

ECE ACCESS FOR BLACK CHILDREN & FAMILIES:

Months Beyond (Re)conceptualizing ECE
for Black Children & Families

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(RE)CONCEPTUALIZING
CURRENT
MEASUREMENTS OF
ACCESSIBILITY FOR
BLACK CHILDREN AND
FAMILIES



Project Profile

During a fellowship with the Children's Equity Project out of ASU, I studied accessibility in early learning spaces for Black children. I wanted to be intentional about using a practitioner and family-centered lens.

Introduction

My goal was to unravel the complexities surrounding the accessibility of early education for Black families, by shedding light on the inadequacies of current policies and practices.

Foundationally, the key accessibility domains outlined by the Office of Policy, Research, and Evaluation (OPRE), acknowledge in their second report, that early learning opportunities are not grounded in inequality. However, this took place in the second report, and not in detail.

Data collection across various forms of the literature reveals that specifically, Black children and families are not truly considered when policies are created. Furthermore, inequitable data disaggregation inhibits proper dialogue to highlight and offer targeted policies and practices.



What Makes Accessibility Exclusive

- Black families, and their diversity, are not considered. It is not a one-size-fits-all in terms of child and family needs.
- Geographically, and considering the Child Opportunity Index, predominately black neighborhoods are the most susceptible to lack of viable resources and amenities (Acevedo-Garcia et al., 2020; Sanders, Winston, & Rochester, 2023).
 - In ECE, the same issues exist in accessing quality
- Tuition assistance is scarce for ECE. Black families, deter between child care and meeting their other basic needs.
- Historical context highlights the anti-Black beginnings of many federally funded childcare and family assistance programs, which adds to mistrust and disconnection
- Operationally, the majority of care is set up for a typical, nuclear family, however, for Black families, nontraditional is the norm
- Many Black families, must choose between getting care to have something lined up, and quality when the two are mutually exclusive



Research Questions

1. How has access to early care and education been largely defined and conceptualized?
2. To what extent does current conceptualizations of current measurements, exclude Black families?
3. What are some policy implications that would foster systemic change to be more inclusive to Black children and families in early learning spaces?

Equity is the Epicenter of Accessibility

It is imperative to center equity in the conceptualization of how early childhood education accessibility is measured, particularly for Black families, as historical and systemic inequities have disproportionately hindered their access to quality educational opportunities.

By prioritizing equity, we can accurately identify and address the barriers faced by Black families, leading to more inclusive and equitable early childhood education systems that promote positive outcomes for all children.

Additionally, one of the primary issues with the current data on early childhood accessibility is its lack of disaggregation based on demographic factors such as race, ethnicity, income level, and geographic location. By failing to capture the specific challenges faced by different communities, the data obscures the realities of those who are most impacted by inequities in access to early childhood education. This oversight perpetuates the cycle of disadvantage for marginalized groups, denying them the opportunities and resources necessary for optimal development and future success.



Months Beyond (Re)Conceptualizing

We are headed in the right direction by acknowledging nontraditional hours and current challenges that hinder its opportunity to be a solution, however being intentional takes it a step further past painting a picture of characteristics. We need to consider nontraditional hours for who? Who needs it when? To what extent is the current disconnect? Where do we need to prioritize such programs? Being forward with the intricate questions, allows us to seek specific answers, and create specific solutions. And for this provider, have a specific call to action.

We must also continue to think through these solutions. We can't afford to stop at offering non-traditional hours, we must continue to push forward into the urgent need for quality and equity to marry. Cultural responsiveness must become be a priority.

