

African American Boys' Journey to School Readiness

Chris Barnes: Hello, everyone. Thank you for joining us. Thank you for joining the "African American Boys' Journey to School Readiness" webinar. I'm tremendously excited today to talk with you. We have a wonderful group of panelists and a wonderful list of topics that we want to talk to you all about. All, and this is, of course, Supporting the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys. We have a lot of content to cover. A lot of real estate that we want to tackle today.

I want to get this conversation started; I can give you a little bit of history about how we actually got here. This initiative started back in 2013. This 2013 initiative began with the Obama administration, talking about really My Brother's Keeper Initiative, and how looking at the societal issues that affect and impact African Americans on a daily basis was really at the core, really at the crux of what we were trying to get in.

With that, Head Start took a look at how this disenfranchised community really could be supported and thinking about what we could do internally to support the efforts of young people as they reach their full potential. Of course, this title sometimes undoubtedly elicits a range of emotions, and we recognize that. We want to really embrace that. Really depending on who you are as individuals, the reasons that you took to really take a part to participate in this actual webinar.

We know that your thoughts really come to mind when you think about African American boys. It could be triggering; it could be in some ways — it gives you an opportunity to pause and really time to do some self-inventory on why you are here and how you want to support African American boys and girls. We know that we all come with our own conscious and unconscious biases, and we recognize that. We also know that we come from different racial, ethnic, and cultural backgrounds. We want to not run away from that but really run toward that and really understand what the motivations are when the subject is sometimes as dense as this.

What we want to do really is think about what's important to all children and we're going to talk to some expert panelists today. We have Lisa Gordon with us and Dr. William White. I'm going to give them the opportunity to introduce themselves in a moment. We really want to really hear, we're going to kind of give you some topics, give you some issues, and some perspectives that may be new to you, may be fresh, and challenge the way you are as an individual, as an early educator.

We really want to talk about that and hopefully dig deep. This, of course, is one of many. This is going to be the inaugural run of a series of webinars that is going to, of course, tackle this whole Supporting the School Readiness and Success of Young African American Boys. We're going to talk about that a lot. But before I get too far and too deep into this, I want to give both Lisa and Dr. White the opportunity to introduce themselves. Lisa, do you want to go first?

Lisa Gordon: Sure, Chris, I'd love to. Welcome, everyone. I'm excited to see everyone here. As Chris said, my name is Lisa Gordon. I'm the director of training and technical assistance and community outreach at the Children's Equity Project at Arizona State University. I'm also a DTL, or a National Center for Development, Teaching, and Learning, trainer. I come to this work, Chris, from both a personal and professional level. On a personal level, first and foremost, I'm a mother of two African American boys or young adults now.

But as a parent of two Black boys, I've experienced and nurtured their sense of inquisitiveness and wonder as young children. Their joys and their triumphs and pride and confidence in who they can become. I've also experienced and witnessed firsthand though that negative rhetoric and messages and bias about their capabilities, and I've stood in the gap. I've stood in the gap as their advocate of change.

On a professional level, I come to this work having trained in both the state and local levels to address issues. Including racialized bias and resulting disparities for over 25 years in early childhood. I also come with this work as having been part of that initial development of the African American - Supporting the School Success and Readiness of African American Boys Project that launched in 2014.

I've been continuing to provide that training and technical assistance to both Head Start, regions, and programs, as well as early childhood teachers, leaders, and parents, and families, and public schools, and child community-based centers and programs through this most important initiative. Both from a professional and a personal level I come, and I show up for this work.

Chris: Absolutely. Dr. White.

William White: Yes, I'm excited to be here with these two panelists. Like this is the dream scene of the day and I'm very excited to be here with you. I come into this work from several different layers. The first layer is just being a Black male. But even the deeper layer from me is being a Black male teacher in my past. I'm not a father yet but as a Black male teacher, I was seen as a father, especially in my last school of Southeast DC.

It's something that came to my heart was just seeing how our Black males were just really trying to thrive but many times being held down by the system, I was like, "What is going on here, how can I make a bigger impact?" Which led me to — professionally right now as part-time faculty at North Seattle College in Early Child Education to help create and generate the next generation of teachers.

I'm in my current role of the director at My Brother's Teachers like getting more Black and Brown males to think about what does it look like to be a Black and male teacher? Because I knew my impact and I want to help them see their impact in the community. Looking at this tutor approach of how can we really make an impact overall as people of color, as males of color? How can we also help teachers understand that Black males have a gift inside of them but how can we pull it out? I think giving webinars and training that we'll be doing over the next

several months, you'll learn different techniques of just getting to that layer of understanding your unconscious bias. How can I really approach this? How can I think about working with my families? I'm excited to be here today. In Seattle, it's 12:00 here and it's not raining today for once. But it's the start of the day so there's room. I'm going to turn it back over to Chris. Thank you so much, Chris and Lisa.

