

Building Bridges not Blocks: Creating Pathways to Listening and Responding to Families

Ohio State University October 8, 2021
2021 Symposium on Children



The BUILD Initiative

- Provides tailored and timely technical assistance to state agency leaders and the Leadership Team as defined in partner states.
 - State liaison who is an expert in early childhood systems building and, other experts in the field, on the range of the early childhood system.
 - Supports state agencies and division or departmental leaders working to ensure diversity and equity in all aspects of early childhood systems building.
 - Supports states in using the qualitative and quantitative data to inform and drive decision making, quality improvement, removal of barriers, and monitoring and distribution of state resources.
- Informs and influences state and national conversations and policy decisions by highlighting emerging issues, innovative approaches, best practices, and results from the field.
 - Facilitates learning communities that share the latest research and promising practices.
 - Serves as a knowledge broker by shining a light on promising early childhood systems efforts and highlighting new ideas and successful innovations.

Goals

- To **offer a framework and actions** for advancing equity for children and their families.
- To **provide practical steps** for creating feedback loops with families and communities.
- To consider how **family voice can impact** policy, practice and programs.



Structure of the Talk

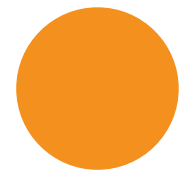
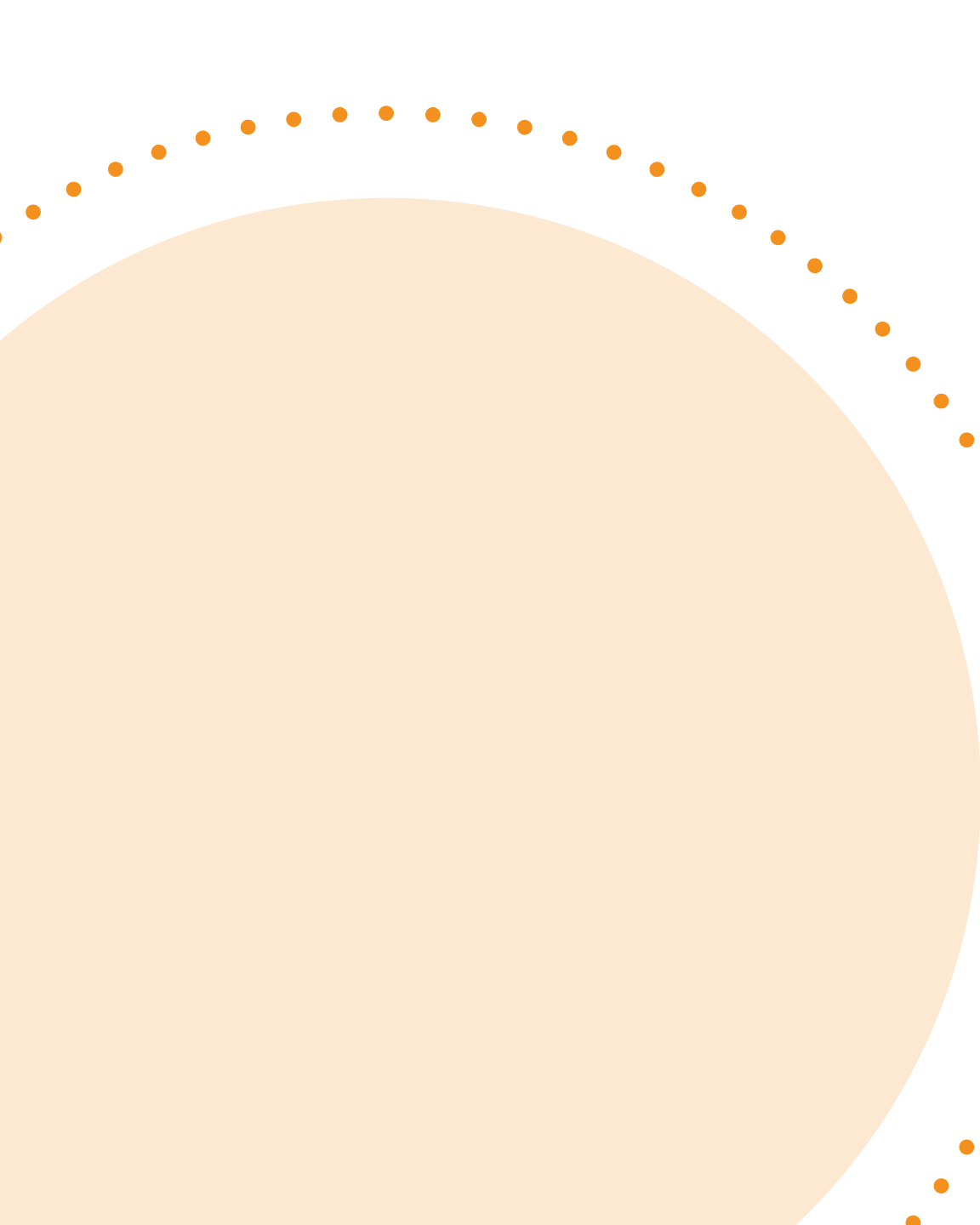
- Why seek family engagement and voice in policy
- Framework for Advancing Equity
- Process to Advance Equity
- Beneficiary and Community Voice
- Questions and Answers



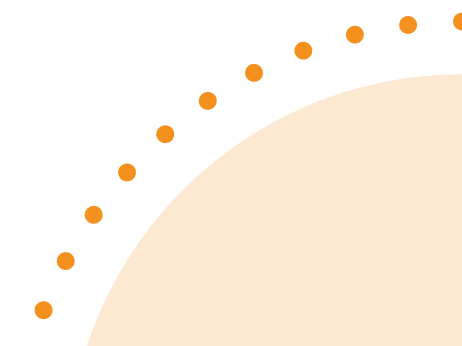
Commitments to the Equity Conversation

- Stay engaged.
- Experience discomfort.
- Speak your truth.
- Expect and accept non-closure.
- Assume positive intent.
- Own your own learning.
- Means of interaction must respect others “methods.”
- Other?
- Critical Thinking—look for what challenges your thinking rather than what confirms you are right.
- Humility—come as learner, not expert.
- Dialogue—think and make meaning together.
- Hope—believe that a better future is possible.

Source: “Courageous Conversations About Race: A Field Guide for Achieving Equity in Schools” (Chapter 4 pp. 58-65); Glenn Singleton and Curtis Linton. Corwin Press, 2006



