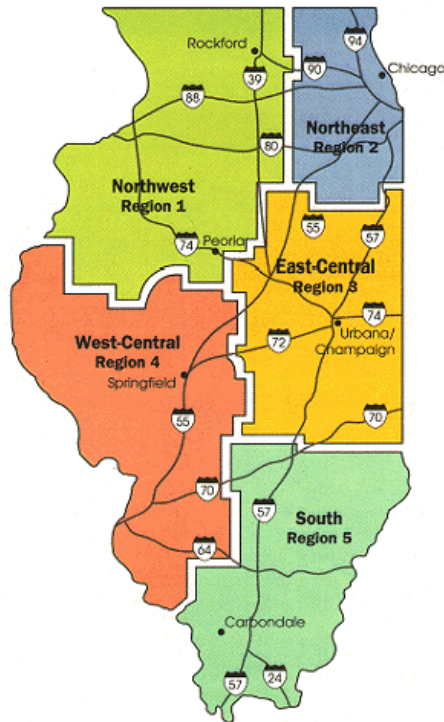- ◯ West-Central
- ◯ South
- ◯ Other: _____

Regional Reference Map of Illinois (source: https://www.dnr.illinois.gov/)

12. **Please select the program setting types that you oversee, including but not limited to any expansion program sites. (Check all that apply)**

Check all that apply.

- [ ] Private Child Care Center
- [ ] Early Childhood/Child Care Center
- [ ] Public Elementary School
- [ ] Private Elementary School
- [ ] Family Child Care Center
- [ ] Head Start/Early Head Start
- [ ] Community-Based Organization
- [ ] Other: _____

Organization Characteristics

We'd like to learn more about the organization and children you serve. Please answer the following questions to the best of your ability.

13. **Please provide the racial/ethnic breakdown of the children served in your organization listed as percentages. (e.g., 45% Black/African American, 20% White/Caucasian, 35% Latinx/Hispanic, etc.)**

_____

14. **What percentage of children served are Dual Language Learners/have a primary language other than English in your organization?**

Mark only one oval.

◯ 0%-10%

◯ 11%-30%

◯ 31%-50%

◯ Over 51%

15. **What are the most prevalent primary languages of your Dual Language Learners (if no Dual Language Learners served, please answer "N/A")?** *

_____

16. **Which designation(s) best describe your organization's community setting(s)? (Check all that apply)**

Check all that apply.

☐ Urban

☐ Suburban

☐ Rural

17. **How would you characterize the average income level of the majority of families you serve in your organization?**

Mark only one oval.

◯ All or most are below the federal poverty level

◯ Low to Middle Income

◯ Middle Income

◯ Middle to High Income

◯ High Income

◯ Mixed/No Prominent Income Level

18. **Which age ranges best describe the children you serve in your organization, including but not limited to any expansion program sites? (Check all that apply)**

Check all that apply.

☐ Infants (0-11 months)

☐ Toddlers (12 months - 30 months)

☐ Preschool (30 months - 4 years old)

☐ Pre-Kindergarten

☐ Kindergarten

☐ School Age (5 -10 years old)

Focus on Racial Equity

We'd like to learn more about your experiences and thoughts around racial equity. Please provide a brief response to each question below (up to 5 sentences) to represent your ideas.

19. **How would you define racial equity in early learning?** *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

20. **Why are you interested in participating in the Equity Leaders Cohort?** *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

21. **What are some ways that you have seen injustice at play in early childhood programs and systems?** *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

22. **What words or phrases describe your hopes for what a focus on racial equity could mean for your program/organization?** *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

23. **What scares you or makes you uncomfortable about an equity focus in your organization?** *

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Thank you for your time and participation

You are finished! Please press submit below. We will be in touch with you about the status of your application shortly.

Appendix C

Illinois Racial Equity Leaders Cohort 2019–Professional Learning Session Overview

Racial Equity in Early Learning Programs: Leadership Strategies for Prioritizing and Implementation

SESSION 1: BUILDING AND DEVELOPING YOUR TEAM
FEBRUARY 19, 2019

Objectives:

- Examine own values and synthesize diverse perspectives on racial equity in the early learning environment
- Analyze current program practices with a racial equity lens to determine where current school policies and practices may advantage some children and families while creating barriers for others
- Establish and communicate a cohesive vision for racial equity within participants' respective programs
- Identify and articulate a "topic of inquiry" which will guide participants' individual work within their programs