Chris: No, I appreciate that. Thanks, Dr. White. Thanks, Lisa. I really do – you guys can probably tell there's a lot of enthusiasm and there's been a series of events that led up to this. There have been some regional conversations, there have also been some internal conversations around how do we best approach this and looking at the resources, looking at what was already available. We really wanted to craft something that made sense for the field. This we thought was a really important topic to bring up and to highlight. That's where we are right now.

A couple of things we wanted to talk about today, just in terms of learning objectives because we do have, again, a lot of real estate to cover, and we have a short amount of time. I want you all to get a little bit comfortable with what we want to accomplish in today's session. Essentially, we want to explain, number one, how the SSRSYAAB – Lisa loves when I practice it in the mirror – the Supporting School Readiness initiative is how important it is within the context of the African American experience. We want to talk about, number one, like the why, like why we're doing this. Other pieces we want to hopefully help you guys and promote this conversation around implementing strategies to strengthen equitable learning environments.

We want to underscore the equitable piece. Equitable learning environments for African American boys and families really to support the school readiness event. There's a quote that we're going to use later on. I don't want to steal Lisa's thunder. We talk about this rising tide like we want to make sure that as we support this particular population that we're really – the thought behind it is to raise and to increase the equality and the capacity of all children as we have this conversation. We want to emphasize that as much as possible. That is really going to underscore, undergird everything that we talk about today.

Part of this conversation as well, Lisa and Dr. White, you guys I'm sure you can agree with is because sometimes when you have these tough conversations – and I want to say tough conversations in quotation fingers – but when you have these tough conversations, it is always important to really establish some community norms. Some ways that we can engage one another and feel safe in order to do that. That we did come up, we've kind of talked internally, and thought about how we can really establish a safe space for everybody to contribute and to participate.

One of the things we talked about was as a group, as a whole, as a community, we want to hold a space for reflection and learning. That's really important to do so. Help create a brave learning space so that everyone can take chances, but again, be open to learn and be receptive to other people's opinions. We want to suspend certainty and that's kind of self-explanatory. We don't have all the answers and we want to make sure that we understand that there is this room and this space for learning and for growth.

Another area is speak your truth. I think that transparency and that honesty is going to be really important as we approach this work and as we approach this conversation. Expect non-closure. The reason why we say this is because we know that as that old hat, Rome wasn't built in a day, we know that we are not going to accomplish all of our goals today. But we want to at least begin the conversation. As we do that, there may be some non-closure but we're going to really, really work to understand that this conversation is the continuing conversation.

Then the other space is just give yourself grace. We really want you guys to understand that we all sometimes have these biases that we're not aware of. We may have some blind spots in the way that we approach anything. Give yourself that grace to understand and learn that about yourselves. A lot of the conversations today are going to be reflective conversations. It's not going to be about the person sitting next to you, it's really going to be about how you internally, how you personally are approaching this work and making sure that we are doing the best that we can to support these African American boys.

Lisa and Dr. White, I told you, this is one of those conversations that I don't want to feel like we're talking a lot, but I think the background, the backdrop to this conversation is really, important. We're going to talk about the backdrop to this. The Biden administration, as you guys well know, had some priorities, and equity, this equity conversation came up a lot. If you guys listen leading up to the presidential race, there was a lot of conversation about the platform and what folks thought should be a priority once they got into office.

This priority was on President Biden's — on his wish list, essentially. Essentially what this whole conversation about advancing equity, which is a part of the OHS strategies, by the way, is really kind of making sure that we reach all children. Reach more children and families, making sure that it is an equitable space, making sure that we are making these opportunities available to everyone, including some of those disenfranchised communities. That's part of this. This focus on Head Start services will also lead us to look at how we support vulnerable populations. That's across the diaspora of either African Americans but also some of those other populations. That was a clear focus of the Biden administration and OHS.

Some of the objectives, again, was looking at the school readiness of African American boys and the early childhood workforce. That's what we're going to be talking about as we touch on real estate and topics that we hit on today. Again, this topic around a rising tide lifts all boats is going to be a theme in the back of our minds as we have this conversation. But this strategy, again, is really thinking about the historically disenfranchised communities that we work with on a day-to-day basis and how we support them. It is going to be important that we kind of suspend all that certainty and think about how we can really, really intentionally focus on those communities that we potentially have left to the wayside for a period of time.

We want to make sure that that is part of the conversation. There's a working definition right now of equity. I think it makes sense for us to kind of tackle that right now. We know right now this is the working definition that OHS is using. Equity means all children and families, and those who support them have opportunities to reach their full potential. It's the full potential piece that we're talking about. How do we do that? That working definition is going to be, again,

thinking about a child's unique culture, language, and funds of knowledge like what do children come to our buildings, to our environments with.

If you're in a home visiting environment, if it is a center-based environment, we want to know that they are – we have to understand that there are some cultural, ethnic, these funds of knowledge that we always refer to, these children and families come with their own respective ideas and thoughts about life, and how they approach it. That has to be respected on our side. We'll talk about how important that is as we embrace early child education. Because I think it's important that we really do understand that because that really does – that compassion for children, that compassion for families, really does build confidence, it builds confidence in both the children and families.