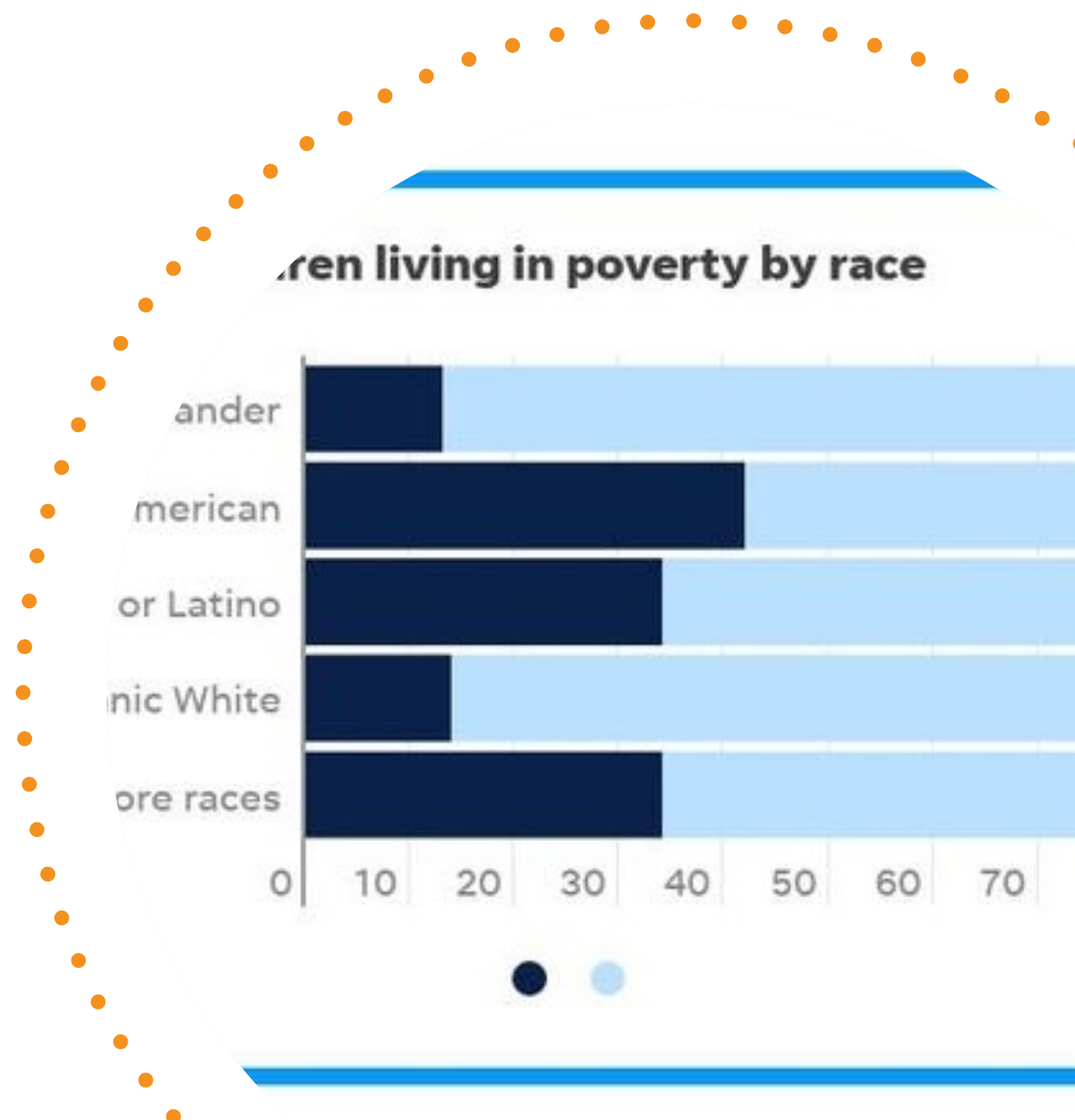
Why



Study: Life is improving for Ohio children, but not all of them

Source: Cincinnati Enquirer

(<https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2019/06/19/study-life-improving-ohio-children-but-not-all-them/1497802001/>)



Pandemic disparities mirrored pre-existing conditions for low-income families, minorities, report shows

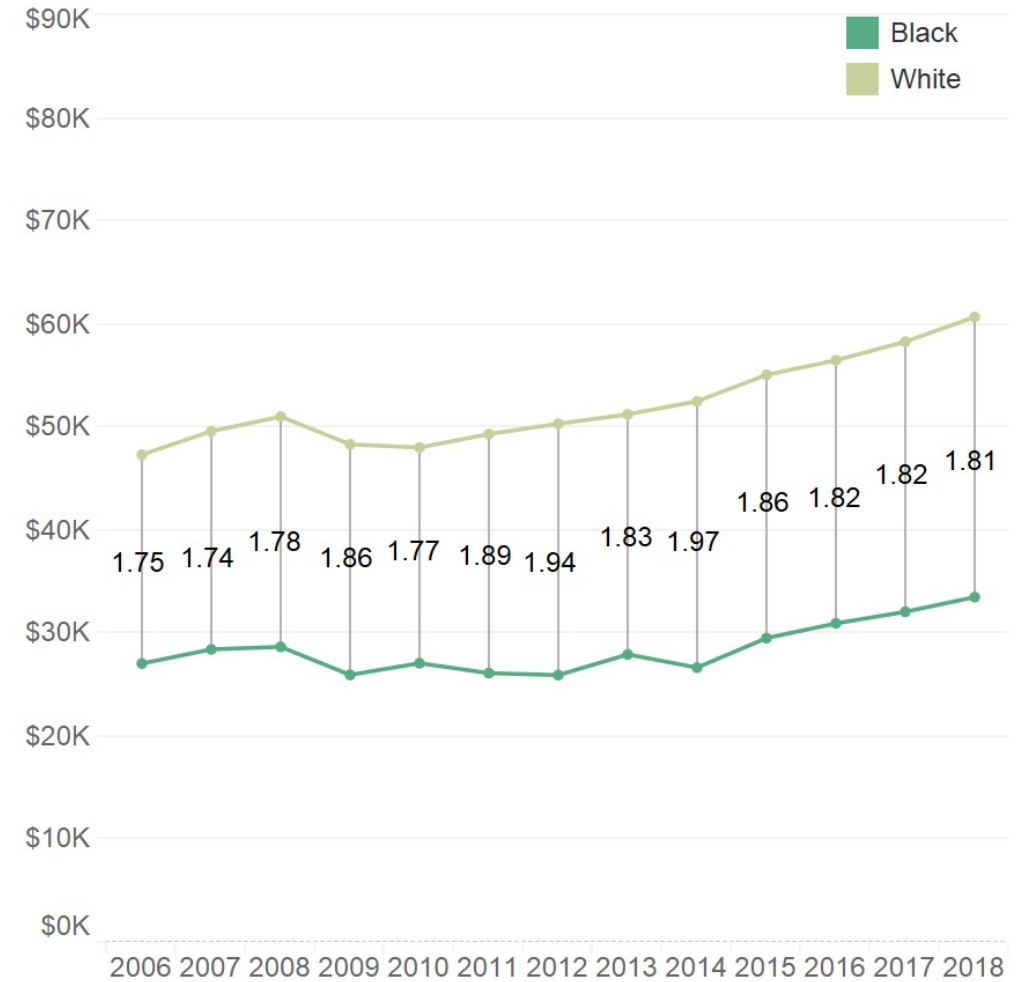
Source: Ohio Capital Journal

(<https://ohiocapitaljournal.com/2021/04/01/pandemic-disparities-mirrored-pre-existing-conditions-for-low-income-families-minorities-report-shows/>)



THESE FIVE CHARTS SHOW THE TRUE STRUGGLE FOR BLACK HOMEOWNERSHIP

Source: OHFA
(<https://ohiohome.org/news/blog/august-2020/racialinequality.aspx>)



"Report: Health Coverage Gaps Remain for Ohio's Hispanic Kids"

Source: Public News Service

<https://www.publicnewsservice.org/2016-01-15/childrens-issues/report-health-coverage-gaps-remain-for-ohios-hispanic-kids/a49890-1>

Build
INITIATIVE



This trail-blazing suburb has tried for 60 years to tackle race. What if trying isn't enough?

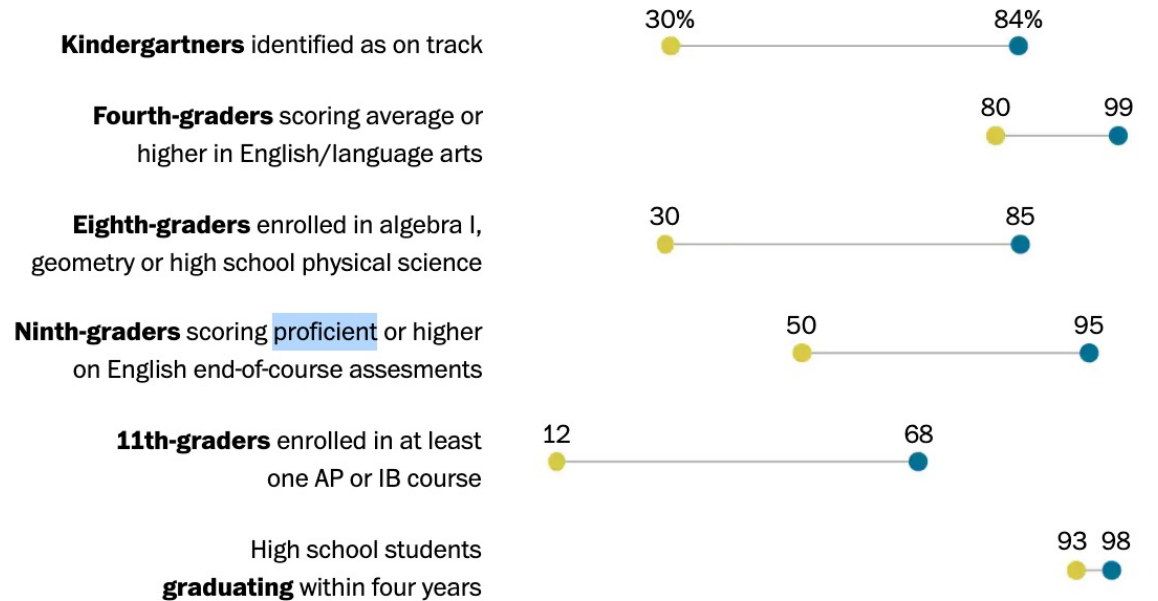
Source: Washington Post

(<https://www.washingtonpost.com/education/2019/10/11/th-is-trail-blazing-suburb-has-tried-years-tackle-race-what-if-trying-isnt-enough/>)



