



The Education Trust

# YOUNG LEARNERS, MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:

## Ensuring That Black and Latino Children Have Access to High-Quality State-Funded Preschool



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#YoungLearners

For this report, The Education Trust conducted a first-of-its-kind analysis examining race and ethnicity in state-funded preschool programs across the country. We analyzed two aspects of these programs: the percentage of a state’s Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled by quality of the program and the representation of Black and Latino children in state-funded preschool programs relative to their representation in the state overall. Of the 26 states we analyzed, no state provides high quality and high access for Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds.

**FINDING 1:** Far too few Black and Latino children have access to high-quality state-funded preschool programs.

**FINDING 2:** Latino children have particularly low access to high-quality state preschool programs.

**FINDING 3:** In 11 of 26 states, Latino children are underrepresented in state-funded preschool programs. In three of those states, so are Black children.

**FINDING 4:** Access is lower for Black and Latino 3-year-olds than for Black and Latino 4-year-olds.

**FINDING 5:** Far too few state-funded preschool programs collect and report race and ethnicity data.

## **STATE ACTION ITEMS**

- Publish meaningful equity data and use it to track progress.
- Prioritize expansion in historically underserved communities.
- Spread the word to Black and Latino families.
- Make enrollment easy.
- Offer hours and locations that align with the schedules and commutes of working families.
- Meet quality benchmarks.
- Eliminate suspensions and expulsions.
- Support dual language learners.
- Support families.
- Diversify the workforce.

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# YOUNG LEARNERS, MISSED OPPORTUNITIES:

## Ensuring That Black and Latino Children Have Access to High-Quality State-Funded Preschool

By **Carrie Gillispie**, Ed.D., senior analyst, P-12 policy, *The Education Trust*

High-quality early childhood education, or ECE, is essential to a strong early start in life. Ever-growing research supports its benefits, which occur during the rapid cognitive, social, and emotional development that takes place in the first five years of a child's life, and which are maintained by a high-quality elementary school experience.<sup>1</sup> ECE is also important to long-term success. Lifelong benefits associated with high-quality ECE include higher employment, better health, and better cognitive and social-emotional skills, among many others.<sup>2</sup> And these outcomes are multigenerational. Children whose parents attended high-quality ECE programs have fewer school suspensions and better education outcomes overall, as well as better employment and health outcomes.<sup>3</sup> Just as high-quality infant and toddler programs are critical for promoting child development, high-quality preschool is important for 3- and 4-year-olds to capitalize on this particularly sensitive period of child development.

But not all children have the chance to benefit from high-quality preschool, and just as inequities persist

throughout the education continuum, they exist at the earliest stage. For this report, The Education Trust conducted a new, first-of-its-kind analysis examining race and ethnicity in state-funded preschool programs across the country. We analyzed two aspects of these programs: the percentage of a state's Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds enrolled by quality of the program and the representation of Black and Latino children in state-funded preschool programs relative to their representation in the state overall.

Across the nation, far too few Black and Latino children are served by high-quality state-funded preschool programs (see "What Qualifies as a State Preschool Program?" on page 4). In the 26 states included in this study, only 1% of Latino 3- and 4-year-olds and 4% of Black 3- and 4-year-olds were enrolled in high-quality state preschool programs (see page 5 for how we defined "high-quality" for this analysis).<sup>4</sup> In 11 of the 26 states, Latino children were underrepresented — that is, a lower

*Data analysis by **Ivy Morgan**, associate director for analytics at The Education Trust, and **Dorothyjean (DJ) Cratty**, research consultant*

percentage of Latino children were enrolled than the population would indicate. And in three states, a lower percentage of Black children were enrolled than the population would indicate. Perhaps most striking, of the 26 states we analyzed, no state provides **high quality and high access** for Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds.

Certainly, there are too few seats in high-quality state preschool programs overall, and this is a problem for families of all races and ethnicities across our country. It is, nonetheless, important to focus on the experiences of Black and Latino children specifically. Systemic racism causes opportunity gaps for Black and Latino children that begin early — even prenatally, which makes it crucial for these families to have access to high-quality ECE opportunities as a pathway to success into their K-12 education. Without these opportunities, Black and Latino families are left to do even more work to overcome the barriers they face when entering and moving through a K-12 system, and beyond, that continues to struggle with providing students of color with what they need to succeed, from adequate funding to advanced coursework to strong teachers and school leaders.<sup>5</sup>

If we are serious about closing the opportunity gaps that limit success for students of color, then a good place to start is ensuring that Black and Latino families have meaningful access to the high-quality ECE opportunities that set a strong foundation for that success. And by “meaningful access,” we mean more than just providing seats, but ensuring that families can enroll their children in programs without facing barriers and have the option for high-quality preschool that is also convenient and affordable.

State leaders have the power to narrow these gaps for Black and Latino children. And therefore, they should take action to increase access to and quality of state-funded preschool programs for Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds. In this report, we provide an Early Childhood Education Equity Checklist, with 10 recommendations that every state preschool program should address (see page 17).

By providing better access to high-quality state preschool programs, state leaders can set a strong foundation for school success that benefits their youngest learners and keeps their futures bright.



ONLY 1% OF LATINO CHILDREN AND 4% OF BLACK CHILDREN  
IN THE 26 STATES WE ANALYZED ARE ENROLLED IN HIGH-QUALITY  
STATE PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS.

## WHAT WE EXPLORED

Ed Trust examined accessibility and quality of state-funded preschool programs for 3- and 4-year-old Black and Latino children during the 2017-2018 school year.

We measured access by calculating the percentage of a state's Black or Latino 3- and 4-year-old population who were enrolled in its state preschool program; for instance, Maryland's state-funded preschool program enrolled 28% of the state's Black 3- and 4-year-olds. Given that most states do not serve a high percentage of 3-year-olds overall, and most states serve only 4-year-olds, we also calculated these percentages for 3-year-olds and 4-year-olds separately. We analyzed **state preschool programs** only, and acknowledge that 3- and 4-year-olds are also served by subsidized child care, federal Head Start not substantially supplemented by nor administered by the state, and other programs not included in our analysis. (See column at right.)

Additionally, in order to determine how representative the programs were of the states' populations of Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds, we analyzed the relative representation ratio for Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds in each of the 26 states we studied.<sup>6</sup> That is, we examined whether Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds made up the same percentage of a state's preschool program as they did the state's children overall.

Our analysis includes all 26 states for which we had sufficient data (including Washington, D.C.). We excluded 19 states that did not report complete data on enrollment in the state-funded preschool school program(s) by race and ethnicity for Black and Latino preschool-age children.<sup>7</sup> Six states had no state-funded preschool program, and were also excluded from the analysis. (See map on page 15.)