We want to make sure that we don't take for granted those opportunities that we have before us. Again, it is just always good to kind of ground ourselves, in not just the history because we're going to talk a little bit more about the history, but really what the goals are, and our goal here is to be as equitable as we can be as we approach this work. Lisa, Dr. White, feel free. I feel like I'm talking a lot. If you guys want to chime in, feel free. But I do want to make sure that that is a part of this whole conversation as we move forward.

The other piece is I want to kind of get from you guys, and I know we don't necessarily have a chat box but if there is potentially something that you can think about if you're in a room with other folks, if you can kind of maybe think about this personally. But what does equity mean to you? Like what does that mean? What does the word mean? How do you embrace it? If it is a part of your overall agency, mission, or culture, or ideas, how do you all embrace operationalized equity within your programs?

Because it's important that you think about what that looks like. Again, in the Q&A, you can put something in there. If you have questions as well, you can put those into the Q&A box as well. We have a team of folks. We have a wonderful team who are behind the scenes that will be manning the Q&A box, and they have a lot of understanding and a lot of knowledge they bring too. If we aren't able to answer them live on air, we have a team of folks that will be able to answer those questions behind the scenes. In the interest of time though, I do want to move on to this.

There's a quote that is generally associated with Frederick Douglass. Until someone tells me different, Lisa, it is Frederick Douglass that said this, I was standing there when he said it. But the quote is, "It is easier to build strong children than to repair broken men." Literally, the first I ran across this quote like years ago, and it has been – it was a tagline on my e-mails like years ago. I still love this quote to this day. But again, if you know anything about Frederick Douglass, if you watched the documentary or read like the narrative, if you've read anything or know anything about Frederick Douglass, you understand that his journey to become a learned man, to become an educated man was not a traditional or what we would call the normal way that people would learn.

Of course, we know that Frederic Douglass was born a slave. He made his way to freedom, and I quote, "made his way to freedom." As he made his way to freedom, he took every opportunity he could to learn and master who we know today as Frederick Douglass who has basically counseled and shared thoughts and ideas with presidents. This person who was not formally educated was able to take those opportunities to gain experience. He had a few different inspirations and mentors along the way. But those folks that trained him, that gave him some of the information, the inspiration that he was given by his grandmother and by other folks, that actually turned him to where we are.

What we want to do in terms of a Head Start community, in terms of an early learning community, is really to inspire a new generation of leaders similarly to how Frederick Douglass was. Everyone doesn't come with the same background. There are some family upbringings and some cultural backgrounds that potentially could go a different way. Something that we, yourself may not be used to. But we have to understand that no matter what journey a person takes, there is a genius within every child and we have to respect that. We have to understand and respect that.

Part of our charge as the Head Start community is to learn, understand, and really respect and recognize all those backgrounds that come into our environments. We have to. As we do that, that really does. If we don't literally take for granted the fact that there is a genius within any child, a lot of this, a lot of the issues that we talk about on a daily basis really do go away because we do respect and understand the fact that there's a genius within all of those folks.

I want to go a little bit more into – a little deeper into the history, not to give you guys a history lesson but I think it is really important for us to kind of understand why we chose, why this particular topic at this particular time is really important aside from the climate and everything else. I think historically, there are a lot of different events, a lot of different cultures, a lot of different narratives that went into this process that we embarked upon back in 2013. Part of it is looking at the African American community in particular. Looking at the journey outside of slavery, beyond slavery, there is a huge narrative.

Prior to the civil rights movement, if we know that there were some challenges that this community faced, both intentional and unintentional that basically affected the community in general. As we know this, we know that historically the community was affected by policies, either to the Jim Crow era whether it's redlining and so forth, there were other issues around them not access the financial resources, mass incarceration. There were a number of different topics, theories, ideas, schools of thought that went into how the African American community became disenfranchised.

Part of it is us recognizing like the inadequate schools and some of the other topics that kind of as a result of what I just mentioned came out of those particular policies that we know that we have to literally focus on overcoming those deficits, as a community. Lisa, I wanted to kind of bring you in on this conversation because I know historically, you have a lot of background, you come with – of course, you have a background in early childhood education so you have your

own perspective on how this kind of impacts us. I want you to kind of weigh in on some of the history and what your impressions are.

Lisa: Thanks, Chris. I appreciate that elevation of history. At the Children's Equity Project, we really have dug into this a lot when we talk about the issues that we see now and the inequitable environments and inequities that we see for children, especially Black, Indigenous, and children of color. Chris, as we think about African American boys, we have to remember the impact that really it was 100 years of Jim Crow. I mean, 100 years. To the civil rights movement to mass incarceration, like you said, and all those other policies that really speak to African Americans' continued fight for social justice and equality. It is important to note that the African American community really made financial progress during the reconstruction era.

