



# 2020-2022 BIENNIAL REPORT

Center on the Ecology of Early Development

Boston University Wheelock College of  
Education and Human Development



A close-up photograph of several purple flowers with bright orange centers, likely Gazanias. The flowers are in various stages of bloom, with some fully open and others as buds. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green, suggesting foliage. A dark purple banner with white text is positioned at the bottom of the image.

# Planting Seeds of Racial Justice and Equity for Children in Boston and Beyond

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# Message from the Executive Director

“It is easier to build strong children  
than to repair broken men.”

-Frederick Douglass

What a year CEED has had! We spent our first year (and a portion of second) moving in the right direction towards our mission. Through relationship building and dialogue with our generous funders, CEED has been able to solidify its vision. I would like to say a special thank you to our funders for this dialogue because it allowed me to gain a deeper understand of not only the need for racial equity in early childhood settings but also how CEED occupies a special niche in this space. CEED would not be able to honor our commitment to racial justice without the support of our funders, and I thank you!

Also, I want to acknowledge the sage wisdom of our advisory panel. Our inaugural meeting really provided such food for thought about what CEED should be focused on and how we should function.

We have managed to institute nearly all of your advice, and we are working towards the remaining pieces. I look forward to touching base with you again next year.

Lastly, I want to thank the CEED staff. They have been amazing! I could not have asked to work with a more smart, diligent, and collaborative team. Your greatness makes me stronger. I am so humbled to be your leader.

**Stephanie M. Curenton, PhD.**  
**Executive Director**

*Stephanie M. Curenton, PhD.*



# FUNDERS

- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- National Science Foundation-American Education Research Association
- Brady Education Foundation
- Foundation for Child Development
- Conrad N. Hilton Foundation with Annie E. Casey
- W. K. Kellogg Foundation
- Doris Duke Charitable Foundation
- Imaginable Futures
- AERA Grant
- Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation



# OUR STORY



Launched in Fall 2020, the Boston University Center on the Ecology of Early Development (CEED) serves to empower families and community members from racially marginalized groups. Our work focuses on centering racial justice and equity in our efforts to support children from racially and ethnically marginalized backgrounds, particularly Black children. We believe in the tenacious and resilient spirit of Black children and their families, and we design research programs centered on racial justice and equity for children in Boston and beyond. Created by Executive Director and Associate Professor Stephanie M. Curenton-Jolly, CEED began as a passion project to close gaps exacerbated by racial and socioeconomic inequality in early child care and education. These gaps have only increased with the immense health and educational challenges associated with the intertwined pandemics of COVID-19 and systemic racism. Such urgent times call for the Center to proceed with intention and timeliness in its development of strengths-based research, community partnerships, and efforts to inform policy. Our work serves to humanize the lived experiences of Black children and families through research, policy, and practice.

CEED honors the legacies of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. (BU Alum '55) and Lucy Wheelock, founder of Wheelock College in 1888. Lucy Wheelock's dream was to create an education system that adequately prepares children to be engaged and productive citizens. Dr. King's dream was that education be available to all children, regardless of their race or economic status. Dr. King and Lucy Wheelock's legacies are at the heart of CEED's mission.

# OUR MISSION AND VISION

## Mission

CEED conducts applied equity-focused research to inspire policy leaders and practitioners to cultivate health and education opportunities that optimize Black children's well-being and ability to thrive.

## Vision

CEED's vision is to plant seeds of racial justice and equity for children in Boston and beyond.





# CORE BELIEFS

CEED's work is grounded in the following eight core beliefs:

01

Black children and families are tenacious and embody a remarkable spirit of resilience.

02

Black children thrive in diverse communities across the African Diaspora and are distinct in nationality, nativity, ethnicity, and linguistic traditions.

03

Black children are entitled to free, public education that acknowledges their heritage and prepares them to thrive as learners and citizens.

04

Black children deserve to live and learn in healthy environments free from pollution, violence, and danger.





Black children deserve health care delivered with dignity and respect that fosters wellness and positive physical growth and emotional development.

05

Black children benefit from teachers and caregivers who embrace racial and cultural diversity, who value their unique heritage, and who are prepared to educate them with a focus on equity and racial justice.

06

Research on Black children must consider their holistic wellbeing and pinpoint their strengths, needs, and various identities.

07

Family and community members caring for Black children should be empowered to advocate for their children's rights.

08

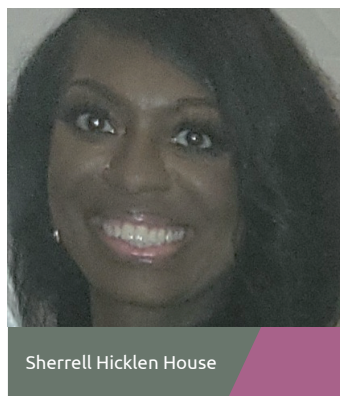
# WHO WE ARE

We are a diverse team of educators, students, and scientists united in our passion for advocacy of racially minoritized children and the communities that serve them through policy- and practice-oriented research. This list represents current CEED team members as well as those who have worked with us in the past.



Stephanie Curenton

Stephanie Curenton, Ph.D.  
Executive Director



Sherrell Hicklen House

Sherrell Hicklen House, Ph.D.  
Director of Research



Jacqueline Sims

Jacqueline Sims, Ph.D.  
Research Scientist



Keshia L. Harris

Keshia L. Harris Ph.D.  
Research Scientist  
(Former Team Member)



Nneka Ibekwe-Okafor

Nneka Ibekwe-Okafor, Ph.D.  
Research Scientist  
(Former RISER Postdoctoral Associate)



Kyla McSweeney

Kyla McSweeney, J.D.  
Director of Practice  
(Former Team Member)



# WHO WE ARE (CONT.)



Mariah Contreras

[Mariah Contreras, Ph.D.](#)

Research Scientist



Shana E. Rochester

[Shana E. Rochester, Ph.D.](#)

Research Affiliate  
(Former Team Member)



Ximena Franco-Jenkins

[Ximena Franco-Jenkins, Ph.D.](#)

Research Scientist



Gullnar Syed

[Gullnar Syed](#)

Research Fellow



Sarah Surrain

[Sarah Surrain](#)

Doctoral Candidate  
(Former Team Member)

# WHO WE ARE (CONT.)

Research Assistant bios can be found at [www.bu-ceed.org/research-team](http://www.bu-ceed.org/research-team).