To examine program quality, we used the National Institute for Early Education Research's (NIEER's) minimum quality standards benchmark rating, which consists of 10 benchmarks that represent research-based quality standards for effective ECE.

### What Qualifies as a State Preschool Program?

According to NIEER's *The State of Preschool 2018*, a state-funded preschool program has the following characteristics:

- The program is funded, controlled, and directed by the state.
- The program serves children of preschool age, usually 3 and/or 4 years old. The program must reach at least 1% percent of the 3- or 4-year-old population in the state to be included.
- Early childhood education is the primary focus of the program.
- The program offers a group learning experience to children at least two days per week.
- State-funded preschool education programs must be distinct from the state's system for subsidized child care.
- The program is not primarily designed to serve children with disabilities, but services may be offered to children with disabilities.
- State supplements to the federal Head Start program are considered to be state preschool programs if they substantially expand the number of children served, and if the state assumes some administrative responsibility for the program.

Source: [NIEER](#)

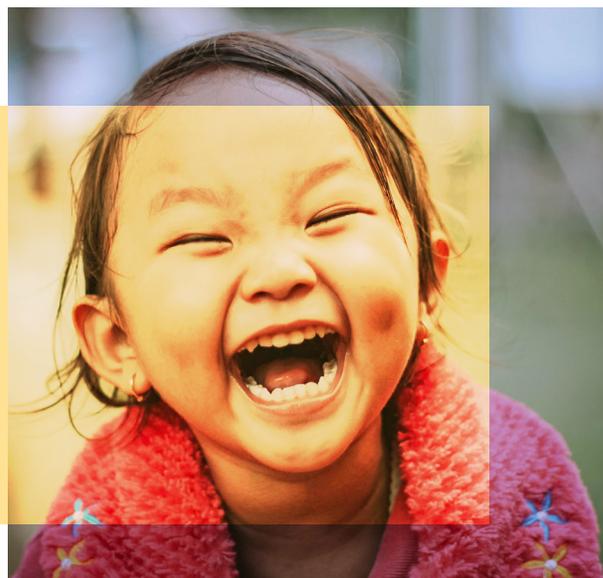
While there isn't agreement within the ECE field as to a standard quality rating for ECE programs, NIEER benchmarks represent best practices used by high-quality preschool programs, and educators and policymakers use NIEER's annual report to inform policy decisions. Furthermore, as the benchmarks are "minimum quality standards," they represent an attainable, reasonable set of goals for state-funded preschool programs that lay the foundation for more extensive high-quality policies and practices.<sup>8</sup> For the purposes of this analysis, we define "high-quality" programs as those meeting nine or 10 NIEER quality benchmarks.

Other quality benchmarks, such as the Head Start Program Performance Standards (issued by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services), provide more comprehensive quality guidelines that directly address family engagement and cultural and linguistic competence.<sup>9</sup> While comprehensive quality benchmarks are essential to increasing meaningful access and quality for children of color and children from low-income families, it is not possible to compare the quality of all state preschool programs using them because this data is simply not collected or reported.

## NIEER Quality ECE Benchmarks

1. Early learning and development standards
2. Curriculum supports
3. Teacher has at least a bachelor's degree
4. Teacher has specialized training in ECE/related field
5. Assistant teacher has at least a Child Development Associate (CDA) Credential
6. Staff professional development
7. Maximum class size (20)
8. Staff-child ratio (1:10)
9. Screenings and referrals
10. Continuous quality improvement system (CQIS)

Source: [NIEER](#)



# PART 1: THE PROBLEM

## WHY STATE-FUNDED PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS?

Ed Trust took a close look at state-funded preschool programs for two main reasons: First, it's actionable. States play an important role in providing and funding preschool, and state leaders have the power to improve the access and quality of these programs. Second, it's possible. State preschool programs provide one of the only data sources that allows us to compare access to high-quality ECE for Black and Latino families across states. State-level ECE data rarely includes information about race, ethnicity, and quality in a way that makes it possible to compare states to each other. NIEER analyzes all state-funded preschool programs, so using NIEER race and ethnicity data provided a way to make these comparisons for state-funded preschool programs.<sup>10</sup>

State-funded preschool programs are just one part of the complex variety of ECE programs within states, which includes subsidized child care, private programs, programs receiving funding from multiple sources, and federal Head Start not substantially supplemented by nor administered by the state. Here we examine quality and access of state-funded preschool programs, specifically, while acknowledging that increasing quality and access for these programs alone will not sufficiently increase quality and access of all ECE. (See "What Qualifies as a State Preschool Program?" on page 4.)

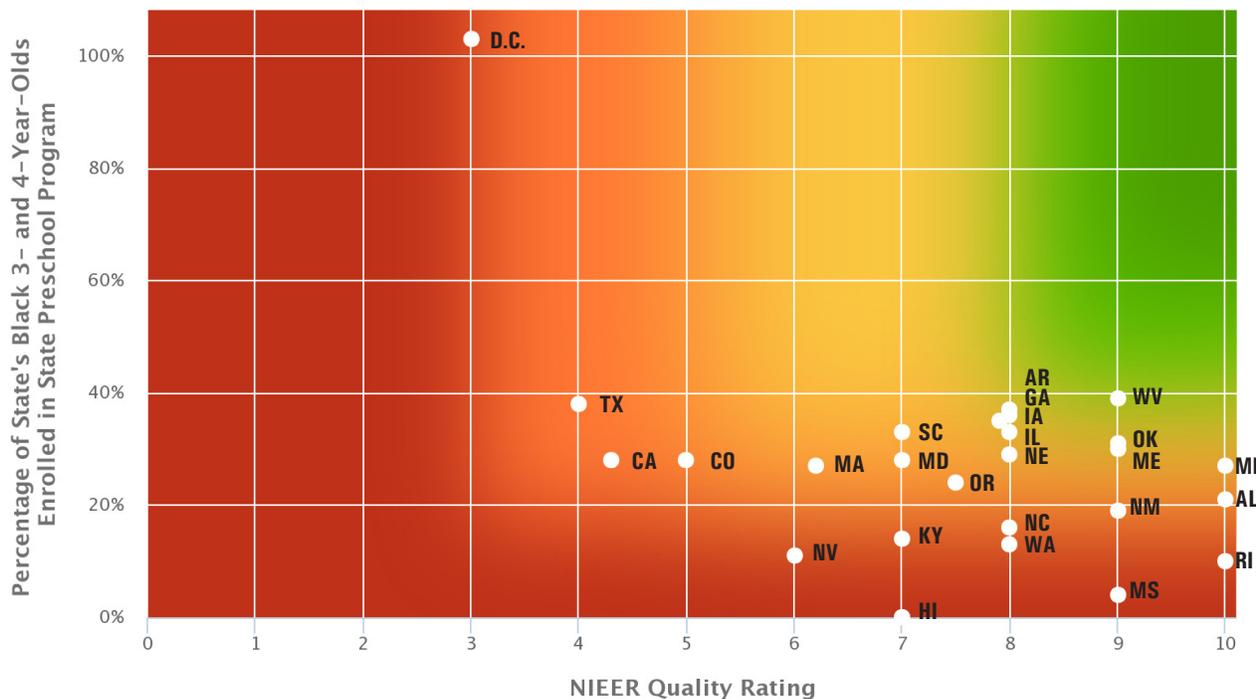


How is your state serving Black and Latino preschoolers? Check out our online tool to see how your state's preschool program stacks up, and what your state leaders should do about it.

