

## WEEK 13

# Behind the Starting Line— Racialized Outcomes in Early Childhood



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

**DAVID J. JOHNS**

From infancy through high school, children’s educational outcomes are dependent on the quality of their early learning experience. Quality early childhood education, in particular, has been shown to have a significant positive effect on future success, because brain circuits are actively developing. In fact, **85% of the brain’s development happens before a child enters kindergarten.**

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

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

- ✔ **High quality childcare is costly** – in 2018, the average annual costs for center-based care (\$13,762) for an infant were similar to the average annual tuition for a four-year university in Illinois at (\$13,970). Higher costs in child care may mean ALICE families have to make sacrifices in other areas of the budget, a trend that will have a particular impact on single parent families, who are more likely to be below the ALICE Threshold. Reflect on Week 12 and consider how the high cost of care acts as a barrier to a family living in poverty’s access to high quality programs for their children.
- ✔ **Cost is not the only issue with childcare in Illinois, accessibility is as well.** A 2018 analysis found that 58% of Illinois residents, the 12th highest in the nation, live in a “childcare desert,” with a dearth of available childcare providers. The percentage is even higher for Latinx families (65%) and for families living in rural areas (69%).
- ✔ **In 2018, well before the pandemic began, 31% of Illinois families with children had income below the ALICE Threshold.** These families are especially vulnerable to the disruptions that accompany childcare, school, and university closures. Essential workers with children rely on childcare; with closures, they often must put themselves and their children at greater risk. Closures also profoundly affect the childcare industry, whose workers themselves are primarily ALICE. School closures mean that children lose their daily routine, including meals and socialization as well as education. For ALICE families without internet access or home computers, digital learning may leave their children behind.

During this pandemic, **Black and Latinx students continue to be more likely to remain remote and are less likely to have access to the prerequisites of learning**—devices, internet access, and live contact with teachers. Left unaddressed, these opportunity gaps will translate into wider achievement gaps.

# Week 13 Challenge

Please **choose one or two** of the below activities to engage with for 15 minutes this week, and if you have time, we encourage you to complete more.

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## ACTIVITY A

**Watch** this [2-minute CBS News report](#) on how systemic racism persists in early childhood education, where Black preschool students are disproportionately facing harsh punishments, like suspension. Reflect on your (or your child) earliest education experience and what you observed (or believed) was happening to Black classmates.

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## ACTIVITY B

**Read** these articles on the need to [close the gap in kindergarten readiness in Illinois](#) and [Illinois Legislative Black Caucus](#) addressing the importance of eliminating systemic racial disparities in education.

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## ACTIVITY C

**Watch** [Recognizing Bias and Promoting Equity in Early Childhood Settings](#). Explore and compare your biases prior to watching this, and how any potential differences will shape your personal or professional purpose.

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## ACTIVITY D

If you are a parent or caregiver, **check out** the [free developmental screening](#), the Ages & Stages Questionnaires. Regular developmental screening can help ensure children are on track and identify opportunities for additional support.

Share your reflections and any resources that helps further the discussion on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#UWIEquityChallenge](#).

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