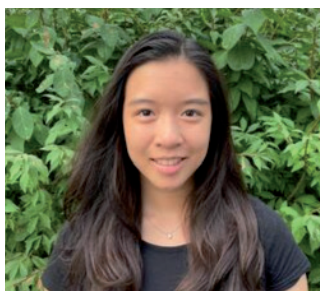
**Ana Schcolnik**  
Research Assistant  
(Former Team Member)



**Beverly Bruno**  
Research Assistant  
(Former Team Member)



**Cecilia Jarquin Tapia**  
Research Assistant



**Christine Huang**  
Research Assistant



**Alexi Man**  
Research Assistant



**Olivia Nazaire**  
Research Assistant



**Maya Rose**  
Research Assistant  
(Former Team Member)



**Kylie Tang**  
Research Assistant

# OUR AIMS AND GOALS

CEED's work is designed to provide evidence-based research focused on the humanity and wellbeing of Black children and their families for scholars, practitioners, policymakers, and organizations interested in racial justice and social equity practices in the early years. The Center situates its work within four priority goals.



## 01 RESEARCH

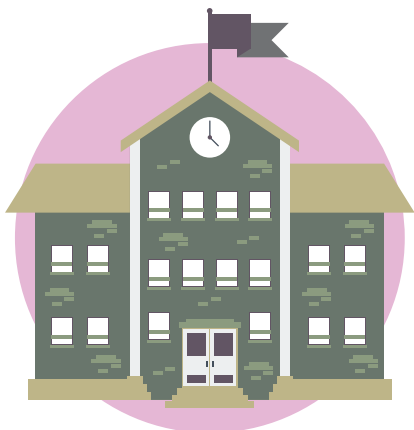
To conduct applied research using a strengths-based equity impact framework that examines young Black children's positive growth and development within education, health, and community settings.



## 02 POLICY

To disseminate applied research that can be used in the design of policies, programs, and systemic practices that foster the healthy development and academic success of racially and ethnically diverse learners.





## 03 PRACTICE

To provide training, coaching, and systemic professional development plans focused on equity and antiracist practices in classrooms, health facilities, and community organizations.



## 04 LEADERSHIP

To offer leadership opportunities grounded in culturally relevant, healing-focused coaching and training that prepare diverse scientists, practitioners, and teachers for success in the field.



2020-2022

# PROJECTS AND INITIATIVES

The work at CEED is centered around three goals for 2020-22, which include building research capacity, family literacy, and capacity for anti-bias practices and evaluation. The projects supporting each of these goals are organized into the following initiatives: 1. The Researchers Investigating Sociocultural Equity and Race (RISER) Network, 2. Language and Literacy for Liberation, and 3. Education for Self-Actualization. A description of the projects that align with each initiative is provided in the following pages.

## 1. RESEARCHERS INVESTIGATING SOCIOCULTURAL EQUITY AND RACE (RISER) NETWORK

The RISER Network is a collaboration between senior, mid-level, and junior scholars working together to conduct applied child development research focused on the positive development of Black children by: (1) enhancing scholarship on Black children (prenatal to age 8), especially by unpacking how racism is an environmental context that erodes health and education opportunities; (2) mentoring future generations of scholars across an intergenerational network of racially and ethnically diverse scholars; and (3) disseminating knowledge to policymakers that is actionable, strengths-based, and focused on wellness promotion. Through this work, RISER strives to contribute knowledge related to the strengths, resilience, and positive development of Black children.

## RISER Network Founders:



Iheoma U. Iruka, PhD.



**EQUITY  
RESEARCH  
ACTION  
COALITION**

UNC Frank Porter Graham  
Child Development Institute



Stephanie M Curenton, PhD.



Center on the Ecology of Early Development

"The RISER Network is a village. It affirms and honors its affiliate scholars in good and bad times, providing opportunities to learn, communicate, and be mentored by well-known and respected mid- and senior-level scholars interested in the positive development of Black children, families, and communities. In its short tenure, the RISER Network has already engaged in critical scholarship from releasing the first report focused on the impact of the dual pandemics of racism and COVID-19 on Black families and children to hosting and leading meetings on how to engage in anti-racist and strengths-based research. The RISER Network is positioned to grow and become stronger from here, especially in our relationships with our university partners, scholars, fellows and affiliates, and funders. I am humbled and honored to be one of the founding leaders."