That was in many Black communities, like Tulsa, Oklahoma, that many of us have heard in the most recent year was elevated again. These communities were thriving across the country but after this decade of gains where were met racial violence around. Jim Crow really followed to almost nearly wipe away all of it. We have to understand of the wealth that was built following slavery and that was cut back and cut down with Jim Crow and other violence. I really want to elevate a point that you made, Chris, and that was when you have said the denial of financial resources, including education because it brings us back home as we're thinking about why talk about this and what all this means.

We really have to understand that it's been almost 60 years or 60-plus years following the landmark decision by the Supreme Court of Brown versus the Board of Education that really ruled Separate But Equal as unconstitutional. But today in schools, schools are even more racially, as well as economically segregated, by every measure really, Chris and William. What I mean by that is school facilities, qualified teachers, curriculum, and instruction. The schools that serve greater proportions of children and families who are experiencing poverty and children of color are far less resourced.

There was a recent report as of 2019 by the Learning Policy Institute that showed that on average school districts serving the largest concentrations of students of color receive approximately \$1,800 less per student in state and local funding and in state of local funding than those serving the fewest students of color. We can see the disparity right there. The divide in that funding really comes largely from reliance on property taxes like local property taxes. Districts with higher property values bring in more property tax revenues, and therefore, they're able to provide higher funding for schools in those districts than those districts that are less resourced. Those districts that are less resourced we know are serving a higher population of Black children and children of color.

While states have really tried to offset and typically do try to offset these disparities to some extent, they rarely provide equitable systems that can respond to children's needs. Even today, Chris and William, your ZIP code really is the half quality of the education you receive. I want to add that there are inequities in education environments and experiences for African American boys and children regardless of the family's income. I know we've highlighted income. But regardless of the income, and I know we're going to talk about that further in the webinar.

But I wanted to elevate that point because I want us to hold on to the thought that inequities exist for African American boys and families, even when their ZIP code changes, no matter their socioeconomic class. Yes, Chris, it's important to understand our nation's history of structural racism that has disadvantaged African Americans, Indigenous communities, and communities of color as the root of the inequities and the root cause of the inequities and the disparities that we see that are still perpetuated today, so that we can support Black boys' school readiness and success. The intentionality around it is critical for the success of our Black boys.

Chris: No, that answered very well, Lisa. I think part of what is worth underscoring, and I'm glad you mentioned it, is that regardless, even if you're in an affluent neighborhood, some of those inequities can still occur. I really do appreciate you underscoring that. I think that kind of segues into this conversation around equity. You guys have probably seen this illustration before. Now, I think it's a powerful illustration but I think that as we move from — along the years we've had different ideas of what "equity" look like. Of course, the one that's far left, we talk about equality and what that means and we talked about equity.

But honestly, we want to move to that far right where there's liberation to the point where there are conversations around removing the obstacles or those barriers in general. Again that people have access, that there is not what we call this inequity or this imbalance between the education in one ZIP code versus another ZIP code. I think this is important for us to think about that. When I definitely hear about how we address it within the context of Head Start service delivery, we want to definitely create this liberated type of approach where we are looking to, again, do the self-inventory, do that reflection so that we are removing as many obstacles as possible.

This illustration, again, just highlights how different communities have seen this conversation from their perspective. Again, from the equality perspective, the realistic perspective. I think folks have definitely seen it, especially if you are one of those communities that has been historically disenfranchised, your perspective on it may be different than others, but again, we want to make sure that we are at least understanding and compassionate enough to see how the other person, how someone else may see it from their background and from their point of knowledge.

Another quote I just wanted to kind of highlight to both Lisa and Dr. White is this whole notion of this culture. "The culture of the child can only enter the classroom once if it has entered the mind once it has entered the mind of teachers." I thought that was just a great quote. It really talks about how program leaders and education staff are taking interest in the child's lived experience. You really have to understand what the lived experience of the child and of the family is like, what they go through.

Young African American boys need to feel the warmth of the classroom, they really do. Whether, again, the classroom or the home, like whatever environment that you provide service, the child, the family has to feel the warmth, they have to feel this compassionate nature of the child. Oftentimes we know everybody, and I've seen a bunch of documentaries, and everybody reflects on either this one teacher or this one school that has such an amazing

impact on their life. We want to elicit those type of emotions when once a child and family leave whatever building or whatever program that you operate, you want them to have that feeling or that impression of what it feels like to have to know what equality and compassion and empathy feels like. Again, that's the behavior, that's the goal that we all want to shift forward.

How it started? I'm going to give a little more history. I'm going to allow everyone to kind of weigh in if necessary. But I think how it started was thinking about just going to the background of this project, this SSRSYAAB Project started a while ago. Since early 2000, there were a lot of studies, honestly, a lot of studies on how there were disparities in preschool education particularly. Dr. Walter Gilliam who is a professor of child psychiatry and psychology at Yale University has done a really well-known – like if you guys have been in and around any Head Start academia, Dr. Walter Gilliam is really, his research is really held in high regard because he's really taken a lot of time to look at some of the disparities in how young African American boys are treated versus other populations.

