

THE UNIVERSITY OF NORTH CAROLINA AT CHARLES HILL

# Strategies to Help Every Child Fly in Inclusive Early Childhood Classrooms and Programs

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 Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

Presentation for Early Childhood Investigations Webinar  
 October 25, 2023



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SPEAKERS

Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka  
 &  
 Jani Kozlowski



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## Honoring Native Lands

I acknowledge that I live, work, and build my families' economic wealth on the Lumbee tribe taken through colonization and attempted eradication by settlers.

LUMBEE TRIBE provides programs and services to all tribal members within the areas of Cumberland, Hoke, Robeson, and Scotland Counties in NC.



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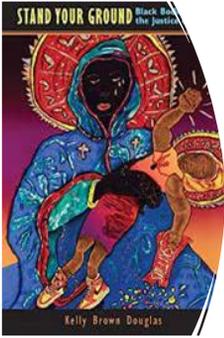
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## Honoring Black Bodies

- Many parts of the US were built by enslaved Africans and their enslaved descendants, and only within the past generation were Black people afforded full rights.
- Today, Black individuals and People of Color disproportionately work as service staff across the country. This community is largely responsible for the maintenance of our daily lives, the food and food service available, child care, health care, and many other basic necessities that make our lives easy. The wealth of our nation is due to the forced free labor of these Africans.

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- ✓ Consider the **intersectionality** of race + ability.
- ✓ Advancing equity must address **equitable access, supports, and experiences**.
- ✓ We must engage in **R.I.C.H.E.R. actions** to change the research paradigm.
- ✓ We are on a **journey**, so continue to read, engage, lean in, and be accountable...doing nothing is condoning racism.



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## Intersection of Racism and Ableism

- racism operated on **inferiority** based on the shape of the skull and gave rise to enslavement
- enslaved people were **maimed** and **disabled** to prevent them from running away or discourage behaviors that slaveholders considered defiant
- enslaved people that ran away were said to have **mental illness** that caused them to runaway



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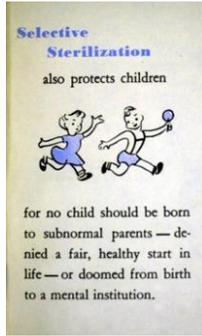
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LET'S NOT IGNORE THE PAST OR HISTORY

The Intersection of Racism and Ableism

- 1900s eugenics movement that came from Great Britain to the U.S. encouraged the birth of "good" genetic stock and **sterilization of others, including individuals with mental illness, those who were poor, and those accused of sexual promiscuity and sexual criminality.**
- Courts that deemed women mentally defective were sterilized.
- In 1960s, more than 85% of those sterilized in NC were Black women




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Racism, Ableism, and Policing

*"Freddie Gray, Laquan MacDonald, Kevin Matthews, Tamir Rice, Eric Garner, Charleena Lyles, Sandra Bland, Quintonio LeGrier, Stephon Watts, Korynn Gaines, Natasha McKenna, Eric Smith, and Daniel Prude are all Black, disabled victims of state violence. In the United States, 50 percent of people killed by law enforcement are disabled, and more than half of disabled Black people have been arrested by the time they turn 28—double the risk in comparison to their white disabled counterparts."*

~ Vilissa Thompson, 2021

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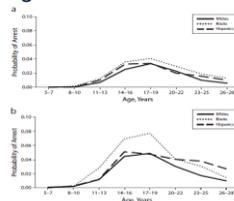
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Racism, Ableism, and Policing

- those with disability have higher probability of arrest
- Black people with disability were disproportionately likely to be arrested
- disability gap larger for Black females than males, but arrest higher for Black males



Source: McCabe, E. J. (2017). The Cumulative Probability of Arrest by Age 28 Years in the United States by Disability Status, Race/Ethnicity, and Gender. *American Journal of Public Health*, 107(12), 1977-1981. <https://doi.org/10.2195/ajph.2017.304095>

Note: Age-specific probabilities averaged in groups of 5 years.

Source: <https://www.ukhsa.gov.uk/about-us/press-releases/2019/04/2019-04-23-people-with-mental-health-problems-national-longitudinal-survey-of-youth-1997>, United States, 1997-2004




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# Why should these adult findings matter for you/us and practice?

hmmmm...



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Equitable access, support, experiences, and outcome matter for children's early years and later life outcomes.