<https://edtrust.org/resource/young-learners-missed-opportunities/>

**Figure 1**

Percentage of State Population of **Black 3- and 4-Year-Olds**  
by Number of NIEER Quality Benchmarks Met



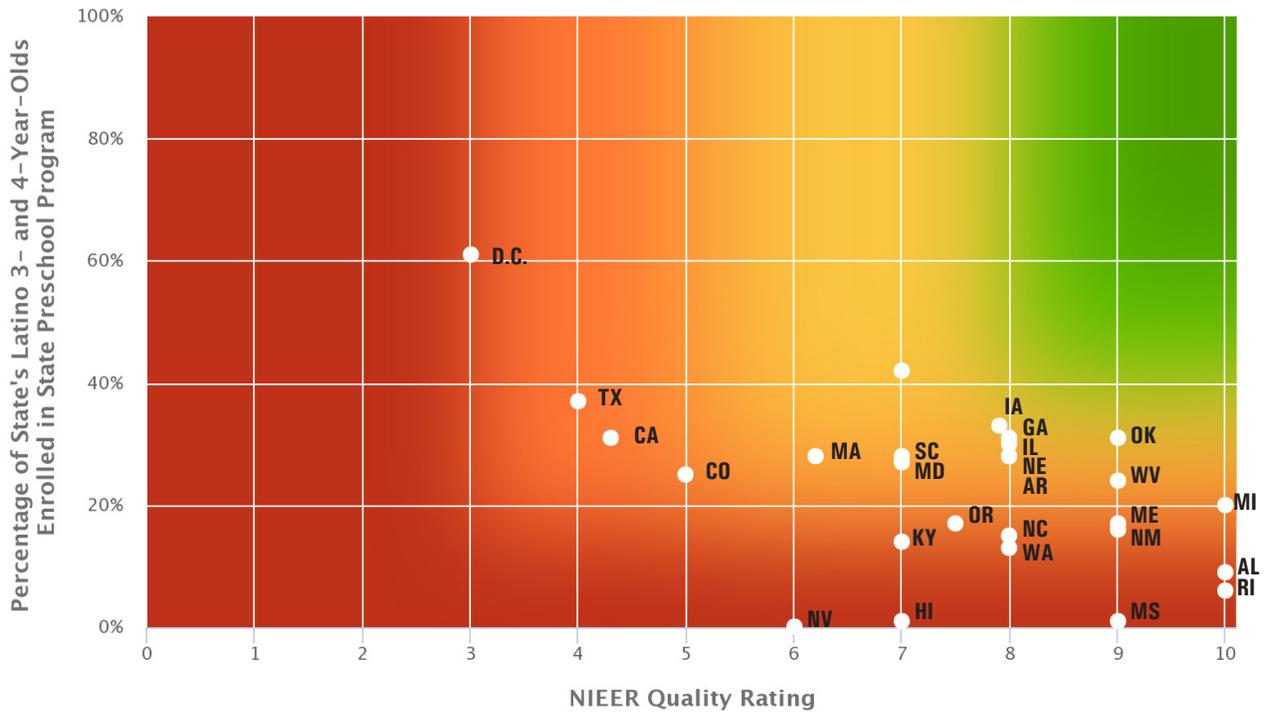
**Some states' access looks particularly low because their state-funded preschool programs serve only 4-year-olds and not 3-year-olds. Those states include Alabama, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island.**

*Note: The number of 3- and 4-year-olds in each state is based on Census estimates from 2017. Unpredicted population shifts may result in Census population estimates being higher or lower than the actual population counts. For this reason, DC's access appears as above 100%.*

*\*State data points with an asterisk represent states that have more than one state-funded preschool program, and these data points represent all programs combined. Please see the state's state-specific webpage through the web tool for data specific to each program. We chose 40% and higher enrollment as the green zone because the 90th percentile of enrollment for all state programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds is 37%. Therefore, the green zone represents states who enroll Black and/or Latino children at rates above the 90th percentile. This does not mean we believe that 40% enrollment is sufficient. Until we have closed achievement gaps for Black and Latino students, we should be pushing to increase Black and Latino access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities.*

**Figure: 2**

Percentage of State Population of **Latino 3- and 4-Year-Olds**  
by Number of NIEER Quality Benchmarks Met



**Some states' access looks particularly low because their state-funded preschool programs serve only 4-year-olds and not 3-year-olds. Those states include Alabama, Georgia, Hawaii, Maine, Michigan, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, and Rhode Island.**

*\*State data points with an asterisk represent states that have more than one state-funded preschool program, and these data points represent all programs combined. Please see the state's state-specific webpage through the web tool for data specific to each program. We chose 40% and higher enrollment as the green zone because the 90th percentile of enrollment for all state programs for all 3- and 4-year-olds is 37%. Therefore, the green zone represents states that enroll Black and/or Latino children at rates above the 90th percentile. This does not mean we believe that 40% enrollment is sufficient. Until we have closed achievement gaps for Black and Latino students, we should be pushing to increase Black and Latino access to high-quality early childhood education opportunities.*

# WHAT WE FOUND

## **FINDING 1: Far too few Black and Latino children have access to high-quality state-funded preschool programs.**

Even though many leaders have voiced a commitment to closing achievement gaps for Black and Latino students, states aren't developing high-quality, accessible preschool programs for these children at a rapid enough rate. Generally, states have either high-quality programs that do not reach enough Black and Latino children, or states reach relatively higher percentages of Black and Latino children but the programs are too low-quality.

- Of all Black and Latino 3- and 4-year-olds in the 26 states we analyzed, only 1% of Latino children and 4% of Black children were enrolled in high-quality state-funded preschool programs.<sup>11</sup>
  - Even among those who were enrolled in state-funded preschool programs, only 4% of Latino children and 13% of Black children in the 26 states we analyzed were enrolled in high-quality programs.