-Iheoma U. Iruka, Co-Founder





# RISER Network Accomplishments:



- Assembled an interdisciplinary group of Senior Advisors to work with and support Network Scholars, as well as to shape the development of future Network objectives and initiatives. Each Senior Advisor will engage in a collaborative conversation with the RISER Network on a topic related to their expertise (such as "Using Big Data for Social Impact Work" and "Mentoring Early Career Scholars and Students of Color"); these conversations began in Spring 2021. Senior Advisors include:
  - James Johnson, Jr, Ph.D., UNC Kenan-Flagler Business School;
  - Robert Sellers, Ph.D., University of Michigan;
  - David Takeuchi, Ph.D., University of Washington School of Social Work;
  - Melvin N. Wilson, Ph.D., University of Virginia.
- Solicited applications and held competitive interviews for the RISER Post-Doctoral Fellowship. The fellowship was awarded to Nneka Ibekwe-Okafor, Ph.D., Boston University Wheelock College of Education and Human Development who joined the network in September 2020.
- Solicited applications and held competitive interviews for RISER Pre-Doctoral Fellowships. RISER Pre-Doctoral Fellows work collaboratively with Network scholars to engage in career building development activities such as conducting data analysis using large-scale national secondary databases, participating in writing scholarly papers and/or policy reports, and developing skills and knowledge related to child and family policy and practice. RISER Pre-Doctoral Fellows include:
  - Angel Boulware, Ph.D. Candidate in Comparative Human Development, University of Chicago
  - Sheniqua Jeffrey, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate in Applied Developmental Psychology, Fordham University
  - Amber Neal, M.S.W., Ph.D. Candidate in Educational Theory and Practice, University of Georgia
  - Amber Sansbury, M.Ed., Ph.D. Candidate in Early Care and Education Policy, George Mason University
  - Nicole Telfer, M.A., Ph.D. Candidate in Applied Developmental Psychology, University of Maryland Baltimore County

## RISER Network Accomplishments (Continued):



- Established a RISER Affiliate Network of individuals interested in staying connected to the work of the RISER Network. Throughout the year, the RISER Network engaged in community building and resource sharing with the RISER Network Affiliates, including invitations to engage in research and event opportunities.
- Collaborated with Research Computing Services at Boston University to establish our storage infrastructure for secure secondary data on the Shared Computing Cluster (SCC). RISER Network scholars were trained by Research Computing Services staff to access the data and relevant statistical packages to analyze the data on the SCC. RISER currently stores the following data sources for analysis on the SCC:
  - Public use of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study - Kindergarten (ECLS-K) file.
  - Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development - Early Childhood (RAPID-EC).
  - The National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE).
- Collaborated with the Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development- Early Childhood (RAPID-EC) to include a racial equity lens to the survey. After reviewing available measures and items, RISER added items assessing experiences of discrimination and related concern for children to the survey.
- Presented about RISER and the RISER-RAPID collaboration during webinar with Pritzker Children's Initiative.
- Published the Black Parent Voices: Resilience in the Face of the Two Pandemics—COVID-19 and Racism report. This report illustrates how the COVID-19 pandemic is affecting Black families' experiences with racism and discrimination, financial security/ material hardship, health and mental health, and early care and education options.
- Held a corresponding release webinar for the Black Parent Voices: Resilience in the Face of the Two Pandemics—COVID-19 and Racism report. Over 1,200 practitioners, policymakers, and researchers registered for the event.
- Held a follow up webinar for the Black Parent Voices Report, Looking Ahead to Juneteenth. Over 500 practitioners, policymakers, and researchers registered for the event.

## RISER Network Accomplishments (Continued):

- Submitted an invited manuscript to the Early Childhood Research Quarterly Special Issue on Early Childhood Research, Practice, and Policy: The COVID-19 Pandemic.
- Presented research projects at the biennial meeting of the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) and at the 2021 BU Wheelock Forum, Human Potential Transformed: Social Justice and Equity in the Early Years. Featured in a Grantee Spotlight, The RISER Network is Shifting the Narrative About Black Children, by the Foundation for Child Development.
- Developed a variety of ongoing research projects including a stream of inquiries linking community-level racial bias with children's health, maternal health, and children's socioemotional skills and behaviors.
- Received a Research Grant from the American Educational Research Association's National Science Foundation Research Grants program.
- Undergraduate research assistant Beverly Bruno was awarded a competitive Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) to study maternal health using the CDC's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System data.
- Held a webinar with the Foundation for Child Development on Advancing Equity: Conducting Strengths-Based Research in Early Care & Education.
- Developed a research partnership with the Center of Excellence for Children's Behavioral Health at the Georgia Health Policy Center in the Andrew Young School of Policy Studies at Georgia State University.
- Received an "Elevating Equity: Longitudinal Trajectories of Parents and Their Children" Research Award from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and the Conrad N. Hilton Foundation.
- Organized a RISER symposium submission to the American Educational Research Association's Annual Meeting.





## 2. LANGUAGE AND LITERACY FOR LIBERATION

Researchers at CEED, in partnership with colleagues from other universities, are investigating the strengths and needs of Black children in terms of early literacy skills and the use of oral language—specifically conversations and narratives—to foster relationships, build identity, and advance their learning. Current projects under the Language and Literacy for Liberation Initiative include the Dual Language Learners Project (known as Conversation Compass); The Pittsburgh Study: Reading, Racial Equity, and Relationships (3Rs) at Home; and the Content Analysis of CEED Racially Affirming Books. Details about each of the three projects are provided below.

### Conversation Compass:

The Conversation Compass is a workbook-based training accompanied by an asynchronous online course designed for teachers of culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) learners. The Conversation Compass professional development (PD) incorporates strategies and empirical findings from a wide variety of literature on classroom discourse spanning early childhood to elementary school (Cabell et al., 2011; Goh et al., 2012; Goldenberg, 1992; Piasta et al., 2012; Weitzman & Greenberg, 2002; Zhang & Stahl, 2011) and specifically focuses on classroom conversations that happen within small groups of CALD preschoolers. The teacher-friendly workbook and accompanying online course focus on how to routinely and systematically use evidence-based strategies to foster conversations among groups of Black and Latine children from a strengths-based, culturally responsive perspective.

As part of the Conversation Compass project, Dr. Curenton videorecorded and transcribed a series of classroom interactions from three centers that were all affiliated with the same Mid-Atlantic Head Start program in 2015-2016. Teachers in these classrooms were recorded prior to and after their participation in the Conversation Compass professional development. The Center on the Ecology of Early Development houses this collection of recordings and transcriptions, and draws on it for a variety of research projects.

