
Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale Technical Assistance Framework: A Pilot Partnership with Think Small Providers

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Overview

At the Center on the Ecology of Early Development (CEED), we believe we cannot change what we do not measure. Therefore, at the heart of our technical assistance framework is the idea that change happens when awareness is raised.

We use the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES; Curenton et al., 2019) as a measure to raise awareness about racial equity in the classroom and support educators in teaching all children to learn and thrive. ACSES is a measure of process quality within interactions related to the equity of interactions, specifically for racially marginalized learners in classrooms. The research team at CEED tested the theoretical foundation and practical mechanism for implementing an early childhood coaching model based on the ACSES tool by training Think Small coaches to be ACSES Equity Mentors and teaching them how to provide feedback to family childcare providers about ways to enhance racial equity in their teaching practices. We also provided virtual professional learning sessions to early childhood educators.



Our team collaborated with Think Small, a non-profit organization in Minnesota, to implement coaching sessions using our ACSES Equity Mentor coaching model designed to promote racial equity and cultural responsiveness in the learning environment.

Think Small's Goal in Partnering with CEED

“The state of Minnesota is in the process of redesigning their Quality Rating and Improvement System, Parent Aware, with a specific focus on racial equity. These efforts are directed in part by a multi-year project which resulted in the Parent Aware Racial Equity Action Plan. A key strategy in the plan proposes ‘embed[ding] strong professional development requirements for Parent Aware rated programs related to Race, Racial Equity, and Bias.’ As a partner in this work, Think Small recognized the need to identify a tool that equips educators and those working directly with them in Parent Aware. We chose the ACSES tool because it supports coaches in developing their own racial consciousness while supporting educators to do the same.”

- Think Small Team

Professional Learning with Think Small

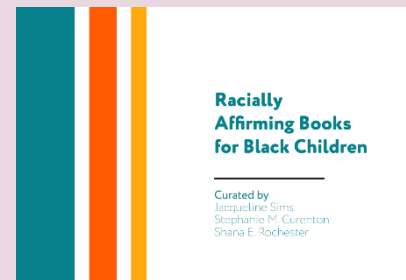
In the spring and summer of 2023, CEED researchers had the opportunity to partner with early childhood educators and coaches at Think Small to teach strategies for implementing equitable teaching practices using the ACSES Technical Assistance Framework. Think Small is a Minnesota early childhood non-profit organization committed to "advancing quality care and education of children in their crucial early years" (Think Small, 2023).

CEED presented a series of professional learning opportunities for center-based and family childcare providers in the spring of 2023. Together, we explored concepts such as the **history of early childhood education as one grounded in social justice**, the importance of **cultural and social identities** in the classroom, and the necessity of **implementing equitable teaching practices**.

- Teachers shared that they gained new perspectives on the ways in which culture shaped their teaching practices and interactions with children and families.
- Teachers recognized the importance of using the ACSES tool in their classroom.
- Teachers were excited to try new strategies such as integrating storybooks found on CEED's Racially Affirming Book Lists.

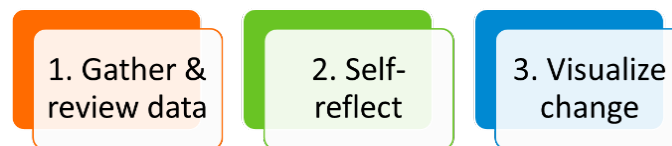
*Resource Connection:
Racially Affirming Book Lists*

These book lists can provide a helpful starting point for educators as they select developmentally appropriate texts that feature children of color. The titles in this list have been carefully chosen to showcase children of color who express a range of emotions and identities and pursue justice.



Piloting the ACSES Equity Mentor Program with Think Small

We partnered with Think Small coaches to pilot and refine our ACSES Equity Mentor Program with family childcare providers. The ACSES Equity Mentor Program is an ongoing, job-embedded professional development model for teachers and school leaders. It relies on an interactive approach to **gathering and reviewing data**, **self-reflecting on that data**, and **visualizing change**.



ACSES Equity Mentors are local coaches who have been certified as ACSES raters and mentors to support teachers in improving their practices related to racial equity. As part of the model, ACSES Equity Mentors conduct classroom observations using the ACSES and then meet one-on-one with the teacher and/or leader to discuss patterns in the data and collectively plan for improvement.

Recommendations for the ACSES Equity Mentor Program

As part of our partnership, we gained valuable insights about how the ACSES mentorship model can better support center-based teachers and family childcare providers in the field. We learned the importance of supporting educators in contextualizing data, supporting them in goal setting, utilizing local resources, and recognizing the unique experiences of Equity Mentors in the coaching relationship.

Contextualizing Data Within Each Context	Supporting Teachers through Feedback
<p>We learned the importance of supporting teachers and mentors in contextualizing ACSES scores within the demographic contexts of their classrooms.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We learned that Equity Mentors and providers may need support understanding how to make sense of ACSES scores within their unique contexts. • We co-created and piloted discussion questions that encourage providers to reflect on the demographics of their local community and acknowledge the impacts of historic and contemporary segregation. 	<p>We learned the importance of supporting teachers in identifying the next steps in their journeys toward racial equity through feedback.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Think Small coaches gave us feedback about our mechanisms for providing providers with an overview of scores. • They encouraged our team to design a score report that provided an overview of the ACSES measure that allowed coaches to offer generalized and specific feedback.

Utilizing and Honoring Local Resources and Experiences

Think Small coaches helped us understand the importance of **identifying local resources** teachers and providers can use to promote racial equity in their classrooms.

- Mentors discussed pointing teachers towards the Think Small library system to check out socially and culturally affirming texts.

We learned the importance of acknowledging mentors’ various levels of experience, talking about their own **racial identities**, and supporting teachers in understanding their identities.

- We designed a system of reflection activities to support mentors in identifying opportunities to discuss racial identity as it relates to racial equity.

Considerations for the Future

This partnership provides a unique opportunity to collaborate with educators in designing professional development and coaching.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

1. Certified ACSES Equity Mentors can support teachers in contextualizing data within their unique classroom and school contexts.
2. General and specific feedback supports teachers in changing practices.
3. Mentors' and teachers' unique experiences – related to their racial identities and knowledge of local resources- must be utilized in designing professional learning experiences.

We are very grateful for the opportunity to collaborate with Think Small!

To learn more about the ACSES measure and its use in a variety of educational settings, visit the Education for Self-Actualization webpage at www.bu-ceed.org/education-for-selfactualization.

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About CEED: The Center on the Ecology of Early Development (CEED) at Boston University is led by Dr. Stephanie M. Curenton. CEED conducts and disseminates applied research using a strengths-based equity impact framework that examines young children's positive growth and development within health, education, and community settings. ACSES is a classroom observation tool developed by co-developed by Drs. Curenton, Iruka, Rochester, and Durden with a racial equity lens. ACSES measures equitable interactions between teachers and students. For more information about the research on ACSES visit: www.bu-ceed.org