Resources:

- Moving Beyond Exclusion to Inclusion: The Significance of Culturally Responsive Teaching to Black Students, Social Emotional Competence: The missing but necessary ingredient in facilitating black children's academic outcomes and positive development, and a Reflection: There is Nothing Wrong with Black Students

Session Overview:

"Visuals Speak Warm-up" - Participants choose from a series of images to illustrate and discuss how they envision equity in their own programs, and how they think about their own growth as an equity leader

Introductions and Personal-Historical Timeline - Participants and facilitators identify and share key historical, familial, and racial experiences that have shaped their identities

Defining Equity and Naming the Barriers - Participants compare and refine working definitions of key terms such as Bias, Racism, Oppression, Equity, Cultural Responsiveness, White Supremacy, etc. and examine the differences between equality, equity and liberation

Building and Developing your Team - Participants examined data related to racial inequity in the workforce, reflected on how these patterns of inequity show up in their own programs, and considered potential steps according to the individual leader's locus of control and sphere of influence

Assessing Organizational Policies and Practices - In preparation to articulate a Topic of Inquiry, individual programs completed an inventory of org-wide policies and practices (in workbook) and discussed areas of strength and areas for growth with their learning buddies. The group brainstormed possible Topic of Inquiry activities.

SESSION 1: BUILDING AND DEVELOPING YOUR TEAM
FEBRUARY 19, 2019

Session Overview, cont.

<u>Shared Vision Statement Activity</u> - Participants explored the features and functions of a unifying vision for equity, and worked in groups to co-create a sample vision statement, practicing strategies to ensure all voices are captured and honored.

<u>Barriers and Bridges</u> - Participants worked to name barriers to growing as an equity-focused early learning community: Individual Barriers (i.e., implicit bias, lack of self-awareness);

Organizational Barriers (e.g., hiring policies/practices that limit diversity of candidates);

Institutional barriers (e.g., narrow pipeline of teachers/leader of color, competing priorities); and raised actionable steps for leaders to take within their spheres of influence to address these challenges, with a particular focus on creating "community agreements" as a set of shared values and commitments.

<u>Read and Reflect: Assessing Organizational Readiness for Change</u> - Participants read excerpt from Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs: A Guide for Change and followed prompts to reflect on potential allies and sources of resistance in their growth as an equity-focused program.

Follow-up: Community Call

The cohort met virtually to reflect on their own, their staffs' and their programs' readiness for change. They reflected on the continuum of individual growth (resistant, beginner, learner, mentor) and discussed what it takes to move individuals and groups toward greater consciousness and preparedness to implement anti-bias practices.

Resource:

● Leading Anti-Bias Early Childhood Programs: A Guide for Change, pp.13-18

SESSION 2: STRENGTHS-FOCUSED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
APRIL 23, 2019

Objectives:

- Surface and think critically about the attitudes, biases, and assumptions they may hold toward families of color and families whose first language is other than English

- Define and recognize the implications of family funds of knowledge, and identify patterns of white supremacy/dominant culture centricity within their family engagement policies and practices

- Define and examine micro-inequities that commonly impact families in ECE programs

- Think critically about current administrative practices and their impact on successful family engagement

- Provide and receive coaching support with peers and facilitators to overcome challenges associated with defining and implementing the Topic of Inquiry

Resources:

- Pre-Reading

  - Video: Luis Moll describes Funds of Knowledge

  - Article: Reimagining Black Family Engagement p. 18

  - Book Excerpt: The Impact of Race on my Life (Courageous Conversations About Race) pp. 87-97

- Session Materials

  - Video: The Danger of a Single Story

  - Video: Bringing Families Together: Building Community

- TRIZ Protocol

Session Overview:

Four Corners Warm-up: Each participant responded to questions related to the strengths and assets they see in families by moving to a space in the room designated for one of four provided answers that most accurately represents their thoughts. After each sort, the groups that congregated there reflect on why they chose their station, and what examples they can share where families exemplified these strengths, especially as a result of their sociocultural identities. Participants reflected as a whole group on the experience of talking about families in this way.

Examining Dominant Culture Centricity - Participants unpacked examples of of how prevalent and how problematic it can be in early learning programs to center dominant (i.e., white, anglo, middle-upper class, etc.) values and expectations as the "standard" for all members of a diverse early learning community, and ways in which dominant culture centric practices reinforce white supremacy.