In 2020 there were three active projects drawing on the Conversation Compass data: a discourse analysis pilot study, the Dual Language Learners Project, and the Importance of Dyadic Classroom Conversations for Dual Language Learners Project.



## Discourse Analysis in an Urban Head Start Serving Latinx/e and Black Preschoolers: Results from a Conversation-Based Professional Development for Teachers

The discourse analysis project examined differences in classroom discourse before and after teachers' participation in the Conversation Compass professional development course. This pilot study examined teachers' use of cognitively challenging questions, conversational turn-taking between teachers and children during joint-conversation, teachers' and children's use of mental state talk, and whether these features of classroom discourse differed before and after teachers' participation in the PD. Key findings from this pilot study include:

Post-PD, teachers asked more cognitively challenging questions and were more balanced in conversational turn-taking between themselves and children.

Children used more mental state talk. Teacher's use of mental state talk did not differ before and after the PD.

Results suggest that teacher practices and children's linguistic productivity can be targeted to improve features of conversations, including in predominantly CALD classrooms. This suggests the need for future experimental work considering the efficacy of the Conversation Compass approach.

Teachers learned how to systematically and routinely ask challenging, open-ended questions and then practiced writing and using them during the Conversation Compass PD (Curenton, 2008; Sigel, Stinson, & Kim, 1993). Additionally, teachers learned specific strategies for facilitating joint conversation among a group of students, such as incorporating a speaking prop to be passed around to provide children with a tactile and hands-on reminder of whose turn it is to speak and deflecting the conversation away from oneself by referring back to what children have said. Last, teachers learned to promote critical higher order reasoning by focusing on academic (literacy, math, science) or social reasoning, utilizing cognitively challenging questions, and facilitating children's ability to critically reflect on their thoughts and sources of knowledge. For this study, we were interested in exploring whether the PD enhanced children's social reasoning as it relates to their ability to talk about their mental states (e.g., their beliefs, thoughts, knowledge). Literature indicates that the ability to attribute and understand mental states is an important pragmatic language skill needed for conversation (Curenton, 2015).

### Discourse Analysis Accomplishments

- Presented findings from the discourse analysis project at two national conferences: A poster at the National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC) in December 2020 and a symposium paper at the Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD) biennial meeting in April 2021.
- Submitted the manuscript "Discourse Analysis in an Urban Head Start Serving Latinx and Black Preschoolers: Results from a Conversation-Based Professional Development for Teachers" for publication.



## The Dual Language Learners Project

The Dual Language Learners Project focuses on the conditions that foster Dual language learners' participation in classroom conversations in early childhood. Dual language learners (DLLs), a subset of culturally and linguistically diverse learners whose families speak a minoritized language at home, make up close to one third of school-aged children (Child Trends, 2019). This project is motivated by the importance of oral language skills in both the minoritized and socially dominant languages for DLLs' literacy development and school learning (Dickinson & Porche, 2011; NICHD Early Child Care Research Network, 2005) and research showing that children's oral language skills can be fostered through responsive, contingent interactions with teachers (Barnes et al., 2020; Cabell et al., 2015). However, such conversations are relatively rare in preschool classrooms, particularly between teachers and their DLL students (Jacoby & Lesaux, 2014, 2017; Sawyer et al., 2017). Promising practices include: Use of DLLs' minoritized language for instruction, hybrid language practices, and small group instruction. Therefore, the project is designed to answer two primary research questions:

How do teacher language practices and DLL students' language use differ by instructional context?

How do teachers use code-switching to support DLLs' meaning-making in different instructional contexts?

Key findings from the Dual Language Learners Project include:

- Teachers code-switched between Spanish and English more frequently in small group lessons compared to whole group lessons.
- Spanish-speaking DLLs spoke more often and took longer turns in small group lessons compared to whole group lessons.

Our results suggest that small groups consisting of DLLs from the same language background facilitate DLLs' active participation in classroom conversations in Head Start classrooms.

### Dual Language Learners Project Accomplishments

- Presented findings from the DLLs Project at two national conferences: A poster at the National Research Conference on Early Childhood (NRCEC) in December 2020 and a symposium paper at the Society for Research on Child Development (SRCD) biennial meeting in April 2021.





## → Importance of Dyadic Classroom Conversations for Dual Language Learners

This project drew on transcribed videos from the Conversation Compass database to conduct a case study of a DLL student across three different instructional settings: Whole group lesson, small group with only DLL students, and one-on-one dyadic interaction with a bilingual teacher. The goal was to illustrate the value of dyadic interactions for DLL students that are reluctant to participate in larger groups. Such interactions can lay the foundation for positive teacher-student relationships and enhance students' comfort in preschool classrooms.

### Importance of One-on-One Classroom Conversations Accomplishments

- This project was funded by a competitive Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program (UROP) grant awarded to CEED research assistant, Cecilia Jarquín Tapia, who led the project.
- This project resulted in the manuscript entitled, "The Importance of Dyadic Classroom Conversations for Dual Language Learners" that was submitted for publication in January 2021.



# The Pittsburgh 3Rs Study:

The Pittsburgh Study: Reading, Racial Equity, and Relationships (3Rs) at Home study is part of a larger project, The Pittsburgh Study Early School Age Cohort: Reading, Racial Equity and Relationships (3Rs). The 3Rs umbrella study is a multifaceted literacy approach that integrates racially-affirming texts and high-quality literacy prompts and instruction across: (1) family, (2) community, (3) school leadership, and (4) classroom-based contexts (the four 3Rs Strands). The 3Rs at Home strand covers the family context. At CEED, we have created three primary aims for the 3Rs Home Strand:

- Strive to increase child and family literacy by encouraging home literacy activities, such as shared-reading with racially affirming texts, in-depth conversations, and oral storytelling.
- Ground our approach in research about families of color that describes their literacy strengths (such as oral narratives and social-emotional conversations about racial identity) and their literacy challenges (varying literacy levels and/or low frequency of shared-reading at home).
- Measure the family's attitude towards reading, racial- ethnic identity/socialization, self-efficacy in helping their child, and the child's reading comprehension and narrative skills.

