Equity Considerations for Policymakers and Practitioners

Policymakers

• When writing policies, do we analyze **disaggregated data** by race, ethnicity, income, language status, and ability? Do we consider how policies may **impact** Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian children? Are we creating policies that are aware of disparities and allocate adequate **resources** to effectively address these disparities?

• Are our policies and funding allocations creating new systems centered on equity that address historic and current imbalances of power?

• Were the parents of children we serve **deeply and authentically involved** in the creation of our policies? Were educators, **including early educators** involved in the creation of our policies?

Practitioners

• Do I read books to my class that **feature Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian stories, authors, illustrators, and characters**?

• When creating programs, do I look at **disaggregated data** by race, ethnicity, income, language status and disability? Do I consider how our programs and policies impact Black, Latinx, Native American, and Asian children? Am I creating learning experiences that are aware of disparities and dedicate **intentional efforts** to effectively address these disparities?

• Do I have **negative feelings or perceptions** about the students and families I serve? How much do I know about their **lived experiences**? Does our program welcome authentic collaboration with families? Do we provide **resources to support their active engagement** in literacy efforts?

• Am I uncomfortable when I think about or discuss issues related to race and racism? Have I sought out resources to transform my feelings of discomfort into a commitment to be **anti-racist**?
Why These Questions Matter

- The Rhode Island public education system has been plagued by racism since its founding and the inequities that developed as a result continue to be one of Rhode Island’s greatest challenges. Policies and practices that are not racially-aware and equity-centered can exacerbate these inequities.

- The number of children affected by these inequities is significant.
  - Young children in Rhode Island are more likely to be identified as people of color than any other age group. In 2018, 45% of Rhode Island children under age five identify as People of Color.
  - Between 2014 and 2018, 23% of children between the ages of five and 17 living in Rhode Island spoke a language other than English at home.
  - During the 2018-2019 school year, 15% of Rhode Island public school students were receiving special education services.

- Schools, early learning programs, child care providers, and community organizations must adapt their practices to be more culturally competent to better serve Rhode Island’s increasingly diverse child population.

- Many learning systems expect parents to engage in ways that are more consistent with White, middle-class parenting and behavioral norms while often overlooking the value, contributions, and assets of families of Color.

Take Action

- **Right from the Start** is a legislative and budget campaign to advance state policies for young children and their families in Rhode Island. Visit the RIght from the Start Digital Action Center to contact your legislators and urge them to support programs and policies that will help Rhode Island’s young children and families get through the COVID-19 crisis and emerge even stronger.

- **Rhode Island KIDS COUNT** engages in information-based advocacy to affect public policies and programs for the improvement of Rhode Island’s children. Visit the Rhode Island KIDS COUNT Advocate Page to stay updated on policy, research, and news related to child well-being.

- **United Way of Rhode Island** offers a variety of ways to make a difference, advocate, and help your community. Visit United Way of Rhode Island to give, act, volunteer, and get involved.

- **Women United** focuses energy and resources on achieving one very important goal: improving childhood literacy in Rhode Island. Visit Women United: Improving Childhood Literacy to learn more.