Defining and Understanding Funds of Knowledge - Participants reflected on their own formative experiences as a way to "see" their own culture and funds of knowledge, and understand funds of knowledge as they show up in families. They worked together to break down the definition: "Historically accumulated and culturally developed bodies of knowledge and skills essential for individual, household, or community functioning and well-being."

SESSION 2: STRENGTHS-FOCUSED FAMILY ENGAGEMENT
APRIL 23, 2019

Session Overview, cont.

<u>The Danger of a Single Story</u> - Participants used the video The Danger of a Single Story to illustrate the relational consequences of failing to take a strengths based perspective of families. They reflected on single stories potentially held by themselves and their staff, and reflected in program policies and practices.

<u>Micro-Messages and Implicit Bias </u> - Participants examined ways that families most commonly experience micro-inequities (i.e., micro-insults, -marginalizations, -devaluations, -limitations) as a result of single-story driven bias in early learning communities, how these are transacted, and how they undermine family partnership efforts. They unpacked real-life examples to shed light on the underlying bias, and the consequences for families.

<u>Family Engagement with Funds of Knowledge in Focus</u> - Participants used the Building Community video to view and reflect on examples of strengths-focused family engagement.

<u>Read and Reflect: Leadership Strategies for Equitable Family Engagement</u> - Participants selected one of three readings from Leading Anti-Bias ECE Programs: A Guide for Change pp. 70-71; AND pp. 78-80 (Create Family Visibility and Connection); pp. 80-84 (Family Anti-Bias Education and Dialogues: A Two-Way Street); pp. 84-86 (Promoting Family Partnership and Leadership - Family Support System); OR pp. 87-89 (Families as Allies of ABE)

<u>Action Planning: Further Defining the Topic of Inquiry</u> - Participants followed a protocol called "Triz Analysis" to bring to light current barriers to strengths-focused family engagement, and opportunities to lead their programs in improves practices.

Follow-up: Community Call

Participants watched a video in which families of diverse backgrounds shared perspectives on their role in early learning, and how their understandings and expectations diverge from dominant culture norms that pervade the early childhood space.

Resource:

- <u>Increasing Parent Engagement through Absent Narratives</u>

SESSION 3: LEADING FOR ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION
NOVEMBER 8, 2019

Objectives:

- Examine the activities, successes and challenges of their respective Topics of Inquiry, and why this work matters for their programs

- Recognize children's capacity for both bias and anti-bias development, and their connections to typical social development trajectories

- Define identity development and its implications for early childhood programs and the children they serve

- Reflect on the urgency and timeliness, and developmental appropriateness of anti-bias and anti-racism approaches in ECE

- Reflect on core attributes of effective ABE leadership and establish goals for individual growth

- Identify potential actions of ABE leaders to support ABE within "high-leverage" components of the early childhood program

- Practice strategies to interrupt bias and create an anti-bias culture within the organization

- Co-create strategies and action plans to overcome common challenges related to participants' individual TOI projects.

Resources:

- Pre-Reading

  - Article: Ten Lessons for Taking Leadership on Racial Equity

  - Podcast: How to Not (Accidentally) Raise a Racist

- Session Materials

  - Excerpts from Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves, by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen-Edwards

  - Video: The Doll Test

  - Wise Crowds Coaching Protocol

Session Overview:

"Nine Whys" Warm-up - Participants stated their Topic Inquiry focal points, accomplishments, and bright spots, and supported one another in re-examining their reasons for pursuing their Topics of Inquiry. They compared their "foundational WHY" with the rationale for anti-bias education.

Recognizing Facets of Identity and Human Difference - Participants explored details about goals 1 and 2 of anti-bias education (ABE), and emerging research about young children's racial and social identity development birth through age 5. Participants used the video, The Doll Test, to illustrate and discuss the prevalence of racial awareness, internalized oppression and superiority, and biased attitudes developing in very young children.

Continuum of Racial Awareness - Participants examined their own racial identity development by responding to and discussing a series of prompts about how race was discussed and experienced (or not) in their early life.

SESSION 3: LEADING FOR ANTI-BIAS EDUCATION
NOVEMBER 8, 2019

Session Overview, cont.

Internalizing Justice and Acting Upon Injustice - Participants explored details about goals 3 and 4 of ABE, and a series of research-based principles for putting ABE into action with young children as a way of responding to and overcoming resistance from within the learning community.