Racial achievement gaps in Shaker Heights schools

Share of **black** and **white** public school students, 2018-2019

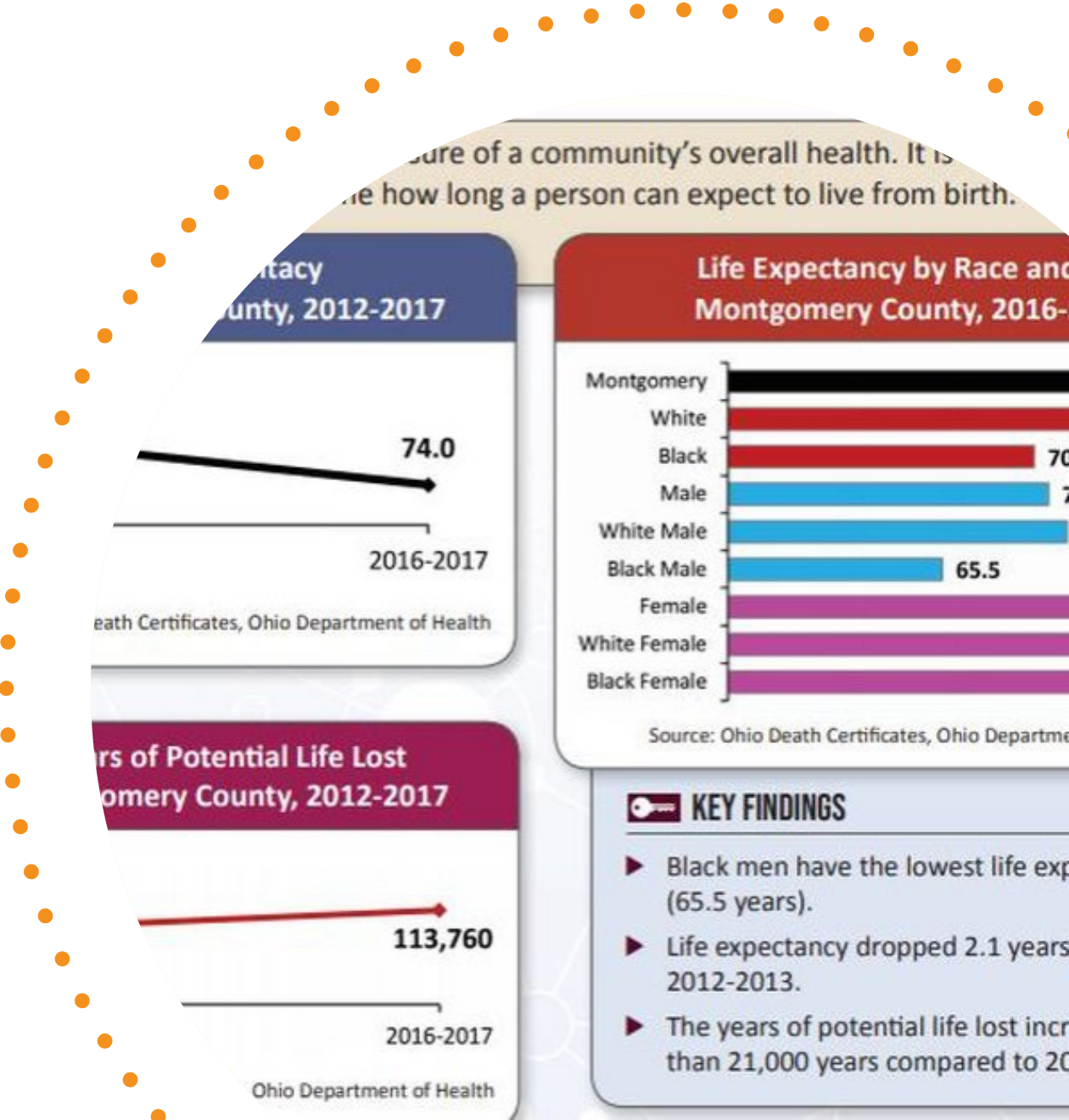


Source: Shaker Heights City Schools

KATE RABINOWITZ/THE WASHINGTON POST

Data shows inequities span cradle to grave for local Black residents

Source:Dayton Daily News
<https://www.daytondailynews.com/news/local/data-shows-inequities-span-cradle-grave-for-local-black-residents/bMFodC4xhIVGWBdiHrWYqJ/>



The Pandemic Only Compounded Child Care Woes in Ohio's Appalachia

Source: Cleveland Scene <https://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2020/09/21/the-pandemic-only-compounded-child-care-woes-in-ohios-appalachia>



Ohio Agencies Look to Reduce Racial Bias in Child Welfare

Source: <https://www.clevescene.com/scene-and-heard/archives/2020/07/07/ohio-agencies-look-to-reduce-racial-bias-in-child-welfare>



Poll 1

What is your “why” for wanting to engage with families and communities? Check all that apply

- Job responsibility
- Personal experience
- Moral responsibility
- Empathy and compassion
- Changing demographics
- Data or Current events
- Policy Mandates



Zip Codes and Opportunities: Race and Place

Children and families in urban, suburban, and rural “zip codes” do not have access to the opportunity structures that middle and upper-class children experience. The reduced opportunity structures available to children of color and in poverty shape their lives from birth to end of life.

- Systemic disinvestment in communities;
- Segregation by class and race and ethnicity;
- High poverty - low wealth
- Policies that perpetuate inequity (e.g., not financing needed high quality programs for all children)



OPPORTUNITY STRUCTURES NOT AVAILABLE TO ALL CHILDREN

- Employment: Adequate income, benefits, working conditions
- Environmental safety
- “Good” health
- Maternal and infant well-being; low-mortality
- High-quality nutrition
- High-quality early care and education and K-12 schools
- Post-secondary career prep.
- Technology access and support
- Housing security
- Child welfare involvement
- Criminal justice system fairness
- Freedom from fear

”

"If you have come to save me, you are wasting your time. But if you have come because somehow your liberation is wrapped up in mine, then let us work together."

Lila Watson

Australian Aboriginal Group



Framework

HISTORY

INTERNAL

Bias
Privilege
Internalized
Racism

EXTERNAL

Interpersonal
Institutional
Structural

**POWER
AND
ECONOMICS**

CULTURE

IDENTITY

Equity Leadership Proposition

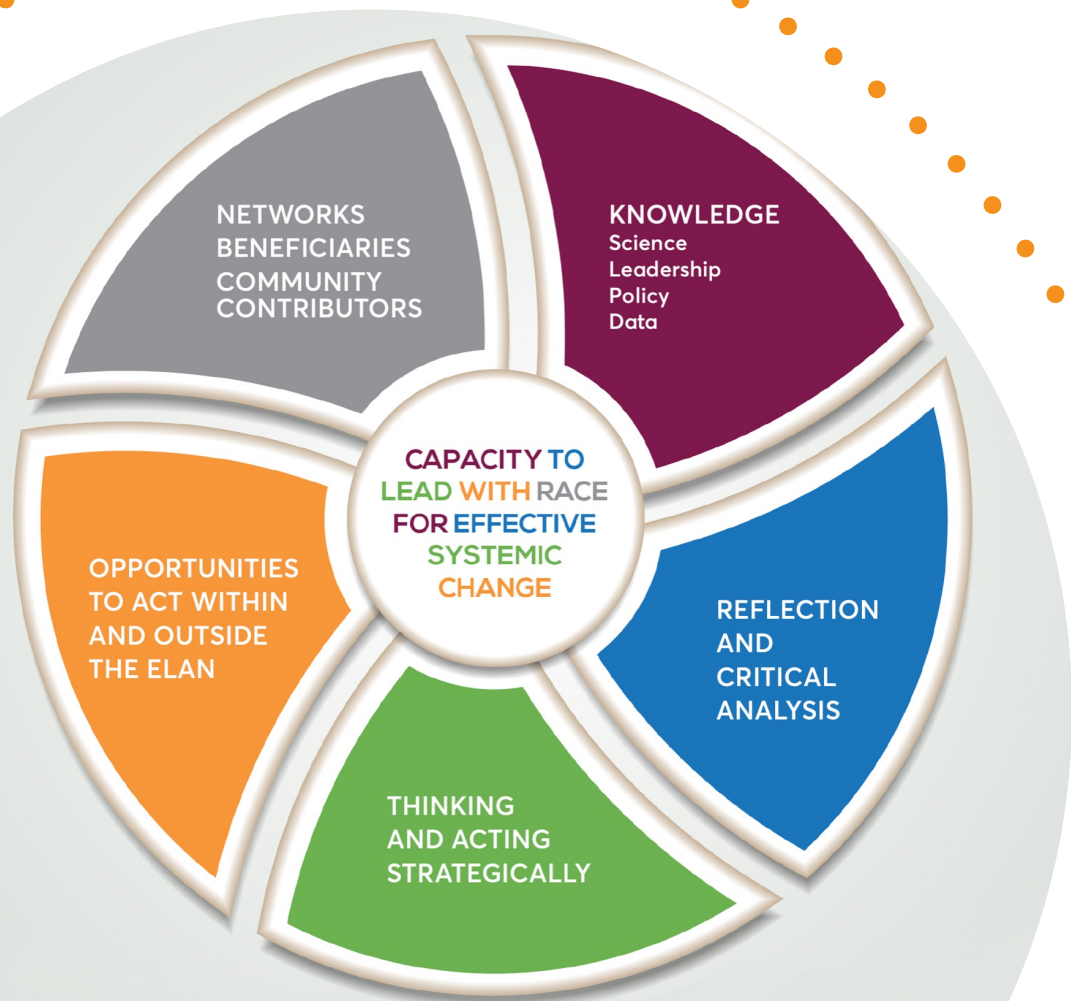
Ensuring racial and economic equity for young children including ensuring:

- (a) **Increasing opportunities for children and adults** who care for very young children of color and in poverty and
- (b) **removing barriers to those opportunities** that support optimal growth and development;
- (c) **that resources, burdens, and rewards are distributed in ways that remove and do not exacerbate inequities;** so that those with the greatest challenges are adequately maintained and not further disadvantaged; and
- (d) **Mechanisms are in place to determine who is advantaged and disadvantaged** by initiatives, policies and programs designed to advance equity and dismantle inequities.