## The Pittsburgh 3Rs Study at Home Accomplishments:

- Developed video for educators and parents with tips for shared reading at home.
- Curated a list of racially affirming picture books for Black children organized by child age/grade.
- Conceptualized ways to work with families to support their literacy goals and racial socialization practices (described under the Content Analysis project below).
- Co-presented project overview, entitled "Mirrored Reflections: How Do Racially Affirming Books Socialize Black Children around Race" at the 2021 Boston University Wheelock Forum, Human Potential Transformed: Social Justice and Equity in the Early Years.
- Developing a conceptual model that positions books as a vehicle for helping Black children to (a) develop a positive racial identity, (b) encourage strong family relationships, (c) promote racial healing, and (d) engage in positive self-narratives.



# Content Analysis of CEED Racially Affirming Books for Black Children

Racial socialization is the process by which verbal and non-verbal messages are transmitted to younger generations for the purpose of developing attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors regarding the meaning and significance of race (Lesane-Brown, 2006). Messages can be transmitted in many ways, including through explicit conversations between parents and children or implicitly through the provision of materials (e.g., books that feature characters from similar racial/ethnic backgrounds). Understanding the types of messages transmitted through children's books can support education stakeholders, such as parents, in determining appropriate texts to complement their existing socialization practices.

The content analysis project examines the characteristics of racially affirming books written for children in prekindergarten (pre-k) to Grade 3 that feature a Black main or supporting character. The purpose of this project is to understand how books (a) depict Black characters (e.g., gender, social roles, time period of story), (b) communicate aspects of racial socialization messages for Black children (e.g., cultural socialization), and (c) address tenets of critical race theory. We identified subsets of racially affirming books from a curated comprehensive booklist for the 3Rs Study that featured books showcasing the full humanity of children of color.

The content analysis methods include:

- Selecting texts from the 2020 CEED Racially Affirming Books for Black Children (Sims et al., 2020) that (1) was written for children in pre-k to Grade 3, (2) featured a Black main or supporting character, and (3) include 32 or fewer pages
- Applying a critical content analysis methodology (Short et al., 2016) with critical race theory as the framework (Solórzano, 1997)
- Developing analytic prompts to capture the types of racial socialization messages communicated in picture books, some of which were informed by P.R.I.D.E. racial identity categories (e.g., developing cross-racial relationships)

## Content Analysis Accomplishments

Developed analytic codebook with exemplars based on coding 25% of sample.

Co-presented project overview entitled "Mirrored Reflections: How Do Racially Affirming Books Socialize Black Children around Race" at the 2021 Boston University Forum, Human Potential Transformed: Social Justice and Equity in the Early Years.



# Content Analysis of CEED Racially Affirming Books for Asian American and Pacific Islander Children and Families

In tandem to our 2020 book list, "Racially Affirming Books for Black Children", CEED has curated the CEED 2021 book list, "Racially Affirming Books for Asian American Pacific Islander Children and Families" to promote literacy and racial identity in the AAPI community.

Although the COVID-19 pandemic forced the world into lockdown, the AAPI community experienced increased exposure to racial hate crimes and attacks despite self-isolation across racial and ethnic groups.

In response to heightened levels of discrimination against the AAPI community, the CEED team has passionately used our expertise in children's language and literacy development to curate a list of books featuring the full humanity of AAPI children. Our goal was to increase awareness of children's books that feature AAPI children as main characters who show a wide range of emotions, ideas, and identities, and who are learning about how their stories connect with others.

We aim to provide educators, researchers, librarians, and AAPI families with literacy resources to encourage racial conversations, promote racial identity, a love of reading, and exposure to different perspectives, cultures, and backgrounds.

The Content Analysis Methods Include:

- Staff recommendations and selecting books from Lee and Low and YouTube read alouds from The Room 110 show.
- Books selected based on the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence's definition of AAPI
- Books written by an AAPI author and catering to reading levels for children ages 2 to 12
- All selected books featured at least one of the following three criteria (a) books that instill cultural pride, (b) depict children in their full humanity, and (c) books that illustrate children overcoming bias or protected from bias.



# Content Analysis of CEED Racially Affirming Books for African American Vernacular English for Black Children and Families

In sequence to our "Racially Affirming Books for Black Children" 2020 book list, CEED presents the 2021 edition of "African American Vernacular English Books for Black Children and Families."

We believe that Black children should be represented in their full humanity including in their literacy and language experiences. For decades, Black children have been and continue to be corrected in educational settings when speaking African American Vernacular English (AAVE), a language that is central to the lived experiences of Black people in America. AAVE is important because it is a language that many African American children speak in environments in which they feel safe and supported, such as the home.

Recognizing AAVE as its own entity is a necessary step towards challenging American educational systems and practices to better cater to the needs of children from varying cultures, ethnicities, and racial backgrounds. Our curated list supports efforts to align culture with literacy development rather than ignoring the racial and cultural identities that make children who they are.

Our goal was to increase awareness of the plethora of children's books with AAVE usage that simultaneously elevate Black voices and illustrate stories of who protagonists of color are as active agents in the fight towards justice.