One of the conversations that came up a lot was there were really three risk factors on how Black children, Black boys in particular are treated in regards to suspension and expulsion rates because that's something tangible, that's a real number that you can associate because you can actually literally sift through the data to see if there were any disparities. That work was done. One of the three risk factors that came up consistently in his work was being big, being Black, and being a boy. I'll repeat them. Being big, being Black, and being a boy. The reason why I highlight that is because there were other studies that kind of show like there is this adultification of Black boys. They are seen sometimes, oftentimes, older than what they actually are. They are oftentimes seen as aggressive.

Sometimes these preconceived notions or these unconscious or maybe even conscious biases enter into a classroom, enter into an education setting. What does that result in? That results in Black boys being suspended and/or expelled more frequently than any other race or ethnicity. This work that we started back in 2013 that had resulted in a series of some products, some deliverables for the Head Start community, that was predicated on a lot of what I just referenced in other studies, other research that really kind of looks at and tackles this particular topic.

We want to make sure that the equity and that our lens, our compassion, our work with young children, that equality that we all aspire to extends to every race and population, especially young African American boys. There's not a disparity regardless of ZIP code, regardless of how tall the little boy is, how young he is, how old he is, how darker skin he is, it doesn't matter. We are extending the same level of equality to all children because we respect the background and their funds of knowledge. That's part of the conversation. I wanted to highlight that because as we think about this project, we want to be as culturally responsive and strength-based as possible. That mindset has to really infiltrate everything that we did.

Head Start saw an opportunity to address this concern by raising awareness and really strengthening the capacity of our staff about the unique needs of boys, Black boys particularly, and their families. The project produced a guide back in 2014. It was Supporting the School Readiness and Success in Young African American Boys, it's called Reflections on a Culturally Responsive Strength-Based Approach, that was the subtitle. It was informed by research subject matter expert consultation. It was feedbacked in Head Start and other childcare they have. It was really the compilation of a lot of well-intentioned, highly educated folks that came together to put together this guide to hopefully inform the field, to really support the field in, again, supporting school readiness of African American boys.

That part of the conversation I think, is important for us to understand. I know we've spent a lot of time going through history but I don't want us to lose why this is important. The why is as important as what we do. As we think about it, I wanted to be the beginning, a novel run of the series of webinars that we thought it was important to kind of lay the groundwork and give you guys the context in terms of why we are doing this before we jump into what we jump into. Lisa, Dr. White, if you don't mind, I want to show you a little something real quick. I think this video is really going to set the stage to give us a little bit more background on the why. I'll hopefully share a personal note there. I think this is a good clip honestly. I think this is a good clip to kind of share with you some of the other folks who had a real good hand in making this idea come to life.

[Video begins]

Man #1: The project is an effort to help programs realize the importance of focusing on young African American boys.

Chara Taylor: Real conversations are not easy conversations. Nothing is going to be better if we don't want to have real conversations.

Man #2: Black boys can develop a little differently, think a little differently, they thrive a little differently, but particularly Black boys, I think run into the challenges that could stifle them and put out their light.

Man #1: I see this as an opportunity for growth, an opportunity to empower yourself, and an opportunity to really improve your program.

Woman #1: What Black boys need today is attention, love...

Lisa: Black boys need love.

Woman #1: ...and just to know that they are important.

Woman #2: They need to be seen and we need to be able to give them whatever supports they need.

Woman #1: Yeah, that's what they need.

[Video ends]

Chris: Lisa, I love it. I'm loving the cameo that you gave us in there. That was wonderful. I think it was a great clip. Honestly, I think it really does set the stage. You saw Edward Young in there, he's in Region 5. I think it was his setting up of the work and his background kind of providing a little bit of context and there are some of the other folks that really are in the field, on the ground, they understand the importance of it.

I think one of the ladies is talking about Black boys need love. It is really thinking about what we can do to make all of our children successful. But again, focusing on young African American boys, making sure that we do everything we do to make sure the entire population of the folks that we serve thrive and succeed. Lisa, did you want to add anything?

Lisa: I just was going to add real quick, Chris, that Region 5 has been at this work since the very beginning. That video that they saw reflects the work that they have had with the community of practice with their recipients for eight years now. They're embarking on other communities of practice, engaging everyone, all voices at the table to show the importance and their commitment to this work. I just wanted to add that.

Chris: No, I appreciate that. That actually gives us the opportunity really to jump into really what the Six Essential Equitable Practices are. As you can see on your screen, they are, of course, we have build relationships; communicate high expectations for learning; promote social and emotional development; create learning environments with a focus on play and active learning, including literacy; implement developmentally appropriate curriculum and instruction; and, of course, strengthen home-program partnerships.

That strengthen home-program partnerships is something that we're going to tackle in one of the ensuing webinars but I think is important to underscore because, again, this work is predicated on I think the wonderful thing that I've loved about Head Start, Lisa and Dr. White, is the fact that when we actually work with children, we don't work with children in isolation, we work with their families so that partnership between the home and program is essential, it's critical to the success of it. I think that is important that we underscore that. I think that is worth kind of highlighting.