Diversity, Inclusion and Equity



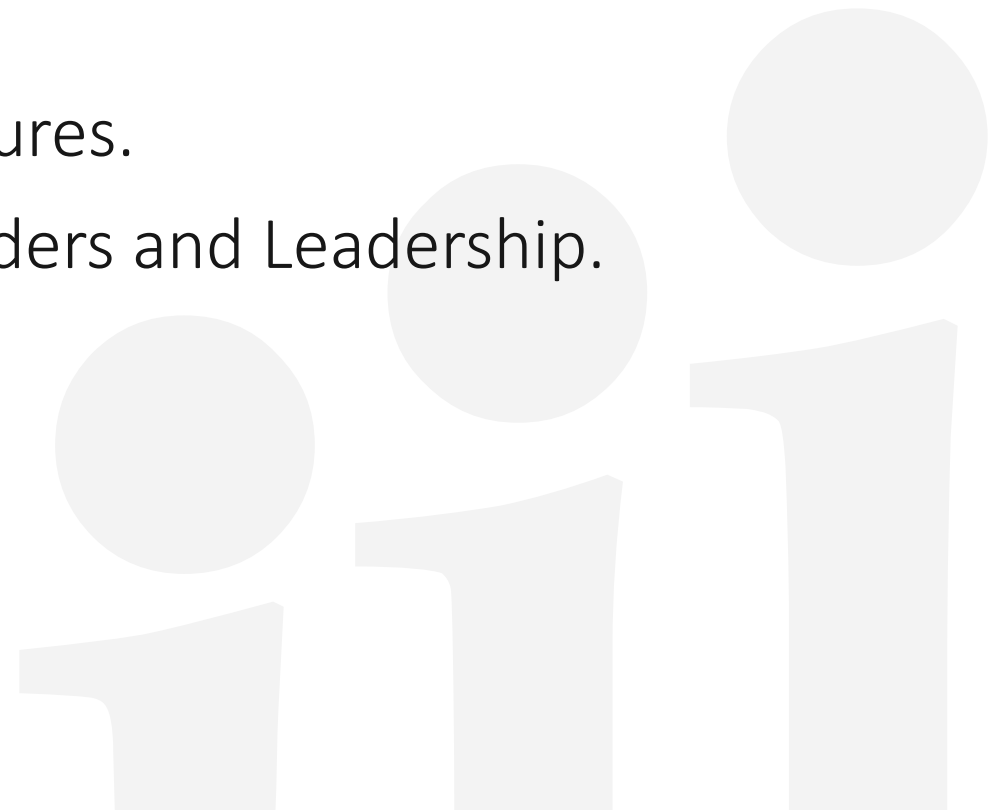
<https://medium.com/greater-good-studio/tips-to-operationalize-diversity-equity-inclusion-practices-in-your-non-profit-organization-ed2c7c09a7cf>

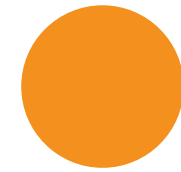


The Process

Five Characteristics of the Process for Leading for Equity

- Understanding root causes of inequity in early childhood systems
- Using Data: to plan, to decide, to monitor.
- Taking Action
- Working with people, programs, and structures.
- Roles, Responsibilities and Influence of Leaders and Leadership.

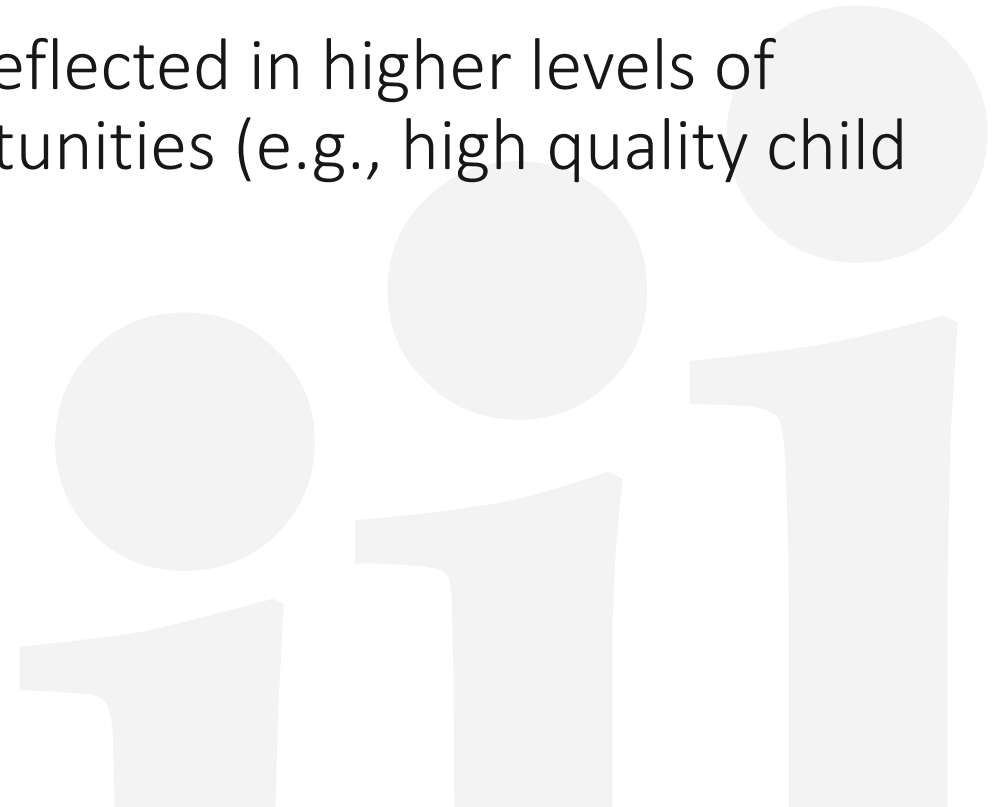




Understanding Root Causes

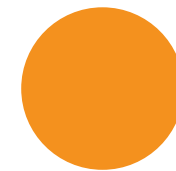
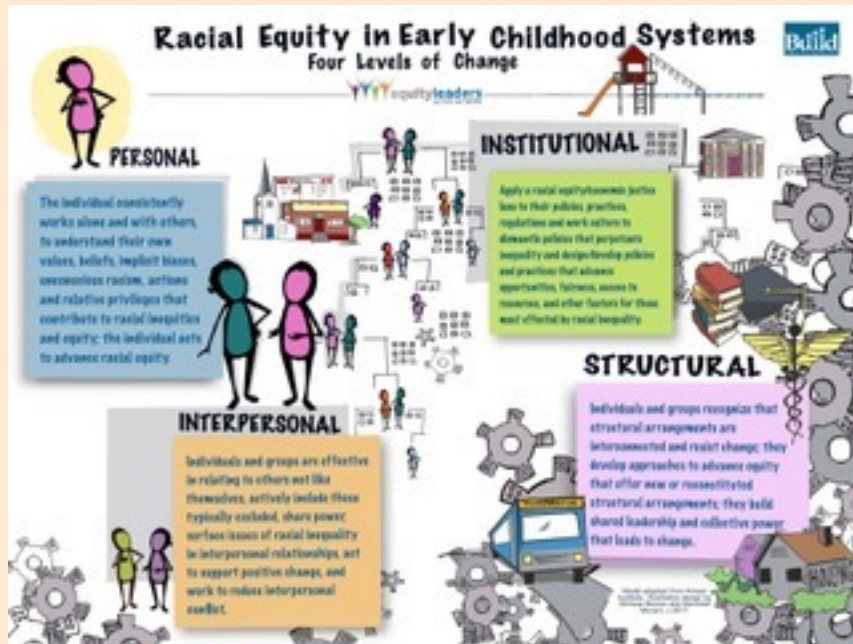
Facing Our Country's History is Essential Racial Equity

- Race is a social construction without significant biological significance.
- Inequality is grounded in historic disenfranchisement and exclusion of groups, especially Blacks, American Indians, Latinx people, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.
- The legacy of this history in the present is reflected in higher levels of poverty, segregation, and barriers to opportunities (e.g., high quality child care and education, adequate health care).