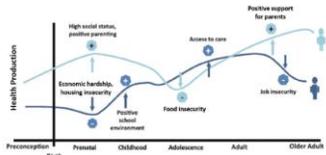


FIGURE 1.1 Variable health trajectories. Life course approach. NOTE: This figure includes several examples; however, there are many other variables that impact health trajectories (see Chapter 3). SOURCE: Adapted from Hallon et al., 2014.

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## Fact Sheet: Advancing Racial Equity in Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education

Revised online at <https://www.ecta.org/resources/fact-sheet-advancing-racial-equity-2023>

The science is clear that the first years of children's lives set the foundation for their healthy development. A young child's race, gender, location, language, and ability should not determine their access to needed services, experiences, and outcomes. The fact sheet provides key information and supporting evidence about racial disparities and inequities for young children with a disability, and questions for state and local leaders seeking to advance equity for all children with disabilities and their families. What we know about equity or lack thereof, for early intervention (Part C) and early childhood special education (Part H, Section 2012) authorized under the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) needs further research. We have intentionally included research on school-age children with disabilities and on school-age children knowing there are insights and lessons for the early years.



- Fact sheet co-developed with national organizations
- Released in January 2023
- 10 Facts about racial disparities and inequities for young children with a disability
- Self-reflective questions for state and local leaders seeking to advance equity for all children with disabilities and their families



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**1. Access to early intervention and early childhood special education for eligible children is a civil right provided under the federal Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).**

While states, local, and lead agencies are primarily responsible for providing education and services for all children with disabilities, it is in the national interest that the federal government have a supporting role in assisting state and local efforts to educate and support children with disabilities in order to improve results for such children and to ensure equal protection of the law.<sup>1,2</sup> The purpose of IDEA is to protect the rights of children with disabilities and ensure that all children with disabilities have available to them a free appropriate public education that meets their unique needs in the least restrictive or in their natural environments to prepare them for further education, employment, and independent living.<sup>3,4</sup>

For early intervention, there is emphasis on building state capacity to provide quality services, identify, evaluate and meet the needs of all children, including historically underrepresented populations and expand options for children at risk of having substantial developmental delay.

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There are racial and economic disparities in access to early identification and special ed screening, id, and referral

Evidence shows racial disparities in developmental screening and early intervention referral and identification with these disparities getting larger over time. For example, the [2019-2020 State of Babies Yearbook 2021](#) shows the national average for toddlers ages 18-36 months who had received a developmental screening in the past year (i.e., 2020) is 32.5%. A racial comparison of this shows:

- 35.7% for White families;
- 27.9% for Hispanic families;
- 27.2% for Black families; and
- 26.1% for Asian families.

➤ Children of color (Black, Latine, Native American), children living in poverty, and children from families with limited English proficiency are less likely to access early intervention services and more likely to be identified later than White peers.

➤ Dismissal of parental concerns and abnormal screening results is often attributed to social risk rather than clinical for Black families

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October 2023

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Additional Data Could Help Early Intervention Programs Reach More Eligible Infants and Toddlers

**What GAO Found?**

- States and territories (states) use different definitions of "developmental delay" and different program eligibility criteria for their early intervention programs, which serve infants and toddlers with disabilities from birth through age 2.
- When asked to name their top challenges serving eligible families, 48 states identified a lack of qualified service providers, and 23 cited staffing challenges at the state level.
- 53 percent of children referred for Part C services ultimately enrolled.



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Horizontal lines for notes

Social stratification of disability is leading to inequities in identification and services.

- Social stratification of disability where some categories are considered low-status and viewed as not valued by society and leading to fewer resources and supports compared to high-status categories.
- Though more Black and Hispanic children receive services under IDEA Part B compared to White and Asian children, disparities exist with the eligibility categories.
- National data show that Black and Hispanic children with disabilities are overrepresented in low-status categories, such as intellectual disability and emotional disturbance, and White students are overrepresented in high-status categories, such as attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder and autism.

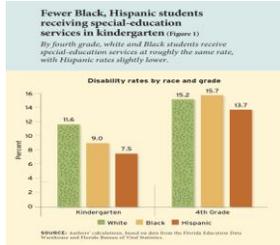


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Horizontal lines for notes

Racial disparities in SPED access & supports especially when considering context of learning.

- Black and Latine children less likely to receive special education in Kindergarten
- Black students are overrepresented in special education programs in schools where most students are White but underrepresented at schools with predominantly minority students



Source: Elder, T. E., Figlio, D., Imberman, S., & Persico, C. (2021). Segregation and racial gaps in special education. Education Next, 21(2).