Lisa, moving forward, I do want to tackle some of these. This is really going to set the groundwork for the upcoming webinars. We're going to dig a little bit deeper. We do want to share with you, again, the equitable practices. But from the context of giving you an overview, and then as we move forward, we'll kind of dig a little deeper. But I think honestly, what we want to do is get you familiar with this 2014 guide and some of the resource that have come out subsequently.

Really help you understand why this is important and why this should be something that, number one, your region, and your program should adopt and really take seriously regardless of how many African American boys you have in your program. I think these essential practices are solid enough that you can implement with many populations. We want to make sure that

this is an important piece. Then, of course, the strategy guide and the resource and initiatives are going to be a part of this, and that will be shared as well. We'll make sure we'll get that information to you as we move forward. Moving forward, let's talk about building relationships, Lisa. I think part of the conversation around building relationships is understanding that this is a multi-generational program. I'll kind of give you my background, Lisa, and you know this.

I was a Head Start director in a couple of different settings. One was a much smaller program, about 350 children roughly, and then I was in a much larger program. What I know about this multi-generational piece is that serving different ethnicities we know that you can have anybody dropping off a child, an uncle, a grandparent, a neighbor. We recognize that Head Start particularly has the reach to touch a whole community whether it's incidentally or on purpose. We know that there is a lot of folks that can be touched by a Head Start program.

Since we don't work in isolation, it's important for education staff to build these relationships with families just to better understand their culture, their lived experience, to really understand and appreciate those folks that come into our programs as human, that recognize the humanity in all children, in all families. It's important that we do so. This includes like the child's growing sense of their identity as well. Lisa, I want to kind of ask you, as you see this strategy with supporting African American boys like how do you factor in this building relationships piece?

Lisa: Great question, Chris. I want to just elevate too that the strategies that you just saw on that prior slide, the six that we're talking about were a part of the original work in 2013/2014 but have been re-surfaced and re-published in this new strategies guide that really put a frame around equity and really embed equity into the conversation in a deeper level. I just wanted to elevate that. When it comes to building relationships, Chris, I think you said it. Children, we know that children learn best. In the context of secure, trusting relationships and interactions with adults that shape their growing sense of identity, as you said, and belonging within a community. '

Equally important to that is also it helps to shape their own belief in themselves as learners. How children see themselves as learners. Those relationships really do begin at home with the families. As you said, Chris, all family members and how that plays out in African American communities, uncles, brothers, fathers, all those male and female members of the family, aunts that play a roll. That's all rooted in culture. I've heard it said before that culture is a lens that really shapes the rules of relationships that enable children to develop and make sense of their world.

To foster relationships it is important that teachers, family childcare providers, and all education staff and leaders really get to know the family's culture. You've kind of alluded to this, Chris. What I want to say is beneath that surface level of culture, we know about, we can talk about traditions, we can talk about holidays but we need to understand the deeper levels of culture, like families' views on childrearing. Their notions of self, how they support their children's sense of identity as Black, as African American males, and other aspects of culture.

Those are the deeper aspects of culture that really provide that important information as well as cues that help teachers, and education staff, and home childcare providers to incorporate that culture into the learning environment, into learning centers. Learning becomes more meaningful. A teacher or a family childcare provider might ask a parent, Chris, or Dr. White, what can I tell you or what can you tell me rather about your child so that I can be the best teacher or caregiver to work in partnership with you, to support his development and learning. For an older child, we might ask the parent, what are your child's strengths?

What do you see as his strengths? Then build, and then learn how to build on those strengths to support learning and development. The development and learning we know can only take place in environments that are built around relationships. Literacy, math, science, none of that can start until a relationship is formed. When children know that there are people who care for and about them. This kind of creates that reciprocal relationship with families. I know Dr. Gilliam once said, and I love this when he said this that he never met a child who was suspended or expelled where a teacher and a parent like each other. How about that? That's powerful. Relationships matter. Relationships really matter, Chris.

Chris: I think that's a great point. I do remember that. I think part of the conversation is, again, us really being reflective and understanding what our role is. I think that is, again, why we came up with those community norms so that we can literally take the opportunity to be honest with ourselves, to be transparent enough to either communicate it with ourselves or just be honest with ourselves in terms of how we approach the work, how we approach individual families. Thank you for highlighting that.

I want to jump to the next slide because I know we don't have so much time left. I also want to allow Dr. White to kind of chime in as well on some of these topics. One of the second topics that we talked about was communicating high expectations for learning. I think it's important too, Lisa and Dr. White, I think as we talk about setting the expectation, thinking about regardless of ethnicity, regardless of gender, when we see challenging behaviors, Black boys are, of course, more likely to be suspended or expelled.

We really thought about how can we change the dynamic. I know part of this conversation, you Dr. White as an educator, Lisa, your experience, of course, in early childhood, we all think about what were some inspiration that you may have had in your personal life? Thinking about those as you visit classrooms or you've been in and out of programs, who are those folks that did it really well? Like what does that look like? I oftentimes like to think about my mom, like I think about my mother was like the first Black graduate from Tulsa University.