Becoming a Leader for Equity - Participants shared examples of role models for equity leadership in their own lives, named the actions and attributes that make them effective in this role, and discussed opportunities to grow in/incorporate these attributes in their own leadership development.

Leadership Qualities "Fish Bowl" - Participants used a dynamic discussion protocol to debate the importance of four critical qualities of effective anti-bias leaders (i.e., awareness, empathy, courage, humility).

Read and Reflect: Exploring Best Practices for Equity Leadership - Participants selected one of four excerpts from Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves about classroom-based strategies for ABE. Topics included Classroom environments and materials, Curriculum and planning, Holidays and celebrations, and Standards and Assessments

Wise Crowds Peer Consulting - Participants worked in small groups to raise and generate solutions to challenges they are facing related to the implementation of their topic of inquiry.

Prerequisite: Community Call

The community call for learning cycle 3 took place prior to the workshop to help participants build a foundational understanding of the four goals of ABE, and to define ABE and how it differs from non-biased or multicultural approaches to early learning.

Resources:

- Anti-Bias Education for Young Children and Ourselves, by Louise Derman-Sparks and Julie Olsen-Edwards

- Video: Start Seeing Diversity

- Video: PRIDE

- Video: Anti-Bias Lessons

- The Anti-Bias Curriculum Continuum

Appendix D

Illinois Racial Equity Leaders Cohort 2019–Topics of Inquiry

Program 1

Challenge:

There are some classrooms in the organization in which black boys are still over-identified for behavior challenges. Because the program staff is predominantly white women, individual awareness and skills to counteract internal and external biases are an area for growth.

As part of this effort, it feels important that curricula is culturally sensitive, and that celebrations are responsive and connected to the lived experiences and identities of children

Topic of Inquiry:

Identifying and naming patterns of inequity and their impact on all members of the learning community, and initiating the development of an equity framework to guide organizational policies, practices, and decision-making.

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

An updated vision and mission statement that includes anti-bias language. This will constitute a first step in developing a framework to inform programmatic decisions (e.g., holidays and celebrations, curricula, behavior management, etc.)

Program 2

Challenge:

The program leaders believe that there is a great need for the staff to build awareness of individual implicit bias. Additionally, staff often struggle connecting what they know and are learning about racial equity and bias to classroom implementation. This question often arises: what does it mean and look like to have a racial equity focused classroom/program?

Topic of Inquiry:

Developing a digital catalogue of equity-focused resources, protocols, and tools that can be used for individual, team-based, and program-wide professional learning among the early learning and upper-elementary staff.

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

The program does not currently have an anti-bias mission and vision statement. The leaders will work with the leadership team to draft these statements and roll them out across the program as part of the professional learning development.

Program 3

Challenge:

One of the first touch-points between newly enrolled families and program staff is a process that extensively reviews, frames, and discusses families from a risk focused and deficit lens. The leaders acknowledge that this process and the language that is used during this process does not honor the funds of knowledge and social identities of families.

Topic of Inquiry:

Designing an anti-bias strengths-based family intake process with attention to integrating funds of knowledge across all levels of programmatic planning including material selection, family event planning, etc.

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

The leaders have redesigned all family intake documents to be accessible, inclusive, and strengths focused. To accompany the redesigned materials, the leaders have also created a protocol and conversation prompts for family engagement workers to use during the family interviews.

Program 4

Challenge:

The program serves about 850 students each year, approximately 7% are African American, 4% are white and the remaining families are Hispanic. The program believes that because some families fear facing deportation, there is a lack of trust between families and local government officials that creates a barrier in the program

Topic of Inquiry:

Identifying, responding, and systematizing effective approaches to family engagement with a special focus on building relationships among families. The approaches that the leader intends to systematize will be in response to the data collected through a family listening tour across the eight program sites.

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

Creating a family listening tour planning guide to include the systems, marketing material, presentation documents and protocols that were used during the tour that the leadership team conducted across all eight of the sites.

Program 5

Challenge:

There are nine early learning sites in the district and family engagement has varied significantly across all sites until it was message a family attendance requirement. The program leader is now interested in learning how to message that all families are welcomed and valued in the program while growing family engagement through an anti-bias approach.

Programs desires to define and understand what an anti-bias approach to family engagement looks like. Proposing to create a policy statement around the program's anti-bias partnerships with families. Program will build systems to support understanding the policy statement and define specific practices that support the programs goals.

Topic of Inquiry:

Explore anti-bias approaches to family engagement, with a special focus on linguistically diverse families through the creation of an anti-bias framework and systems to build and support anti-bias practices.