- This may be partially driven by the fact that larger states such as Texas and California have programs that meet fewer quality benchmarks. High-quality programs tend to be in relatively smaller states.

No matter how good a state-funded preschool program's quality, if the state does not provide access to a significant percentage of Black and Latino children, it is inadequate. Though Mississippi's program had a quality rating of 9 out of 10, it served a miniscule percentage of its Black and Latino children (4% and 1%, respectively). Rhode Island's preschool program had a quality rating of 10 out of 10, but also served a small percentage of its Black and Latino children (10% and 6%, respectively). While Alabama earned a 10 out of 10 for quality, it enrolled less than 10% of its Latino 3- and 4-year-olds. On the other hand, while Washington, D.C., enrolled essentially all of its Black 3- and 4-year-olds and 61% of its Latino 3- and 4-year-olds, making it particularly strong on access, it was rated only 3 out of 10 for quality.

**No state with a substantial percentage of Black or Latino children provides high access to a high-quality program for both 3- and 4-year-olds.**



NO STATE WITH A SUBSTANTIAL PERCENTAGE OF BLACK OR LATINO CHILDREN PROVIDES HIGH ACCESS TO A HIGH-QUALITY PROGRAM FOR BOTH 3- AND 4-YEAR-OLDS.

While “universal” programs are to be commended for good intent and widespread coverage, too often program quality is not sufficient. For example, D.C.’s program reaches essentially all of its Black 3- and 4-year-olds and 61% of its Latino 3- and 4-year-olds, making it particularly strong on access, but it was rated only 3 out of 10 for quality.<sup>29</sup>

**FINDING 2: Latino children have particularly low access to high-quality state preschool programs.**

Only 4% of Latino children enrolled in state preschool programs were enrolled in high-quality programs. Seventy-five percent of all Latino children enrolled in the 26 states we analyzed were enrolled in programs meeting four or fewer NIEER quality benchmarks; this is largely because Texas has a high Latino population, and the only two programs that met fewer than four quality benchmarks are Texas and Washington, D.C.<sup>12</sup>

Even when examining access regardless of quality, five of the 26 states we examined enrolled fewer than 10% of Latino children: Nevada (0.1%), Hawaii (1%), Mississippi (1%), Rhode Island (6%), and Alabama (9%).

Research indicates that low enrollment of Latino children in such programs may reflect a mismatch between Latino families’ needs and the availability and outreach of programs that fit those needs.<sup>13</sup>

**FINDING 3: In 11 of 26 states, Latino children are underrepresented in state-funded preschool programs. In three of those states, so are Black children.**

In 11 of the 26 states we analyzed, Latino children were underrepresented in state-funded preschool programs: Alabama; Washington, D.C.; Hawaii; Iowa; Kentucky; Maine; Mississippi; Nevada; New Mexico; Oklahoma; and West Virginia. In Hawaii, Kentucky, and Oklahoma, Black children were also

underrepresented.<sup>14</sup> These findings were from the second part of our analysis: While our first analysis examined Black and Latino **access** to state preschool programs, this second analysis examined Black and Latino **representation** in state preschool programs.

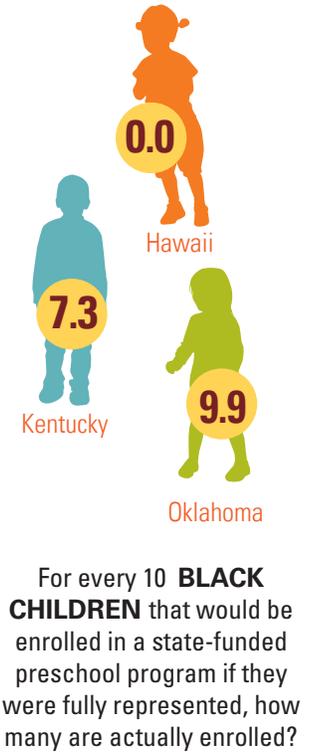
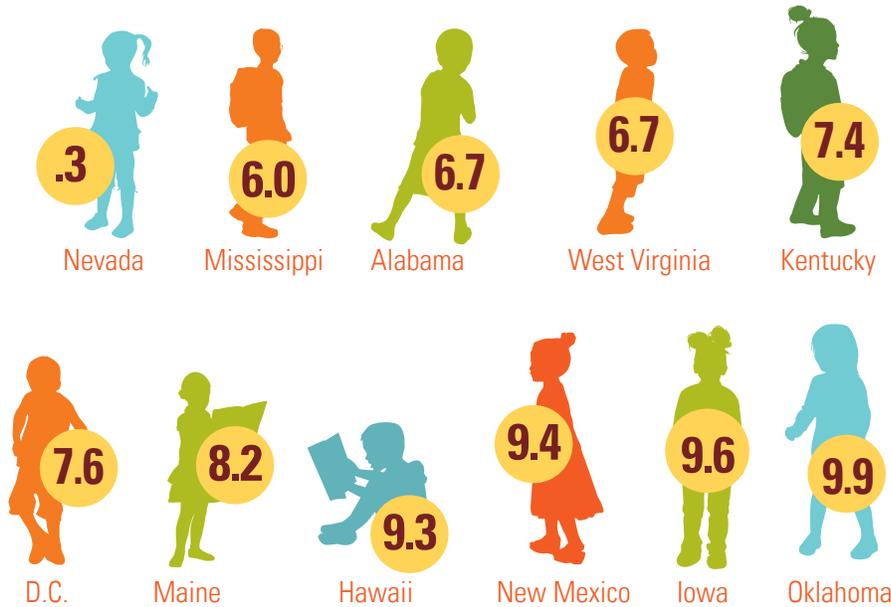
**What does “underrepresented” mean?** Quite simply, it means that Latino and/or Black children do not make up at least the same percentage of the state’s preschool program as they do the state’s children overall. This underrepresentation reflects a particularly unfair exclusion from opportunity for Latino and Black children in these 11 states.



**Figure: 3**

**UNDERREPRESENTATION OF BLACK AND LATINO CHILDREN IN STATE-FUNDED PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS**

For every 10 **LATINO CHILDREN** that would be enrolled in a state-funded preschool program if they were fully represented, how many are actually enrolled?



For every 10 **BLACK CHILDREN** that would be enrolled in a state-funded preschool program if they were fully represented, how many are actually enrolled?