Interlocking Deep Structural Factors that Support Inequality in Early Childhood Systems

- Wealth gap
- Segregated communities
- Segregated, poorly resourced educational systems
- Opportunity and achievement gaps; educational attainment
- Employment structures: gender inequality in wage structures
- Immigration policies and enforcement
- Health/mental health disparities
- Child welfare policies
- Housing policies and costs –eviction and homelessness
- Criminal justice: mass incarceration, policing
- “Strategic racism”: strategic manipulation of racial animus



Taking Action

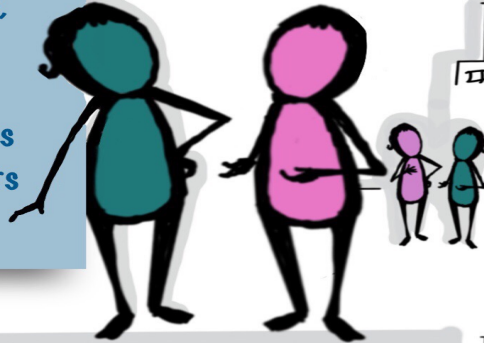
Racial Equity in Early Childhood Systems

Four Levels of Change



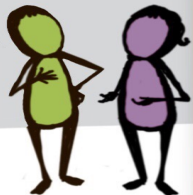
PERSONAL

The individual consistently works alone and with others, to understand their own values, beliefs, implicit biases, unconscious racism, actions and relative privileges that contribute to racial inequities and equity; the individual acts to advance racial equity.



INTERPERSONAL

Individuals and groups are effective in relating to others not like themselves, actively include those typically excluded, share power, surface issues of racial inequality in interpersonal relationships, act to support positive change, and work to reduce interpersonal conflict.



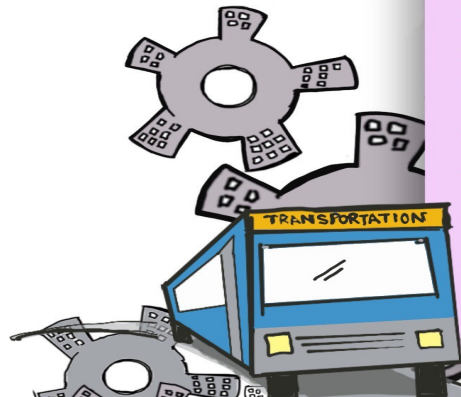
INSTITUTIONAL

Apply a racial equity/economic justice lens to their policies, practices, regulations and work culture to dismantle policies that perpetuate inequality and design/develop policies and practices that advance opportunities, fairness, access to resources, and other factors for those most effected by racial inequality.



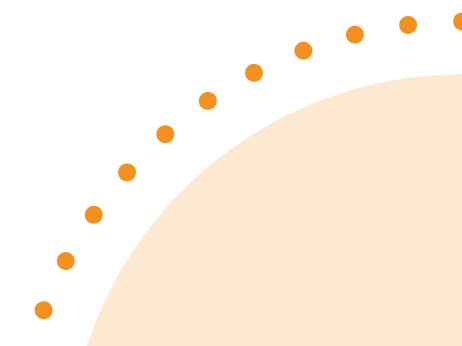
STRUCTURAL

Individuals and groups recognize that structural arrangements are interconnected and resist change; they develop approaches to advance equity that offer new or reconstituted structural arrangements; they build shared leadership and collective power that leads to change.





Opportunities to Act



The Curb-Cut Effect

Laws and programs designed to benefit vulnerable groups, such as the disabled or people of color, often end up benefiting all of society.

By **Angela Glover Blackwell**

Winter 2017





Leaders and Leadership

Poll 2

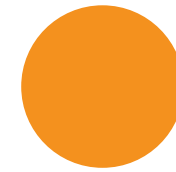
Do you see yourself as someone with authority, responsibility, or influence to advance actions that increase opportunities, remove barriers, distribute resources, or create mechanism to measure results to reduce disparities and increase equity?

- Often
- Sometimes
- Seldom
- Never



Ask yourself:

- In my work and responsibilities **who is and is not benefiting** from my state's/county's/organization's policies and programs?
- As a leader, what actions can I take to **intentionally and consistently** include those furthest from opportunity in my/our work?
- **Do I intentionally engage those furthest from opportunity** in understanding data, quantitative and qualitative, to advance shared equity goals?



People, Programs and Structures

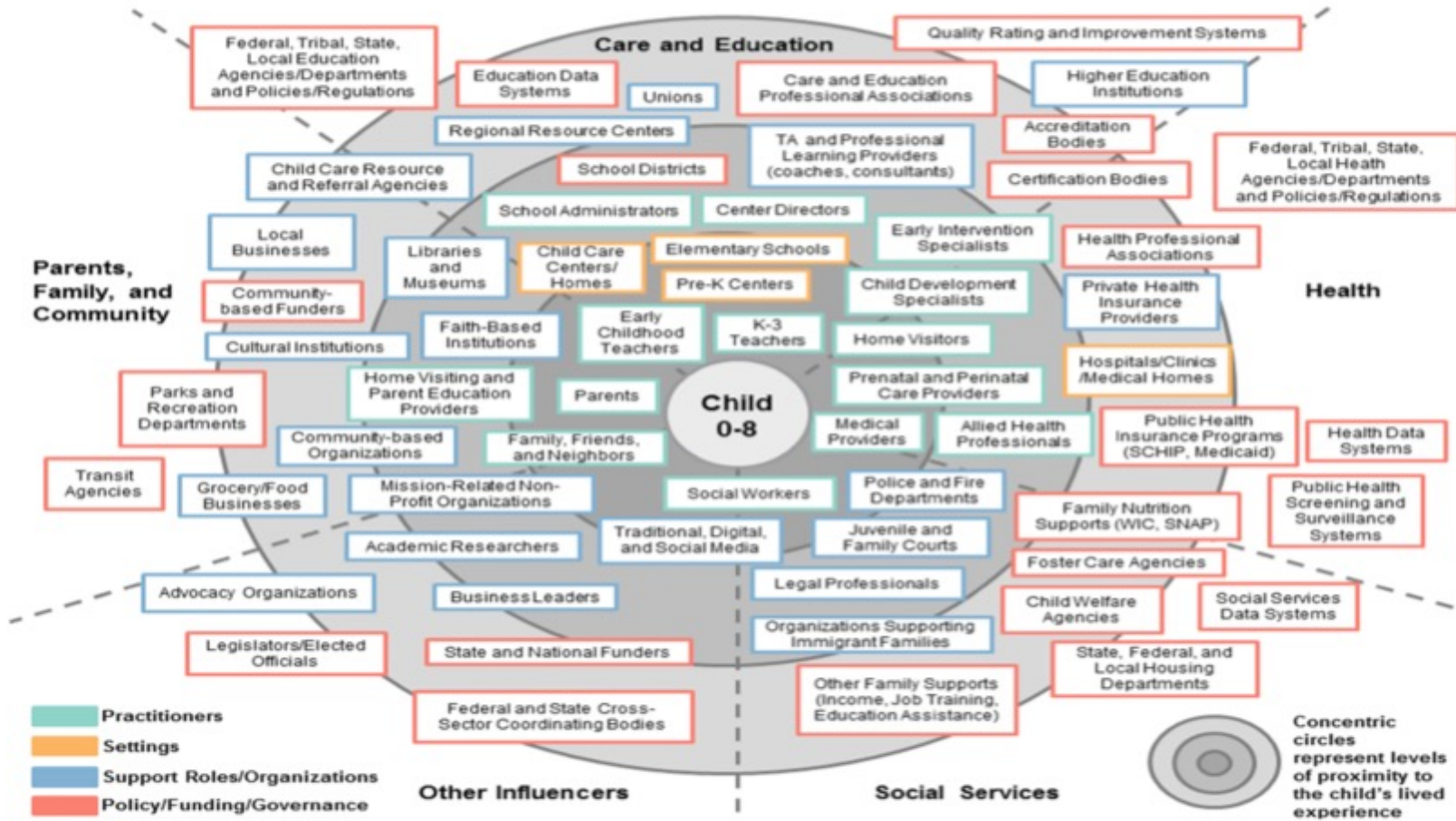
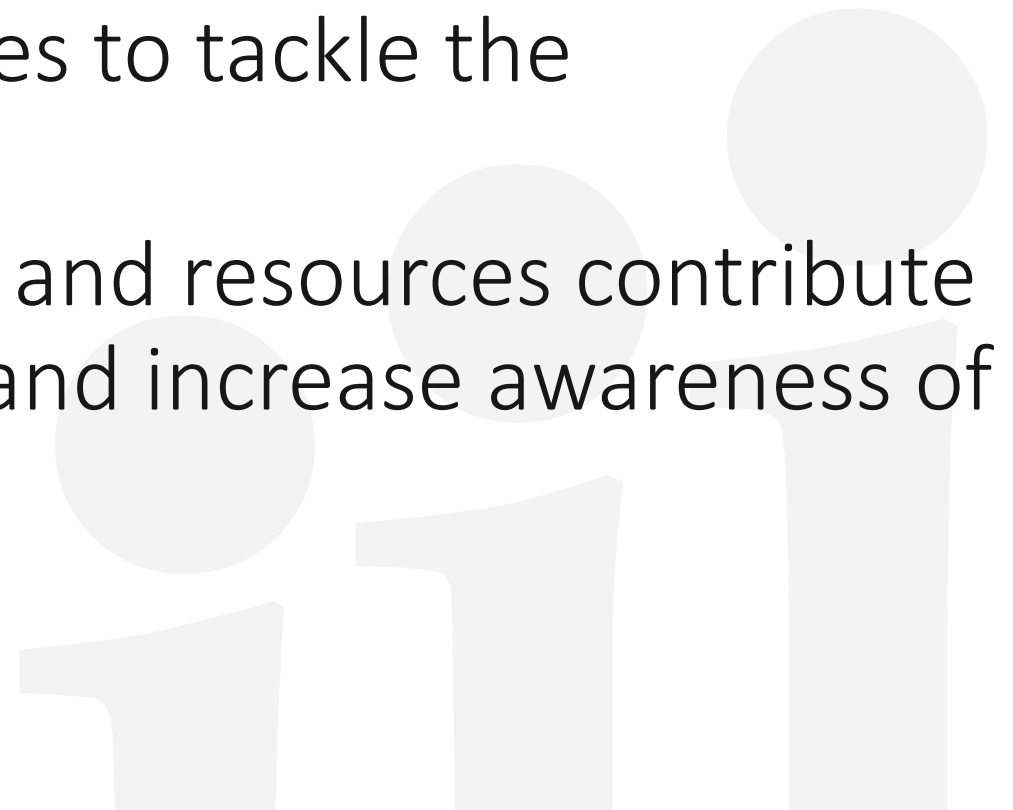
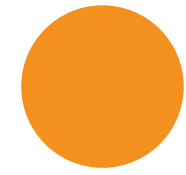


FIGURE 1-1 The complex landscape that affects children ages 0-8.