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

An anti-bias family engagement framework that will include the creation of a vision statement, goals, and supporting family intake documents.

Program 6

Challenge:

The program currently has a high suspension and expulsion rate of children of color. The leader wants to examine how leadership can address biases in early childhood programming and teaching practices.

Topic of Inquiry:

Using program data to identify the bias practices and systems that are possibly influencing the suspension rate and examine opportunities to create better child and family outcomes through strengths-based and empathy focused professional learning communities (PLC).

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

A PLC protocol that supports a continual review of systems and practices in support of anti-bias best practices.

Program 7

Challenge:

Currently many teachers have materials in the classroom that are representative of different cultures, but the leader does not see evidence of teaching teams embracing an anti-bias philosophy or practices. The leader acknowledges that the staff are at various levels on the anti-bias continuum and needs support in providing a programmatic anti-bias framework.

Topic of Inquiry:

Developing an equity-focused culture through the creation of an equity framework to include a vision statement, community agreements, anti-bias goals, and the protocols that will be used to build relationships with families.

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

An anti-bias vision statement, community agreements and goals will be created and shared with staff and families as the foundation to the on-going work of honoring and building relationships with families.

Program 8

Challenge:

Currently, African American families are underrepresented during program events and meetings and leaders are concerned that the program staff might accept and expect for families to not participate in the program. The leaders have identified the need to create a more streamlined family engagement process that can follow families as they transition to Kindergarten.

Topic of Inquiry:

Identifying existing barriers and building effective systems and approaches to family engagement among families of color, with a goal of increasing family participation in the program by 40 percent.

Tangible "Administrative" Outcome:

Restructure the systems that the program uses to plan and market family focused events, collect feedback from families, and access families' funds of knowledge.

Program 9

Challenge:

The program staff is predominantly white women, and does not reflect the diversity of the children and families enrolled. This contributes to a gap in cultural responsiveness/awareness of the unique capacities and needs of children of color, DLLs, and their families, which manifests itself in a lack of family engagement and partnership across the program.

Topic of Inquiry:

Identifying and systematizing effective approaches to family engagement among families of color and families whose primary languages are other than English, especially by listening and responding to family voices. The program will utilize touchpoints with families that are formal (e.g., orientation events) and informal (e.g., "coffee and chat" sessions at drop-off) to conduct listening sessions to learn more about barriers and viable strategies for cross-cultural family engagement, and to build relationships and trust that leads to deeper family engagement.

Tangible/Administrative Outcome:

Updated intention statement around family engagement, developed in partnership with staff and families; Updated tools and protocols for family engagement shared across the program. These will be responsive to family voice, but could include a variety family volunteer "role descriptions" and other ways of formalizing families' participation. This could also include updated protocols for staff collecting and following up on families' commitments to engagement.

Program 10

Challenge:

There is a need to deepen engagement with families of color and those living in poverty conditions -- meeting them where they are includes going into neighborhoods that are unfamiliar to many staff. This has 2 facets: 1) The program needs protocols to make sure that they are hiring people from diverse backgrounds and/or those who represent the communities they serve; and 2) The existing staff could benefit from additional anti-bias training and support

Topic of Inquiry:

Ensuring that current staff and new hires possess positive attitudes and genuine connectedness to the communities served, and that the organization's equity values are both internalized and externalized by staff through effective messaging.

Tangible/Administrative Outcome:

Updated interview protocols to assess new hires self-awareness and attitudes toward the population served; Updated family intake interview protocols that facilitate relationship building, and access the strengths and values that families possess.

Program 11

Challenges:

There is a need for increased cultural awareness and sensitivity at all levels of the organization, and for resources to support communication and relationship building among families. This manifests in that families who speak languages other than English or Spanish have not been successfully engaged in the program.

Topic of Inquiry:

Identify ways to increase engagement among families who speak a language other than English or Spanish by 1) partnering with trusted community organizations (i.e., World Relief) to support communication with families, and help facilitate relationships, and 2) holding translated listening sessions during orientation to identify barriers to participation in current family engagement opportunities 3) responding to family voice and expanding their definition of family engagement by honoring and building upon the many ways diverse families show up for their children and wish to participate in the learning community.

Tangible/Administrative Outcome:

Updated philosophy of family engagement; Action plan for the strategic roll-out of the updated philosophy and associated action with staff

DOCUMENT ENDNOTES

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