**FINDING 4: Access is lower for Black and Latino 3-year-olds than for Black and Latino 4-year-olds.**

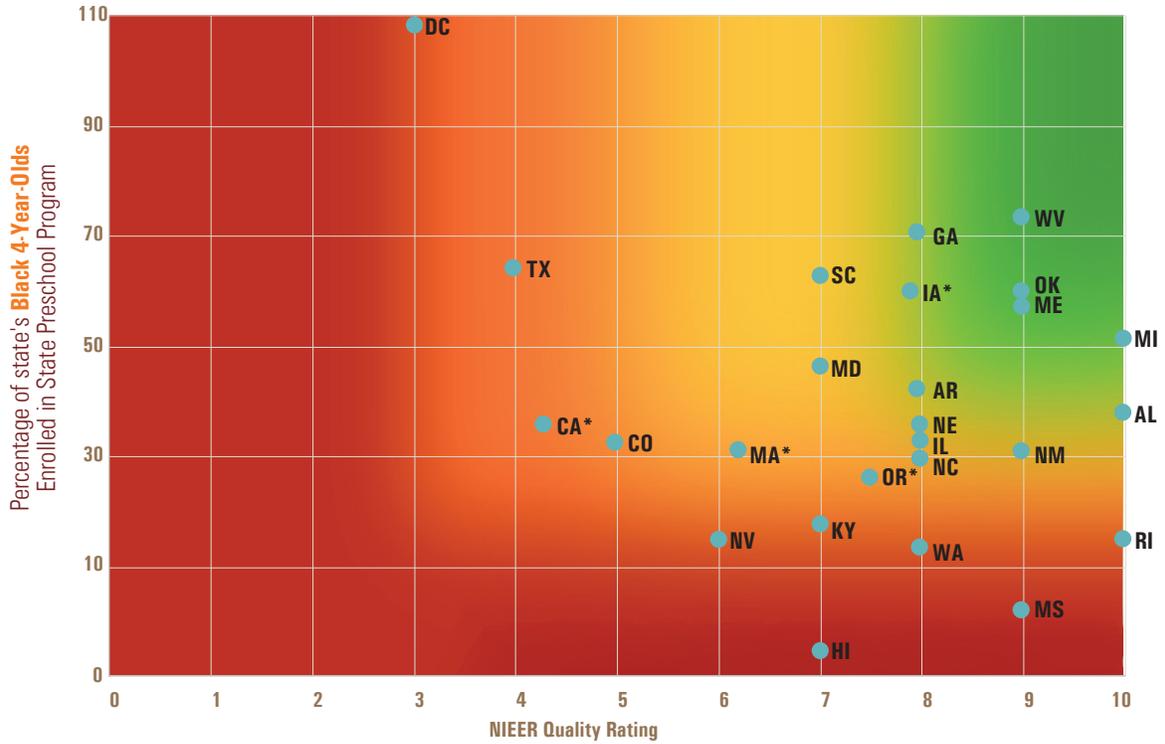
Some states provide state-funded preschool programs for both 3- and 4-year-olds, while others provide programs for 4-year-olds only. States should support programs for both 3- and 4-year-olds, as both years are highly sensitive periods of brain development and learning that build on one another toward a strong start in kindergarten and beyond. Furthermore, when states do not provide ECE for 3-year-olds, many more families are left to find other, often very expensive means of ECE. Overall, states did a better job of providing high quality and high access for Black and Latino 4-year-olds than for Black and Latino 3-year-olds during the 2017-2018 school year. (See figures 4 through 7).

Access is generally much worse for 3-year-olds than for 4-year-olds, and many of the states with the highest quality actually do not serve any 3-year-olds, including Michigan, Alabama, Rhode Island, and Oklahoma.

While it is critical to serve 3-year-olds, it is also worth noting that the 4-year-old graphs in figures 4 through 7 show that it is possible to serve a substantial portion of Black and Latino children in a relatively high-quality state preschool program: Georgia has a substantial number of both Latino and Black families. It serves more than 60% of the state’s Black and Latino 4-year-olds and its program meets eight of NIEER’s quality benchmarks.

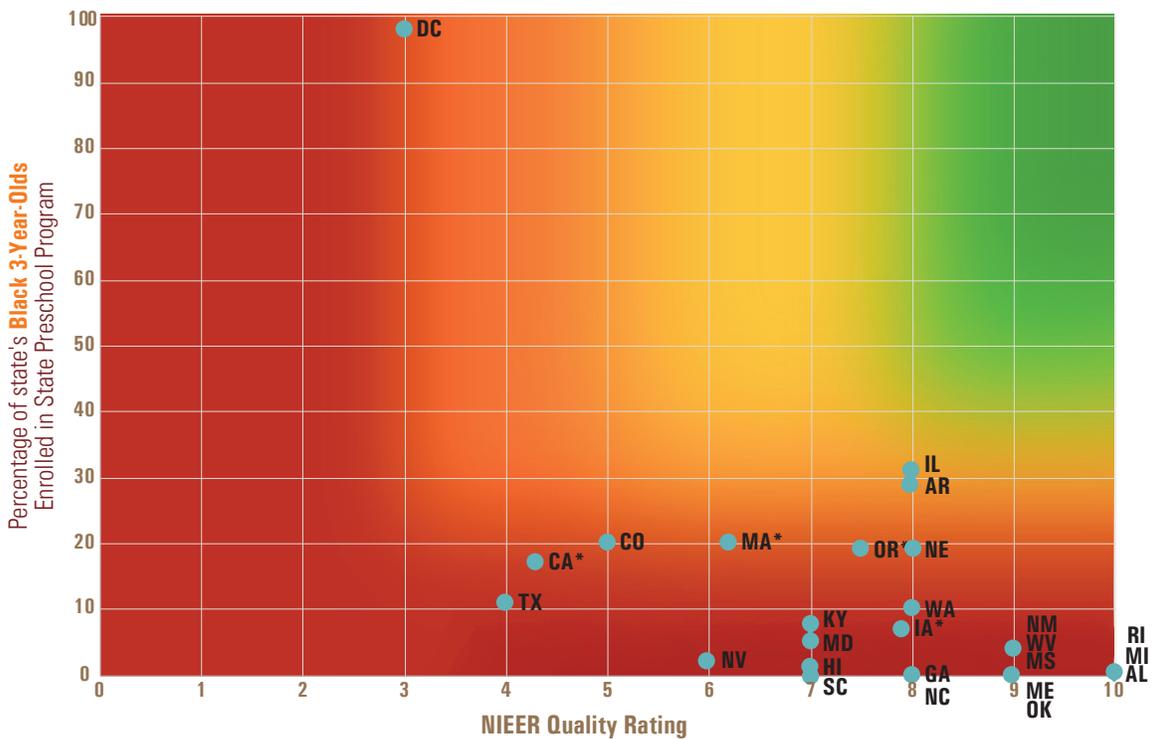
**Figure: 4**

Percentage of State Population of **Black 4-Year-Olds** by Number of NIEER Quality Benchmarks Met