The Content Analysis Methods Include:

- AAVE examples from Phonological Features of Child African American English
- Books selected from CEED's Racially Affirming Books for Black Children, Lee and Low, The Seattle Public Library, Chicago Public Library, and YouTube read alouds from Sankofa Read Aloud
- Selection of listed books spans across topics, historical events, interests, and settings and caters to reading levels for children ages 2 to 12



### 3. EDUCATION FOR SELF-ACTUALIZATION

Researchers at CEED, in partnership with colleagues from other universities and organizations, are working to transform the educational experiences of Black children by conducting research that is focused on anti-racist professional development for educators and practitioners, the development of measures of equitable classroom instruction, and how non-traditional education pedagogies (e.g., Montessori, African-centered) are related to school success and wellbeing. The Education for Self-Actualization initiative includes two projects: Racial Equity in Montessori Education and the Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) project.

#### Racial Equity in Montessori

CEED has an interest in Montessori education as it relates to being a tool of "Education for Self-Actualization" and this interest has developed over the last few years. Our key research question is: How do Montessori leaders engage in racial equity efforts within their schools (i.e., their ideas/values around it, the support and resources they provide for it)? The methods for the Racial Equity in Montessori Education project involve conducting interviews with Montessori leaders about how they view issues of racial equity within the Montessori pedagogy.

##### Racial Equity in Montessori Accomplishments

- CEED and the University of Kansas Center for Montessori Research ([cmr.ku.edu](http://cmr.ku.edu)) hosted the AERA Montessori Education Special Interest Group (SIG) held the virtual conference entitled, *Racial Justice and Equity in Montessori Research* on January 14-15, 2021. The conference was funded by the Brady Education Foundation and hosted by CEED and The conference kicked off with a keynote address by Maati Wafford, Director of Anti-Bias, Antiracist Education at the American Montessori Society. Invited speakers included Jade Lee, Ph.D., Katie Brown, Ph.D., Gigliana Melzi, Ph.D., and Iheoma Iruka, Ph.D. The conference welcomed 154 attendees. Further details are illustrated in the conference agenda.

# Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES)



# ACSES

Assessing Classroom Sociocultural  
Equity Scale

The Assessing Classroom Sociocultural Equity Scale (ACSES) is a reliable and valid assessment designed to improve bidirectional interactions between teachers and children as well as children's peer-to-peer interactions within early childhood classrooms environments. It is an observational measure of classroom process quality that expands upon existing classroom quality measures (e.g. Classroom Assessment Scoring System [CLASS], Early Childhood Environment Rating Scale-Revised [ECERS-R]). The goal of this measure is to assess classroom interactions in order to incorporate the cultural knowledge, experiences, and diverse learning and communication styles of racially marginalized learners into classroom teachings by:

- acknowledging, challenging, and rejecting racism, sexism, classism, and other forms of oppression
- emphasizing and actively engaging in issues focused on social justice, democracy, and human rights
- striving for an equitable distribution of power and participation between teachers and children

## ACSES Accomplishments

- Presented at the Excellence for ALL Students via Professional Development and Instructional Change at Duke University's Center for Child and Family Policy in October 2020.
- Presentation of co-authored book "Don't Look Away: Embracing Anti-Bias Classrooms" by Dr. Stephanie Curenton at Teachstone webinar entitled Equitable Interactions in Early Childhood Education
- Presented findings from psychometric analyses at the 2021 Boston University Wheelock Forum, Human Potential Transformed: Social Justice and Equity in the Early Years and the Society for Research in Child Development (SRCD) biennial meeting in April 2021, at which it was designated an SRCD Strategic Plan poster winner, exemplifying ethnic and racial issues related to child development.





# CEED'S BIGGEST ACHIEVEMENTS OF 2020-2022

A major focus of our work at CEED is to build research to practice partnerships and to share our equity centered research with the public. In 2020-21, we engaged in cross-departmental collaborations and partnered with other universities to present our research findings via virtual conference platforms. Our local and national partnerships help to ground our research within communities.

## Publications

- [\*Black Parent Voices: Resilience in the Face of the Two Pandemics—COVID-19 and Racism\*](#) (published)
- *Discourse Analysis in an Urban Head Start Serving Latinx and Black Preschoolers: Results from a Conversation-Based Professional Development for Teachers.* (manuscript/submitted)
- *The Importance of Dyadic Classroom Conversations for Dual Language Learners* (accepted)
- *Examining the Relationship Between Discrimination, Access to Material Resources, and Black Children's Behavioral Functioning During COVID-19* (submitted)
- *Antiracism Defined as Equitable Sociocultural Interactions in Prekindergarten: Classroom Racial Composition Makes a Difference* (accepted)
- [\*Promoting Racial Literacy in Early Childhood: Storybooks and Conversations with Young Black Children\*](#) (published)
- *The Journey to Racial Healing: Helping BIPOC Children Thrive in the Face of Racism* (submitted)
- [\*The Adversity of Racism and its Impact on Young Black Children's Health and Learning. Policy Insights from the Behavioral and Brain Sciences\*](#) (published)
- *Black Motherhood and the Dual Pandemic: The Protective Role of Stable Income and Housing on Mental Wellbeing* (submitted)
- *Handbook of Education Policy Research. Early Childhood Education Policy. Chapter 52: Race, Early Care and Education. American Educational Research Association* (submitted)
- *Effects of Racism on Child Development: Advancing Anti-racist Developmental Science* (invited submission)
- [\*Factors Associated with the Early Learning and Readiness of Black Children\*](#) (published)



## Conferences and Webinar Series

- In January 2021 CEED successfully partnered with the University of Kansas and held the *Racial Justice and Equity in Montessori Research* virtual conference with over 150 attendees.
- In February 2021 the RISER Network held the *Black Parent Voices Resilience in the Face of the Two Pandemics: COVID-19 and Racism* webinar that was attended by 1,200 practitioners, researchers, and policymakers.
- In March 2021, CEED co-hosted the BU Wheelock Community Virtual Forum entitled, *Human Potential Transformed: Social Justice and Equity in the Early Years* which had over 450 registrants.
- In April 2021, CEED partnered with the Brazelton Touchstone Center to support two webinars of the Parenting While Black Webinar Series: *No Instructions: Development Across the Early Years – The Imagined versus the Real* and *Embracing the Brilliance and Resilience in Black Families*.
- In September 2021, the RISER Network, in partnership with the Foundation for Child Development, presented a webinar entitled *Advancing Equity: Conducting Strengths-Based Research in Early Care and Education*. The goal of the webinar was to promote equity within the early care education field.