Cross Sector Leaders

- Can't reduce inequities as a single leader alone—the intersecting ways inequities exists.
- Multiple ways of hearing the voices.
- Multiple methods and approaches to tackle the challenges.
- Different expertise, experiences, and resources contribute to the changes that are needed and increase awareness of what exists.





Using Data

Data and the Process for Leading for Equity

Use data in planning, decision making and monitoring progress and effectiveness in advancing equity and child and family well-being.

- Data can be **quantitative and qualitative** (statistics and measures of well-being, family focus group data, interviews)
- Data is used to tell us **who is benefiting and not benefiting** from our early childhood policies, practices and systems.
- Data can inform the **identification of root causes** or explanations about disparate outcome of and access to systems, policies, practice.
- Data can work to **uncover strategies or actions** to address those root causes.
- Data is used to **continually monitor the impact of those strategies** across time. **Intended and unintended** impacts.

Use data quantitative data to get you started

Multiple sources

- State
- Local
- Population level
- Program/Services Delivery (health, early learning, economic)

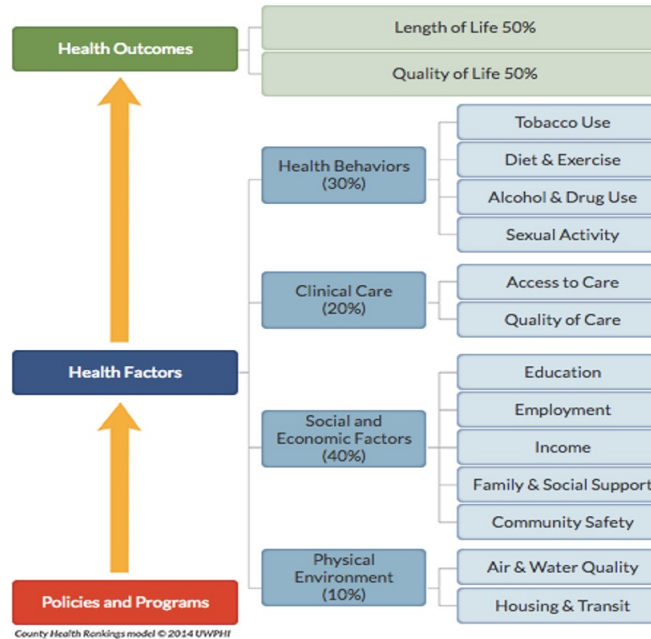
Multiple angles (economic, health, housing)

- Young child healthy development
- School readiness and success
- Children have access to healthy food
- Young children are safe
- Healthy and economically secure families
- Community conditions

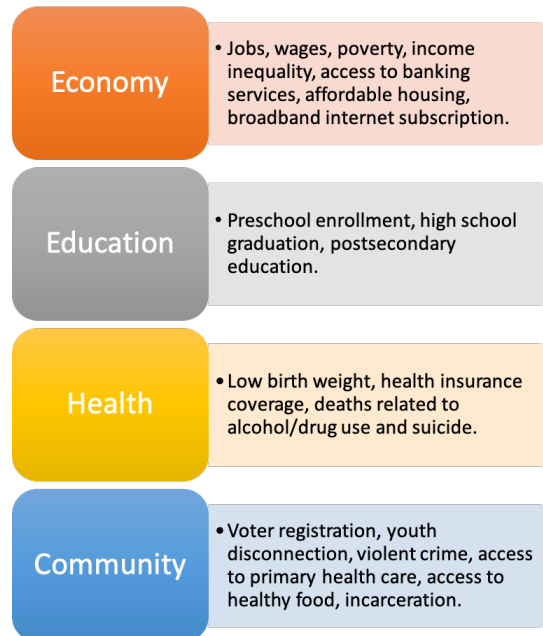
Multiple views

- Disaggregate race, geography
- Sort by states, counties, cities, neighborhoods or towns

County Health Rankings



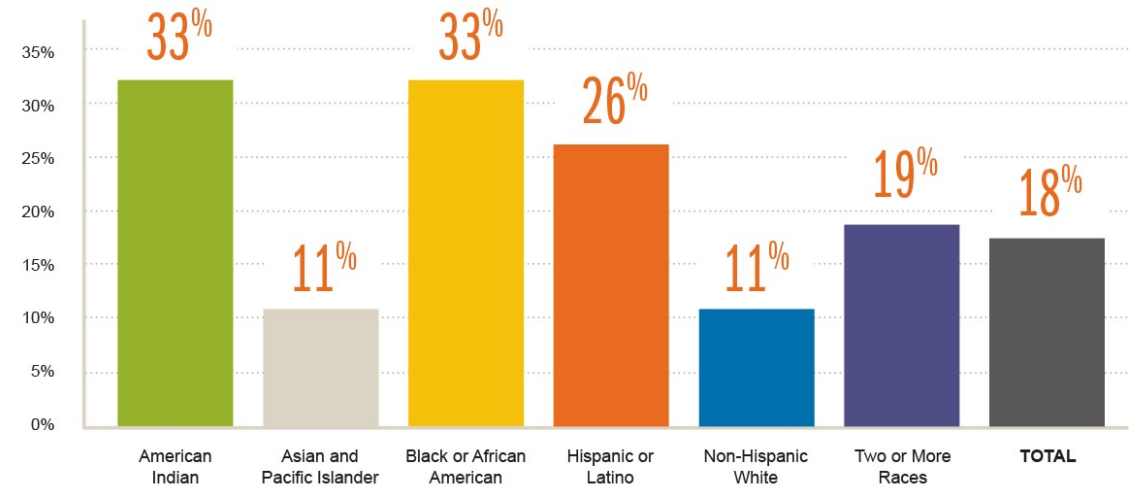
Opportunity Index



Disaggregated Data Matters

- Disaggregating data by race, gender, and other factors exposes the impact of inequality on specific groups of children furthest from opportunity.
- Just looking at poverty alone without looking at race and poverty obscures disparities.

Children in Poverty By Race and Ethnicity (2017)