**Figure: 5**

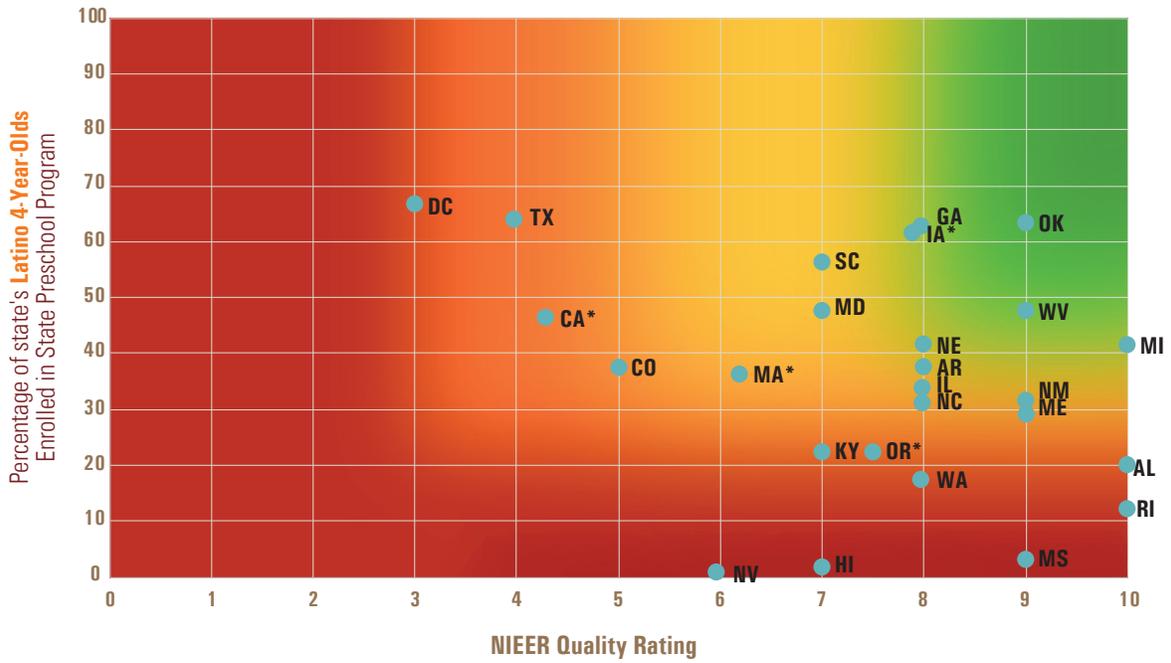
Percentage of State Population of **Black 3-Year-Olds** by Number of NIEER Quality Benchmarks Met



Note: The number of 3- and 4-year-olds in each state is based on Census estimates from 2017. Unpredicted population shifts may result in Census population estimates being higher or lower than the actual population counts. For this reason, D.C.'s access appears as above 100%. \*State data points with an asterisk represent states that have more than one state-funded preschool program, and these data points represent all programs combined. Please see the state's state-specific webpage through the web tool for data specific to each program.

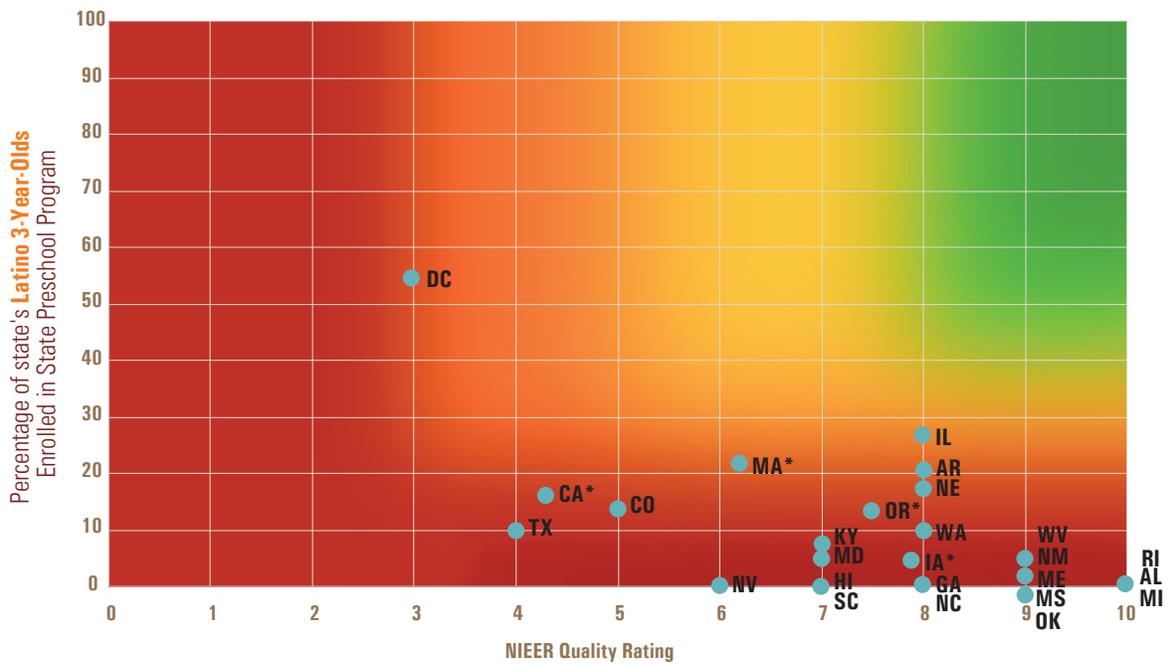
**Figure: 6**

Percentage of State Population of **Latino 4-Year-Olds**  
by Number of NIEER Quality Benchmarks Met



**Figure: 7**

Percentage of State Population of **Latino 3-Year-Olds**  
by Number of NIEER Quality Benchmarks Met



\*State data points with an asterisk represent states that have more than one state-funded preschool program, and these data points represent all programs combined. Please see the state's state-specific webpage through the web tool for data specific to each program.



**FINDING 5:** Far too few state-funded preschool programs collect and report race and ethnicity data.

Without complete race and ethnicity data, it is impossible to measure access, quality, and equity for Black and Latino children and their families. Just under half of all states with state-funded preschool programs did not report race and ethnicity data to NIEER for their Black and Latino students. Kansas, Pennsylvania, and Wisconsin reported race/ethnicity data for only some of their state-funded preschool programs. (See map on page 15.) States should publicly report preschool program data disaggregated by race and ethnicity in order to be fully transparent about the quality and access of their preschool programs for children of color.