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Horizontal lines for notes





**Equity Research Action Coalition**  
 UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

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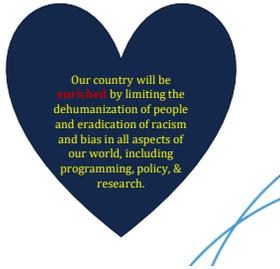
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### BE RICHER!

- Re-educate about history
- Integrate rather than just desegregate
- Critical consciousness
- Humility of privilege + Human Dignity
- Erase racism + other -isms
- Re-vision different ways & approaches + Radical mindset



**Equity Research Action Coalition**  
 UNC Frank Porter Graham Child Development Institute

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**Thank you!!**

<https://equity-coalition.fpg.unc.edu>

fpgequitycoalition@unc.edu



Iheoma U. Iruka, Ph.D.  
 LinkedIn/Twitter: @IheomaIruka




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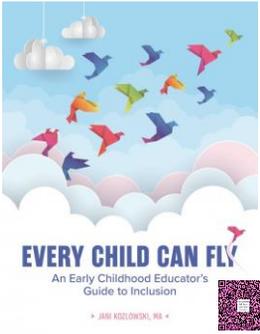
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**Moderated Conversation  
with Jani Kozlowski**




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**Inclusion Benefits....**

- Children with disabilities
- Children without disabilities
- Educators
- Systems

Yet.... we still have issues with access and equity

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### Issues of Access

- Number of young children with disabilities served in inclusive settings remains mostly unchanged since the passage of IDEA
- Fewer than half of young children ages 3-5 receive special education services in regular early childhood programs like child care, family child care, Head Start or PreKindergarten

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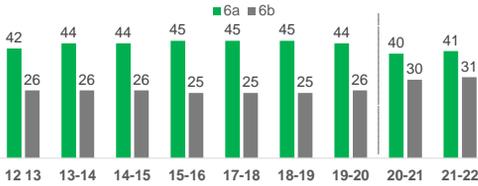
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National Early Childhood Environments (3-5) Percentages Over Time



SPP/APR Indicator 6a: Children attending a regular early childhood program (RECP) and receiving the majority of special education services in the program

SPP/APR Indicator 6b: Children who do not attend an RECP, who receive their special education services in a separate class, separate school or residential facility

Source: <https://data.ed.gov/dataset/idea-section-618-data-products-static-tables-part-b-count-environ-tables12/resources>

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### Issues of Equity

- Disparities in access to inclusive settings for children with certain disability categories
- Children of color are less likely to receive a developmental screening or obtain early intervention services
- Children of color overrepresented in certain categories in special education and more likely to be placed in segregated settings

Fact Sheet: Advancing Racial Equity in Early Intervention and Preschool Special Education - <https://ectacenter.org/topics/racialequity/factsheet-racialequity-2023.asp>

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**Physical environment**

space, equipment, and materials

**Social environment**

interactions with peers, and between adults and children

**Temporal environment**

sequence and length of routines and activities

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**Physical Environment**

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How can we support children to engage with materials in the physical environment?



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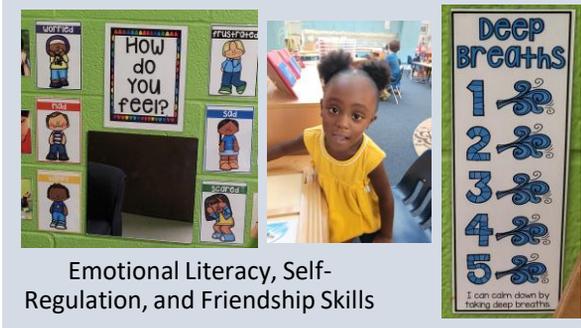
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Emotional Literacy, Self-Regulation, and Friendship Skills

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Temporal Environment

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Help with the Concept of Time

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**Varied Activity Levels**

**Large group & small group**

**Active with the body & active with the mind**

**Teacher led & child led** (mostly child led)



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**Jani Kozlowski, MA**

**EVERY CHILD CAN FLY**  
An Early Childhood Educator's Guide to Inclusion  
by JANI KOZLOWSKI, MA, Ed.S.

Gryphon House

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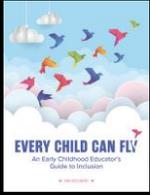
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[janikozlowski@gmail.com](mailto:janikozlowski@gmail.com)

<https://www.gryphonhouse.com/books/details/every-child-can-fly-an-early-childhood-educators-guide-to-inclusion>

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