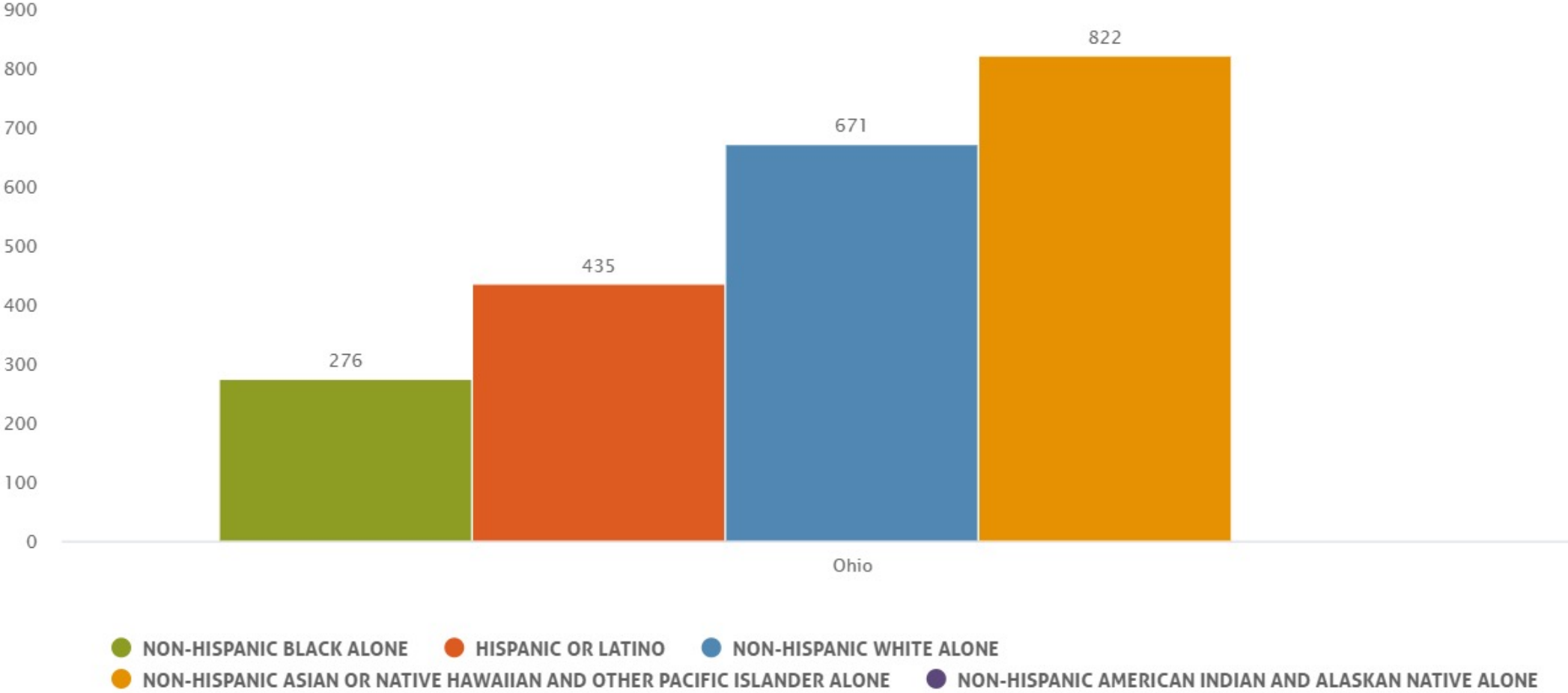


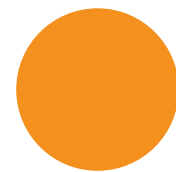
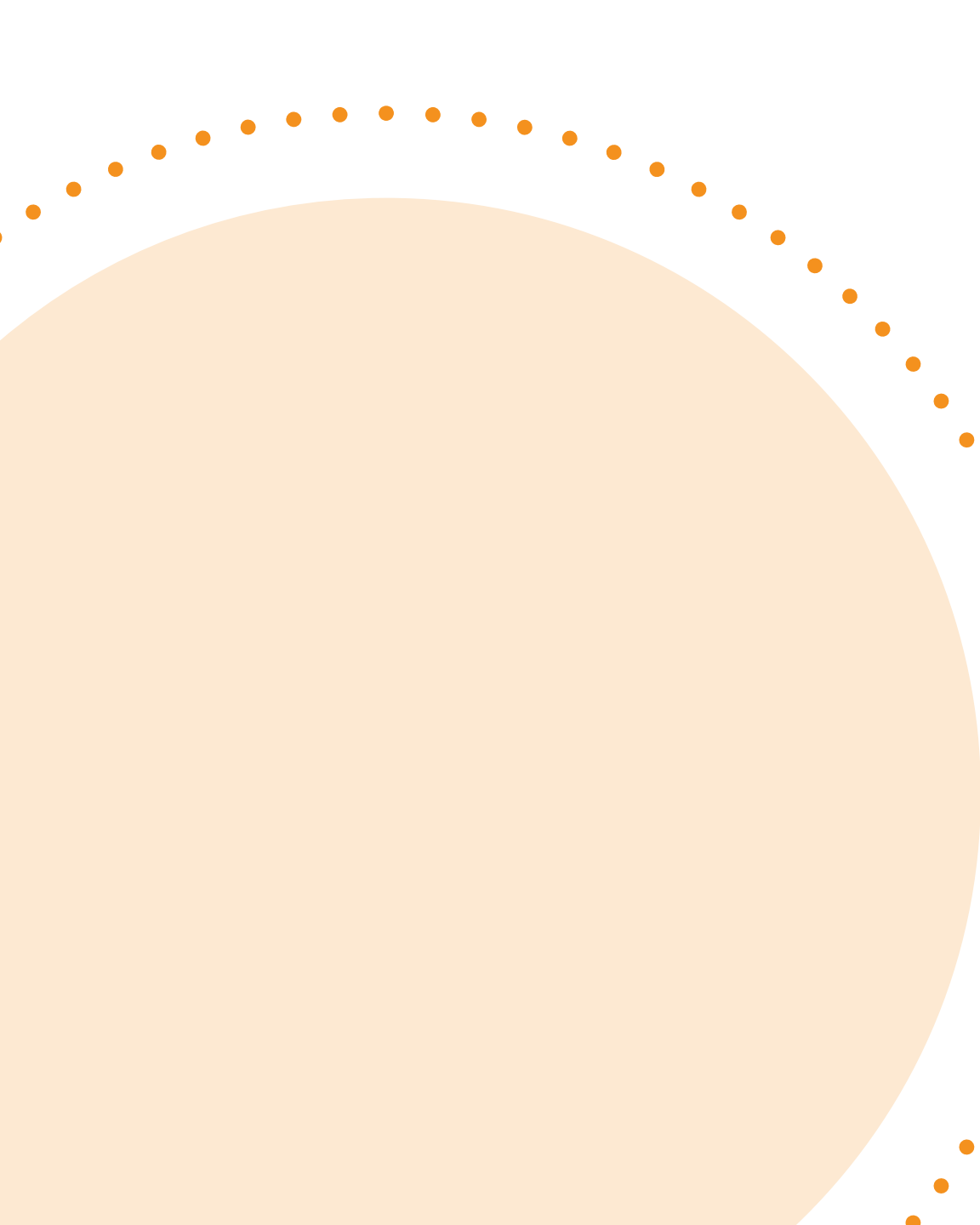
2017 RACE FOR RESULTS INDEX

The Annie E. Casey Foundation has developed the Race for Results Index (value is between 0 and 1,000), which compares how children are progressing on key milestones across racial and ethnic groups at the national and state levels. The index is based on 12 indicators that measure a child's success in each stage of life, from birth to adulthood.

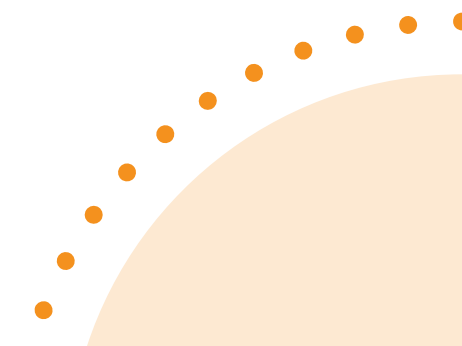
- Babies born at normal birthweight
- Children ages 3 to 5 enrolled in nursery school, preschool or kindergarten
- Fourth graders who scored at or above proficient in reading
- Eighth graders who scored at or above proficient in math
- Females ages 15 to 19 who delay childbearing until adulthood
- High school students graduating on time
- Young adults ages 19 to 26 who are in school or working
- Young adults ages 25 to 29 who have completed an associate's degree or higher
- Children birth to 17 who live with a householder who has at least a high school diploma
- Children birth to 17 who live in two-parent families
- Children birth to 17 who live in families with incomes at or above 200 percent of poverty
- Children birth to 17 who live in low-poverty areas (poverty <20 percent)

Race for Results Index Values: Ohio (2017)





Beneficiary and
Community
Contributor Voice



Poll 3

How often do you communicate with families, children, the workforce or other community members who are the intended beneficiaries of the policies, practices and programs?

- Never
- Rarely
- Sometimes
- Often

Do you collect information from families intended to benefit from policy, programs and services you provide or advocate for, but are currently not benefitting?

- Yes
- No

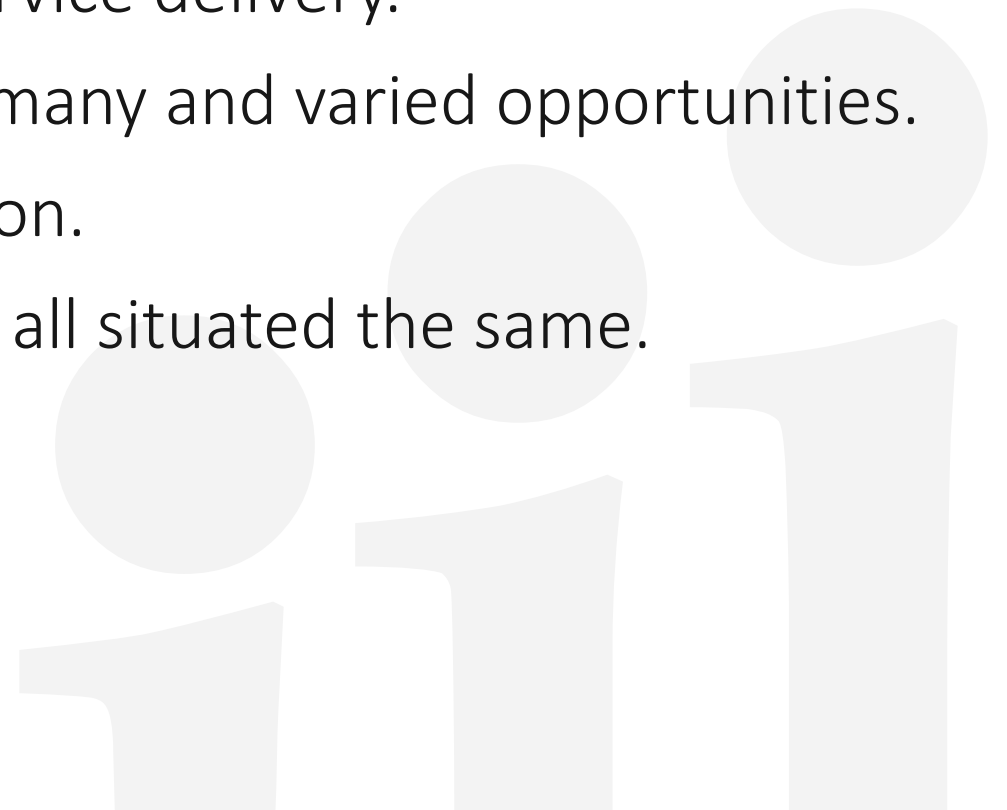
Making Inequity in Early Childhood Systems Visible: Start an Intentional Process



- Children
- Families
- Workforce
- Providers
- Community leaders
- Local policy leaders

Why Support Connection to Those We Intend to Benefit?