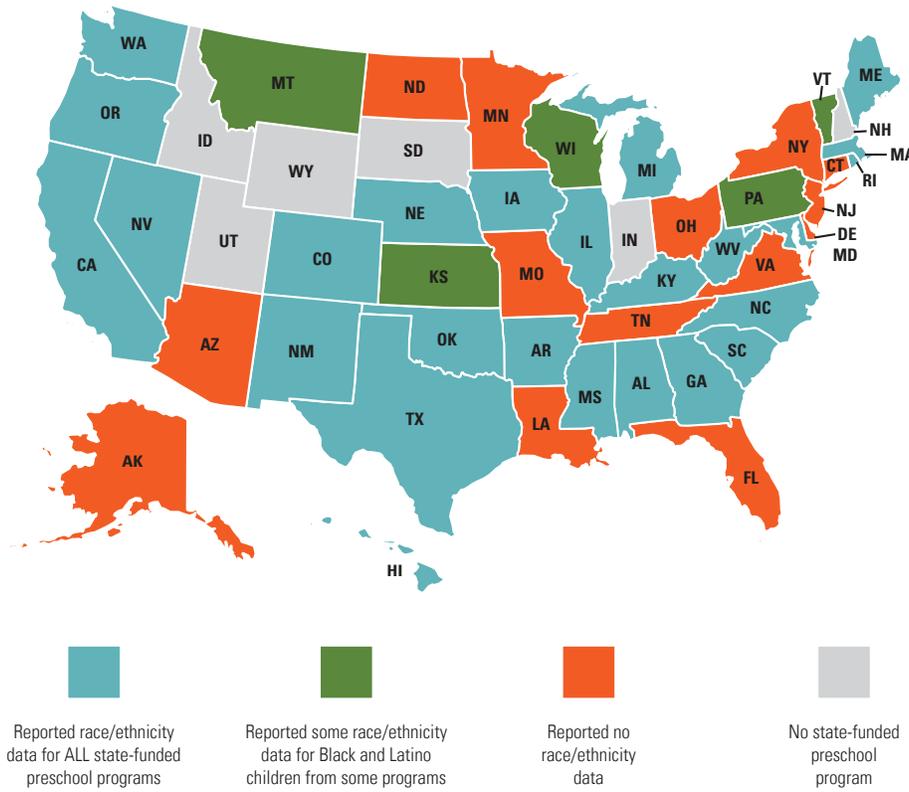
**Bright Spots:** Georgia serves more than 60% of the state’s substantial number of Black and Latino 4-year-olds and its program meets 8 of 10 of NIEER’s quality benchmarks. While there’s still work to be done to improve both quality and access in Georgia, especially for Black and Latino 3-year-olds, it’s worth asking what we can learn from its programmatic and policy choices for 4-year-olds.

Georgia’s state-funded pre-K program began as a pilot program in 1992, serving 750 4-year-olds in school-based, center-based, and home-based programs. Beginning in 1993, state lottery revenues funded the program, which increased program capacity to 8,700 4-year-olds. In 1995, with support for expansion from the private sector, the program expanded to serve all eligible 4-year-olds, becoming the first state-funded universal preschool program for 4-year-olds in the United States. Today, Georgia’s state-funded pre-K program serves 4-year-olds in various settings, including public and private elementary and secondary schools, postsecondary vocational technical institutes, private and state colleges and universities, private child care centers, Department of Family and Children’s Services offices, Head Start sites, hospitals, military bases, YMCA/YWCAs, and faith-based organizations.<sup>30</sup>



Like Georgia, **Oklahoma** and **West Virginia** provide relatively high access and high quality for Black and Latino 4-year-olds. Oklahoma provides access to just over 60% of its Black and Latino 4-year-olds, while West Virginia provides access to 75% of its Black 4-year-olds and 47% of its Latino 4-year-olds. Both states’ programs meet 9 out of 10 of NIEER’s quality benchmarks.

**Figure: 8**



**States that did not report complete race and ethnicity data for Black and Latino students, and therefore are not included in our analysis:**

- |                    |                     |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| <b>Alaska</b>      | <b>New Jersey</b>   |
| <b>Arizona</b>     | <b>New York</b>     |
| <b>Connecticut</b> | <b>North Dakota</b> |
| <b>Delaware</b>    | <b>Ohio</b>         |
| <b>Florida</b>     | <b>Pennsylvania</b> |
| <b>Kansas</b>      | <b>Tennessee</b>    |
| <b>Louisiana</b>   | <b>Vermont</b>      |
| <b>Minnesota</b>   | <b>Virginia</b>     |
| <b>Missouri</b>    | <b>Wisconsin</b>    |
| <b>Montana</b>     |                     |

**States with no state-funded preschool program:<sup>15,16</sup>**

- |                      |
|----------------------|
| <b>Idaho</b>         |
| <b>Indiana</b>       |
| <b>New Hampshire</b> |
| <b>South Dakota</b>  |
| <b>Utah</b>          |
| <b>Wyoming</b>       |



## PART 2: WHAT CAN STATES DO ABOUT IT?

### EQUITY IN ECE CHECKLIST: 10 WAYS TO INCREASE ACCESS TO HIGH-QUALITY STATE-FUNDED PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS FOR BLACK AND LATINO FAMILIES

Depending on where each state's preschool program falls on the charts on pages 7 and 8, states may want to use different strategies to improve the quality and access of their programs for Black and Latino children and their families. States with high quality but low access should prioritize increased enrollment for Black or Latino 3-year-olds, 4-year-olds, or both. States with higher access but low quality should choose to prioritize increasing program quality across the board, and with particular urgency in areas serving the largest numbers and concentration of Black and Latino children, who continue to face the largest opportunity gaps throughout their time in public education. And as this analysis shows, all states must find ways to ultimately increase both access and quality for Black and Latino children.

States should engage in meaningful dialogue with Black and Latino communities to identify current barriers to access and meaningful solutions. Below, we provide a starting point for those conversations, including five steps to improve access and five steps to improve quality for Black and Latino children and families.

**1. Publish meaningful equity data and use it to track progress.** States should collect and publish racial, ethnic, linguistic, and socioeconomic demographics of enrollees in their state-funded preschool programs.

**2. Prioritize expansion in historically underserved communities.** While states should ensure access to high-quality ECE for all young children, they should prioritize expanded access in neighborhoods with the highest number or

percentage of historically underserved children (including Black and Latino children) who are not currently enrolled in a high-quality program.