## Partnerships

- CEED collaborated with BU Wheelock faculty to launch the BU Institute for Early Childhood Well-Being
- CEED partnered with University of Chapel-Hill North Carolina Research Professor, Dr. Iheoma Iruka, to incorporate a racial equity lens in the Rapid Assessment of Pandemic Impact on Development - Early Childhood (RAPID-EC). CEED also collaborated on the Equity Research Action Coalition with Dr. Iruka.
- CEED's Executive Director, Dr. Stephanie Curenton joined the Boston Public Schools Universal Pre-K (UPK) Advisory Committee.
- CEED established partnerships with the Epiphany Early Learning Center (ELC) and the Brazelton Touchpoints Center.
- CEED established a partnership with Wu Yee to assist with the ACSES project.





# CEED ADVISORY BOARD

The CEED advisory board comprises local and national experts charged with helping the executive director shape strategic planning efforts and goals of CEED. Meet our board members below.

Advisory Board Member bios can be found at [www.bu-ceed.org/research-team](http://www.bu-ceed.org/research-team).



Aisha Ray, Ph.D.



Amy O'Leary



Mary Churchill, Ph.D.



Joan Lombardi, Ph.D.



Walter Gilliam, Ph.D.



Gigliana Melzi, Ph.D.





# CEED ADVISORY BOARD

## (CONT.)

Advisory Board Member bios can be found at [www.bu-ceed.org/research-team](http://www.bu-ceed.org/research-team).



Jessica Pryce, Ph.D.



Iheoma Iruka, Ph.D.



Jason Sachs, Ph.D.



Michelle Sanchez, Ed.D.



Jeanne Paratore, Ed.D.



Stephanie J. Rowley, Ph.D.



Kristie Kauerz, Ed.D.



Renée Boynton-Jarrett, MD



# FOUNDING DIRECTION

## FROM THE ADVISORY BOARD

In October 2020, we convened with CEED advisory board members to seek input on its strategic goals of being a leading center on equity and social justice in the early childhood education field. Below we include important insights from CEED's advisory board.

### CEED Has a Unique Niche in the Early Education Field

- Advisory Board members shared a consensus that CEED fills an important gap in early childhood education given the Center's focus on Black children ages 0-8. Dr. Aisha Ray stated, "the focus on the ecology of Black children's development is a unique focus of any center anywhere". Other Advisory Board members acknowledged the importance of CEED's strategic goal to bridge research and practice. Dr. Stephanie Rowley expressed excitement about CEED's specific focus on practice related to Black children, sharing "this is a unique niche that CEED fills".
- During the meeting, Executive Director Dr. Stephanie Curenton expressed a desire for the Center to reach Black children across the African diaspora as the heart of CEED's mission. Board members supported this approach and elaborated on their observations of antiblack tendencies that situate youth of African descent as inferior both within and across ethnic groups. Dr. Gigliana Melzi noted the frequent erasure of Blackness in Latine culture. She shared that it is important to study Black children across the diaspora given that "people often respond to one's race before their cultural and ethnic identity." Similarly, Dr. Iheoma Iruka expressed that the Center's unique role could further demonstrate the heterogeneity in the Black population, promoting the Center's ability to "challenge the assumption that the Black community is monolithic." Further, by including work on the intersection of Black and Latine communities, CEED's work highlights the commonalities and uniqueness across these ethnic and racial groups.
- While expressing appreciation for CEED's focus on Black children, Advisory Board members noted that some projects in the Center, such as ACSES, focus on all racially minoritized children. Advisory Board members felt that this was important to keep in mind when discussing the Center's work to bring attention to systemic inequalities that impact the experiences of all children from racially marginalized backgrounds.

### CEED Contributions to Research, Policy, and Practice

- Advisory Board members shared some uncertainty about the degree to which CEED occupies space as solely a research center, or whether CEED can bolster their research efforts and partnerships to inform policy and practice. Dr. Jessica Pryce suggested that the Center solidify their intentions behind policy-informed research as a starting point.

She encouraged deeper thought about whether CEED's interest in policy is at the organizational, state, or national level. Additionally, Dr. Pryce inquired about whether influencing legislation is the ultimate goal of the Center. Other Advisory Board members mentioned CEED as a Center in which policymakers can reference in order to build legislation that improves access to good quality health and education for Black children. Specifically, Dr. Dr. Kristie Kauerz expressed that CEED's interest in the intersection between research, policy, and practice around Black children is a unique niche that the Center occupies. Similarly, Ms. Amy O'Leary expressed appreciation for the Center as a research center, given that the field needs research centers to look to when creating policy. The general consensus among Advisory Board members was the importance of designing strengths-based and community-informed research to benefit policy decisions that affect the lives of racially minorized children.

- Advisory Board Members also communicated a sense of urgency with the Center's efforts to connect research to policy by delivering research to a broader audience. While Dr. Melzi argued that it is "important to stay grounded in research, whereas there are think tanks that focus more on political action and equity," Dr. Iruka stressed the reality "that policies are made without research." Dr. Iruka further argued that "research with policy implications can't wait to be shared years down the line along the timeline of a grant," and greater intentionality should be placed on "getting messages out to broader audiences even if the message isn't quite ready." White papers and policy briefs are good examples of methods to synthesize preliminary findings and forthcoming research to provide up-to-date, research-informed policy suggestions. To this end, Dr. Melzi suggested looking to both the Child Trends Hispanic Institute as well as the National Research Center on Hispanic Children & Families for examples of policy briefs.