When I think and reflect on my mom, she was number one, the first Black graduate in our family. Secondly, she was an educator. I've got no shorts, like literally. There was an expectation set for me and there was no way that I was going to underperform, trust me. There is power in this setting high expectations. I just want you guys to kind of weigh in on that if you need to. Also, I want to, Dr. White, as we move forward, I want to have you weigh in on the next one as well but feel free to weigh in on the high expectations and when we get to the next slide on the promotion of social and emotional development.

William: No, I concur with you. My mom was an educator as well. It's about when you're in the same school building as your mother for several years of your life, you have no outs. But I think the one thing that I really think about is the research behind that of who has high expectations for Black males. I share with a lot of my teacher-educators that, the study showed that white females have lower expectations from Black kids. I said, "are you part of the study or do you want to be the change. Are you going to be the one to make this Black boy feel even better about himself?" What does that look like? I've really taken that research to practice and then the reality of what we're trying to do here of having those high expectations is so serious. Thank you so much, Chris, for allowing me to share.

Chris: No worries. I want you guys to weigh in on this. Again, one of the next slides I want you to input on is talking about this whole notion around promotion, the promotion of social and emotional development. We know that because we talk about some of the challenges that the African American community kind of experiences on a day-to-day basis, we know that other families due to either structural or maybe systemic issues, they may be different.

Again, you may have a white teacher who is in the classroom with a predominantly Black or African American community and hence there are going to be some African American boys, how do you – and I love the way you framed it like, do you want to be part of the study or do you want to be part of the change? I love that. I love the way you couched that. Thinking about how that is, thinking about the instances of Black children that come from single-parent households, and so forth, like how do we in terms of, how do you promote the development, social and emotional development? What other strategies should we use? What do you think? What's your perspective on that?

William: I really feel you and Lisa hit it on the first part by building of relationships. I was in special education where we had to have some real conversations sometimes because people were like I don't want my child to be identified with a special need. I had to build those relationships to understand these are supports that help your child succeed and this is not somewhere they have to stay. Also thinking about the social-emotional component when it comes to just the Black family and the Black boy, we have to understand, we've got to stop telling them to stop crying. We've got to tell them to stop being tough. Like some of the things we say to these students are like problematic to our young Black boys because it's replicated when they go to the classroom.

I think really taking that approach of like helping teachers be more culturally responsive to social-emotional development over our Black boys, understanding that their social-emotional wellbeing and the way that they protrude or they express their feelings is going to be different than the other students. Having that understanding of helping them be more conscious of what's going on will really reflect on how students will no longer be pushed out of school or suspended. I think there's a lot that we have to do there.

Chris: I agree with you. That is a good segue into the next strategy. The next strategy talks about creating this play-based active learning environment that includes literacy. One of the things that we know and, like to engage, and, again, my own experience, my own lived

experience. We know that this active hands-on engagement really is I think critical for any early childhood environment, honestly. Especially when you're talking about boys and particularly African American boys, we think it's a very useful tool to really develop the social, physical, and also language skills.

Black boys need physical play, boys, in general, need physical play. We know that these hands-on activities are really critical, especially in the field. I mean, I know you guys as seasoned educators know that. I know I'm preaching to the choir. Lisa, in your experiences working in the ECE field, how do you encourage educators to use physical activity to reinforce some of the social and emotional goals or skills that we want to see as a result of their involvement in the program?

Lisa: That's a great question, Chris. I think it's about having a conversation about it. Really dialoguing about the importance of that open-ended hands-on activity and play-based opportunities for children. What we do know is when you're saying that a boy's fine motor, movement is important for all children, but research shows that the spatial capabilities are a little more pronounced in young male brain development. Diagrams, pictures, objects moving through space, they provide that spatial mechanical stimulation that boys need and that they're more prone to in their learning. I say always allow enough time, for physical activity to incorporate movement into daily practices.

If you're reading a book, let them act out characters or pretend they're flying a plane. Allow for movement during that time, engage them in the read-aloud to start acting out. Alternate quiet and physical, active time. One teacher used yoga and she put pictures of yoga stances on the wall. During transition time, children who typically stand straight, stand in line, we do that to kids, and then boys end up being the ones that are pointed out and targeted, but this allows children to move their bodies and to get in the stance when they learn these stances.

Using that time to allow for movement. If they need to sit quietly, use squeeze balls or other manipulative objects. For some boys, that might really help. I know that many of you have examples that you probably use on your own to support that social cognitive, the language, literacy, and math, and those physical skills, and all those areas of domains of learning, feel free to include them in the Q&A if you'd like. But, yes, continuing to be intentional about it, I think is really what it is. We as women because we're in an environment that's very heavily feminized, 90% of women in early childhood, we need to step back and really make space for that and be intentional around it.

Chris: Absolutely. No, thank you for that. I think part of what you mentioned is, again, just that like recognizing that this industry has a certain demographic. How do we encourage maybe other men to be a part of the program, how do we encourage, how do we leverage the family to be a part of the process? I think that's really, really important.