#### **3. Spread the word to Black and Latino families.**

States should conduct substantial outreach using strategies such as the following to increase awareness of ECE programs and enrollment procedures:

- ✓ Provide outreach materials in the most common non-English languages spoken in the state.<sup>17</sup>
- ✓ Make clear in all outreach materials that enrollment does not require information about citizenship status, immigration status, or work status of children or family members.
- ✓ Target messaging through television, radio, social media, and print media most consumed by Black and Latino families.
- ✓ Actively partner with families of current or former Black and Latino preschool students to spread the word through social networks.
- ✓ Host or participate in community events such as "back to school" nights or local festivals in communities with many 3- and 4-year-olds who are not enrolled.
- ✓ Conduct outreach through K-12 schools and school districts.



- ✓ Visit homes door-to-door to distribute enrollment materials in communities with many Black and Latino preschool-age children who are not enrolled.
- ✓ Distribute outreach materials in a variety of locations across the community, such as libraries, grocery stores, community centers, primary care providers, and places of worship.

**4. Make enrollment easy.** In order for Black and Latino families to access preschool, states must remove unnecessary, troublesome barriers to enrollment. States should do the following:

- ✓ Offer enrollment materials in multiple languages, given that 62% of the country's population that is Limited English Proficient is Latino, and 4% is Black.<sup>18</sup>
- ✓ Provide phone, mail, and in-person enrollment opportunities in addition to online. Black and Latino families have lower access to home broadband internet; families should be able to complete enrollment through various modes.<sup>19</sup> Public community centers such as public schools and libraries should also provide support for families who wish to enroll their children online.
- ✓ Minimize required information. Keep enrollment forms short, simple, straightforward, and quick to complete (such as a one-page form or one webpage).

- ✓ **Not** require information about citizenship status, immigration status, or work status of children or family members.
- ✓ Allow a variety of identification options for any necessary documentation.

**5. Offer hours and locations that align with the schedules and commutes of working families.**

Black and Latino workers are at increased risk of experiencing unfair work scheduling practices that make it logistically difficult to plan for child care.<sup>20</sup> Latino adults are disproportionately likely to have jobs that lack scheduling flexibility and have unpredictable, non-traditional work schedules.<sup>21</sup> States should do the following:

- ✓ Analyze the most common work schedules for low-income families, including shift and seasonal work, and provide programs or wraparound child care that begins at least one hour before those work schedules begin and end at least one hour after those work schedules conclude.
- ✓ Strategically locate programs at or near the state's largest work sites for Black and Latino families to allow parents to make it to programs to pick up or drop off children before they close.



MANY OF THE STATE-FUNDED PRESCHOOL PROGRAMS WITH THE HIGHEST QUALITY DO NOT SERVE ANY 3-YEAR-OLDS, INCLUDING MICHIGAN, ALABAMA, RHODE ISLAND, AND OKLAHOMA.

- ✓ Prioritize public transit accessibility of ECE programs. Given that Black and Latino adults are more likely to rely on public transportation, programs should be accessible by a variety of public transportation options whenever possible.<sup>22</sup>

**6. Meet quality benchmarks.** NIEER quality benchmarks are important minimum quality standards that all state programs should meet.<sup>23</sup> In addition, states should also refer to other, more comprehensive quality standards, such as the Head Start Program Performance Standards, in order to provide high-quality, culturally and linguistically competent, developmentally appropriate preschool programs.<sup>23</sup> States should continuously strive to improve quality, which will improve outcomes for all enrollees, including Black and Latino children.

**7. Eliminate suspensions and expulsions.** Both of these practices disproportionately affect young children of color, and should be replaced with evidence-based practices and the professional development necessary to implement them with fidelity.<sup>25</sup>

**8. Support dual language learners.**

- ✓ Offer dual language immersion preschool programs in the state's most common non-English spoken language, and prioritize access for dual language learners (children with a home language other than English who are developing their home language and English at the same time).

## Key Quality Benchmark: Making Professional Development Meaningful for Black and Latino Children and Their Families

States must ensure that professional development, which is a key quality benchmark, is **culturally and linguistically competent**. States should provide ongoing professional development to their programs' ECE educators and related staff on evidence-based, culturally and linguistically competent strategies for the following:

- developmentally appropriate practice
- child development (including social and emotional development)
- supporting language-rich environments
- developmental delay and disabilities
- dual language learners
- collaborating with families
- understanding and supporting culturally diverse environments
- Supporting positive behaviors and eliminating suspensions and expulsions



- ✓ Provide dual language immersion programs in each county's or district's most common non-English spoken language, if different from the state's most common non-English spoken language. To do this, states must invest in recruiting and retaining qualified, multilingual ECE staff and training educators in evidence-based dual language immersion models.
- ✓ Provide all ECE staff, whether in dual language immersion programs or not, with professional development to meaningfully support families with a home language other than English even when staff do not speak families' home language.<sup>26</sup>

**9. Support families.** States should ensure that state preschool programs can connect families to support services, including mental health services, emergency crisis services, early intervention, home visiting, developmental assessment, health care and dental services, and services facilitating seamless transitions into kindergarten.

**10. Diversify the workforce.** All children benefit from diverse educators, and research shows that children of color and dual language learners especially benefit from teachers who are reflective of students' cultural and linguistic diversity.<sup>27</sup> People of color and multilingual people should be represented throughout the various roles within ECE programs, including administrators and lead teachers.<sup>28</sup> States should do the following:

- ✓ Fund higher education ECE degree programs that recruit and support students of color and multilingual students and offer financial support for tuition, fees, books, transportation, certification costs, and other related expenses.
- ✓ Aid with loan repayment or loan forgiveness for high-quality degree programs that are affordable and accessible and provide courses and placements in ECE programs across the state.
- ✓ Ensure that degree programs are accessible across the state and available online with state oversight of online program quality, in order to make programs as accessible as possible to a diverse student population, including Black, Latino, and multilingual students, and students with limited transportation or who live in rural areas far from institutions of higher education.
- ✓ Ensure that coursework is available in multiple languages.
- ✓ Develop high-quality ECE apprenticeship and career and technical education (CTE) programs in high schools, especially in communities with a high percentage of Black and Latino populations.
- ✓ Support professional compensation and benefits at least on par with those of K-12 educators that are guaranteed upon degree completion.

STATES SHOULD ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL DIALOGUE WITH BLACK AND LATINO COMMUNITIES TO IDENTIFY CURRENT BARRIERS TO ACCESS AND FIND SOLUTIONS.



## ENDNOTES

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## ABOUT THE EDUCATION TRUST

The Education Trust is a national nonprofit that works to close opportunity gaps that disproportionately affect students of color and students from low-income families. Through our research and advocacy, Ed Trust supports efforts that expand excellence and equity in education from preschool through college; increase college access and completion, particularly for historically underserved students; engage diverse communities dedicated to education equity; and increase political and public will to act on equity issues.

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