## CEED Can Lead the Field in Research and Improvement in Practice

- As racial, social, and political tensions rise in the U.S. and globally, CEED has the potential to be a leading center to dismantle the negative effects of racism and antiblackness in early childhood research, practice, and policy. Advisory Board Members shared several ways in which CEED can commit to an antiracist agenda through strengths-based research that challenges researchers and practitioners to acknowledge the humanity of Black children. Dr. Iruka emphasized the importance of centering Blackness and suggested that "by getting away from comparing Black children to a White standard, CEED could be part of the small group of people that are trying to re-center research with Blackness in mind." Dr. Mary Churchill supported Dr. Iruka's comments, stating that "anti-oppression and anti-racism work are areas where CEED can lead the field." While many youth-serving centers and organizations intend to provide effective supports for racially minoritized children, appropriate methods to do so are often unclear. To support CEED's commitment to an antiracist agenda through community-centered partnerships, Dr. Pryce noted that "CEED can be instrumental in thinking about how to build strong communities around vulnerable populations and how to create safety nets and cohesion for communities; building from the community up." In other words, CEED can work collaboratively with local community-based organizations that serve vulnerable populations to design research and practice initiatives that are relevant to the lived experiences of these populations.

## Policy Issues that CEED Can Use Its Expertise to Inform

- To bolster CEED's efforts to inform policy, Advisory Board members started a collaborative discussion around current policy issues relevant to CEED's mission and goals. Such issues included research that informs the development of classroom assessments, equitable and inclusive classroom practices, supports for Black children with disabilities, and child welfare efforts. During the discussion, Dr. Rowley expressed excitement about the Center's efforts to build assessments and tools that are specific to Black children. She noted that "having tools and explicit training that takes us beyond culturally relevant pedagogy and really thinking about what is happening in terms of equity in the classroom is critical and will be a powerful part of where CEED can lead." To inform policy at the Federal level, Dr. Ray suggested looking into the Family First legislation, which requires states to deliberately link home visiting efforts with child welfare efforts. Advisory Board members also encouraged the Center to bring together researchers across states working to inform policy, given differences across states. In this way, the Center can make its efforts on providing policy recommendations applicable to the Boston area and beyond. Board members concluded the policy discussion by encouraging CEED to consider how research can inform policy that impacts the most vulnerable populations such as children with learning disabilities. Dr. Pryce noted that "there are Black children who are not necessarily getting the resources they may need, such as those diagnosed with dyslexia."

### CEED's Strategic Partnerships

- In its first year, CEED established partnerships with several local organizations including the Boston Public Schools Universal Pre-K (UPK) Advisory Committee, the Epiphany Early Learning Center (ELC), the Brazelton Touchpoints Center, and Neighborhood Villages. Advisory Board members encouraged the Center to seek partnerships within the Boston University community and to expand the Center's reach to national organizations. Specifically, Dr. Churchill encouraged CEED to connect with Data Science and Computing to "think about how to position CEED to add towards data science at BU." Dr. Lombardi further supported Dr. Churchill's commentary and emphasized "infiltrating the rest of the University around young Black children – getting different fields/areas to think about and advocate for Black children." Dr. Lombardi also expressed that CEED's Racial Equity in Montessori work would be of interest to Trust for Learning, a philanthropic organization focused on early learning for underserved populations. Dr. Pryce concluded the discussion by suggesting that CEED consider branching into health serving organizations and seek to partner with the National Center for Biotechnology Information (NCBI), a branch of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).



## Areas for CEED to Build Upon

- The CEED Advisory Board meeting concluded with closing remarks regarding the Center's ecological focus and its intent to be a leading center for research, policy, and practice in early child care and education. Board members expressed gratitude for CEED's burgeoning footprint and challenged CEED staff to emphasize contextual factors that influence the developmental and learning processes of racially minoritized children. Members charged CEED with solidifying the following key components of the Center's mission and goals:
  - Clarifying the ecology that CEED focuses on
  - Identifying specific Center goals
  - Further specifying to what the term "early education" refers
  - Utilizing Massachusetts as a "lab"
- Advisory Board members concluded that Massachusetts could be an example for other states and at the federal level for showing what could happen in early childhood related to different policies. Ultimately, Board members believed in CEED's mission to better serve the educational and health needs of Black children in Boston and beyond.





# OPERATING BUDGET

## CEED ORGANIZATIONAL BUDGET- FISCAL YEAR 2022

(July 1, 2021 – June 30, 2022)

### FY22 GRANTS & OTHER INCOME SOURCES

Grants	\$5,457,647
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Miscellaneous Income	\$355,273
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TOTAL INCOME	\$5,812,920
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*\*Note: Grant start and end dates do not correspond with BU's fiscal year cycle.*

### EXPENDITURES

Staff Salary	\$619,165
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Employee Fringe	\$150,693
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Office Supplies/Travel/Other Costs	\$132,140
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Subawards & Consultant Costs	\$73,335
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TOTAL EXPENDITURES	\$975,333
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### TOTAL 2022 FISCAL YEAR FUND BALANCE

Total Balance Less Expenses	\$4,837,587
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# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As we approach the second half of 2022, CEED is looking forward to multiple new projects in the pipeline. First, we are developing a effort to utilize the resources and strategic partnerships of CEED to disseminate products focused on the effects of racism during infancy through early childhood (birth-five) for racially marginalized children and families, specifically those that are Black, Latine, Indigenous, or Asian. We will also continue to build out the ACSES Community of Practice, and we will be expanding our work in maternal and child health. Lastly, we will continue our work exploring racially affirming literature and positive racial identity in minoritized children.



**BOSTON**  
**UNIVERSITY**

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