Thanks for underscoring that. One of the things that I think would be the last topic, I think, one of the last strategies is really thinking about the curriculum and instruction and how we use it. Number one, the selection of it but, again, how it's implemented within the program. We know

that these practices are rooted in caring relationships with the teacher and with even the family childcare providers. We know that there is this relationship between them, the children, the family that that setting is important.

The home visitors even have a responsibility, and really because they go into the actual homes, they even have more responsibility to implement and have that level of compassion going into these environments to make sure that they're supporting families in the best way that they should. I want to ask you though; how should we use data in the implementation of either implementing or selecting or even thinking about how instruction is being delivered? Like how do we use data in maybe answering some of those questions?

Lisa: When I think of data too, I think of we often use observation and assessment tools, where we make a notation about how children are engaging in the curriculum. I think we can be a little more open to thinking of other data that informs us of how well children are engaging in their cultural ways of knowing and being, using culture, and opening up opportunities to observe children in non-traditional settings. How are children using their knowledge and their culture, their funds of knowledge in play environments?

How are you setting up opportunities to do that? The three core considerations, Chris, for developmentally appropriate practice is really about that teachers need to use as they think about making decisions where they might be collecting data about, one, what they know about child development. We talked about adultification. Are there things that you're putting in the environment that are not really age-appropriate for children either three, two, four, infants?

Because of the age estimations or over-estimations, we might not be setting up environments that are appropriate, developmentally appropriate. We also need to know what we know about the individual child. How do you set up individual opportunities to see what children know, what they can do, set challenging, yet achievable goals, and use that data that is not just scripted but other ways that you can see children playing that out?

That third consideration is what you know about the social and cultural contexts of a child. All those considerations can really help you as you think about using data and collecting it in ways where children can really show what they know by setting up opportunities for them to play that out based on their cultural ways of knowing and being. I think that kind of goes back a little bit in that conversation.

Chris: No, I appreciate that. I want to ask William something real quick about the next slide but I want to just kind of highlight that there are these wonderful conversations happening in the Q&A, in the question and answer box, so shout out to all the folks that are manning that. I think there's a real conversation going on right now. But, William, I want to transition with you real quick and ask you to kind of talk about this home-program partnership.

We know that, for this is what we know. I've been in Head Start in and around early childhood for about 20 years now. I started when I was a boy. Don't worry about that, don't do the math yet. But the point is that we know that literally within this conversation, there are a lot of conversations that we know happen because there is this partnership. We know that there is either some sort of connection between the program and the family. The level or depth of the partnership may vary but we know that it's baked into the bread that literally there's some sort of home-program partnership.

Outside of creating a community of learners in a classroom, group socialization programs have been successful when they do early childhood as a co-equal partnership. We realize that there is not the family brings their funds of knowledge and then, of course, the classroom, there are folks that have been classically trained in early child education, the marriage of those two schools of thought is really where the magic happens. I want you to talk to me, your experience about home program partnerships, why that's important, and what's been your experience?

William: I really appreciate the question. I think going back to the understanding we have to understand who are your customers. Because your children, they're the customers, they're the ones that are coming to you every day, and they're eating up, they're buying what you're giving them. But if you don't understand where your customers are coming from, you don't know how to engage them. Thinking about from a cultural perspective of understanding like who are my families in my classroom, how can I make this feel like a safe environment?

We have to really take a step back and understand that a lot of the parents also have endured trauma going to school. Now we're asking them to come back and they're deploying the kid to this school because they have no other option like what do we do? Making it seem like a safe environment for, not only the children, but the parents. The parents listen to kids. If the kids love you, the parents will love you. It's quick — it's an easy formula. Once you get to the heart of the kid. Understand there's a lot that goes into but I think really understanding the cultural perspective of your parents and making sure that they're in the classroom in some way, shape, or form and inviting them into your classroom really helps that home partnership work out.

Chris: Got you. No, I appreciate it, Dr. White. I think part of the conversation that we know there's a lot that goes into supporting children in general, but when we particularly talk about African American boys, the conversation can be nuanced because everyone brings their own perspective to it. When we think that these strategies are a solid set of strategies that can be implemented across the board, that will support the school readiness of all African American boys.

We have made it available to, again, there's been a lot of conversation at the Q&A widget so we invite you to continue doing that. We are, of course, going to try to capture and curate those questions. Hopefully, that will inform these upcoming sessions. We want to make sure that this school of work, this body of work is really, as supportive to you all in your efforts as possible.

I want to take my hat off to both Lisa and Dr. White for bearing with me for like the last hour or so. I want to thank everyone that had a role — the contributors, the editors, the authors,

everybody that had a role in this work. I think this is really, really important and amazing work. We want to make sure that the momentum and this conversation continues beyond the 60 minutes. From my living room to yours, I want to make sure that everybody has a great day. Thanks again, Lisa Gordon and Dr. William White, for joining us today. It was an amazing conversation. I really, really appreciate everything that we had – the conversation that we had today.

Lisa: Thanks, Chris. Thanks, everyone.