- Leaders often are far from those who they intend to benefit.
- Understanding “lived experience” of services, programs and initiatives is essential for continuous improvement.
- Voices narrow as you move farther from service delivery.
- Addressing equity requires the increase of many and varied opportunities.
- Leaders’ own stories often drive their passion.
- Families, children and communities are not all situated the same.
- Our social networks are often not diverse.



Shifting Discourse

Discourse I	Discourse II
Single truths.	Multiple stories.
Improving what exist.	Addressing root causes.
Answers and technical fixes.	Inquiry and adaptive challenges.
Externalization/blame “look out the window.”	Internal reflection “look in the mirror.”
Limited time and ability.	Getting started anyway.

Beneficiary Voice

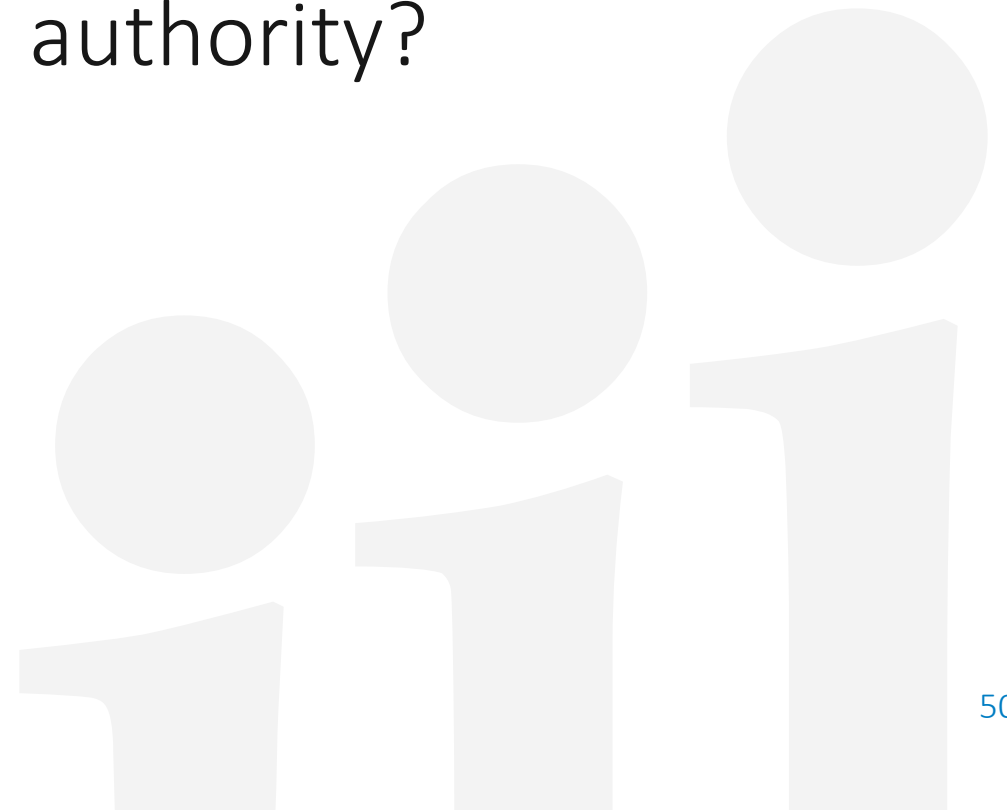
- To listen, understand, and learn about families' goals for their young children, providers' goals for their work with young children, services that work or don't work well, services that exist that they can't access, and where services and opportunities which support young children's growth and development just don't exist.
- To develop experiences with populations and groups that experience racial inequities and disparities, increasing the focus on institutional and structural barriers to achieving equitable outcomes for children and their families.
- To support exploration of how historically and today, individuals and communities have fought back, resisted, and organized for self-determination, inclusion, and fairness.
- To apply lessons learned to our own practice in order to ensure ongoing communication with children and families, and providers.

Feedback Loops

- **Intentionally seek input directly from beneficiaries** – the families of young children who are intended to benefit from the programs and services offered.
- **Engage in a cycle of improvement over time.** A key strategy is listening and getting a more accurate, deeper understanding each time you present back to the community what the team heard and saw at the last visit.
- **Share the challenges that your cross-sector team could not respond to and why,** such as funding, eligibility, timeframes for change, area of responsibility, e.g., local vs. state, etc.
- **Be honest about timelines** and the pace at which government moves.

Chat

What are the challenges and opportunities for including beneficiary voice in your practice given your role, responsibilities, and authority?



Framework Beneficiary Voice

- Before the visit
- The Visit
- Post-visit actions
 - Debrief
 - Feedback loop

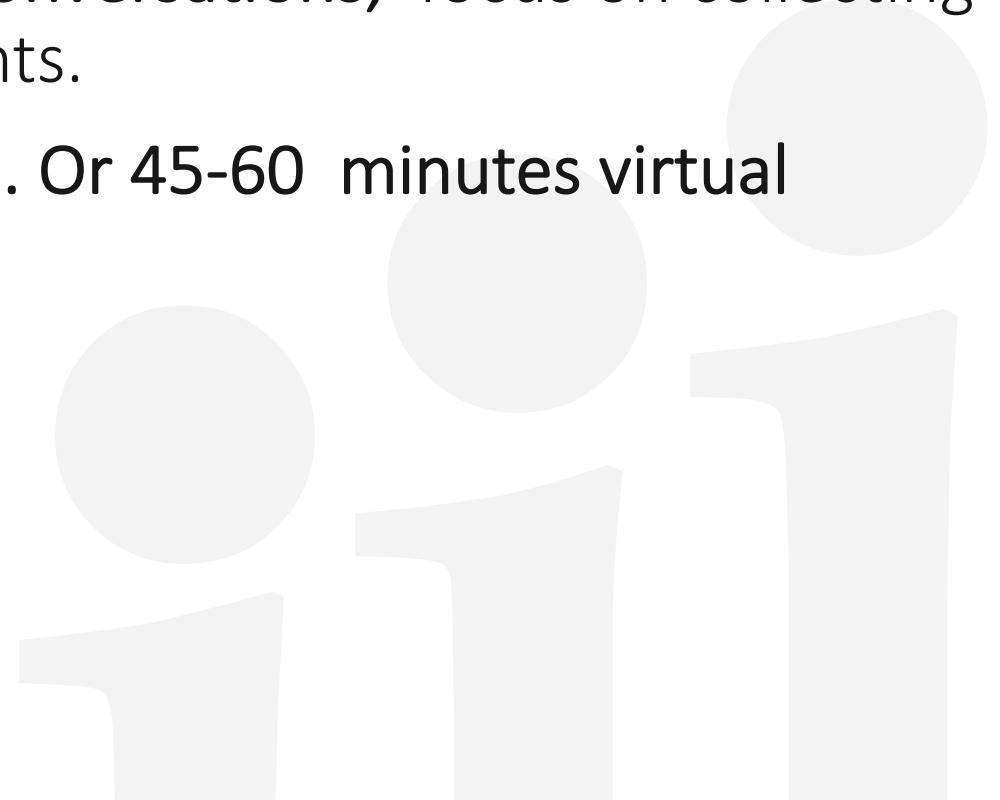


Process: Before the Visit

- Build a **cross-sector team** with diverse interests: library and museum plus other programs and services e.g. health, early learning, economics, local, state, county. Plan to have them attend visit
- Determine and discuss your **why, individually and as a team.**
- **Discuss your understanding using “qualitative data”** to determine one or more locations with low opportunity or marginalized communities.
- **Select targeted places to start.**
- **Identify a local partner** in selected places with access to the selected families, children and providers
- **Co-design the site visit with local partner(s)** for families, providers and local leaders..
- **Co-create 6 to 8 core questions** with cross sector team to share with local partner in advance, especially for families.

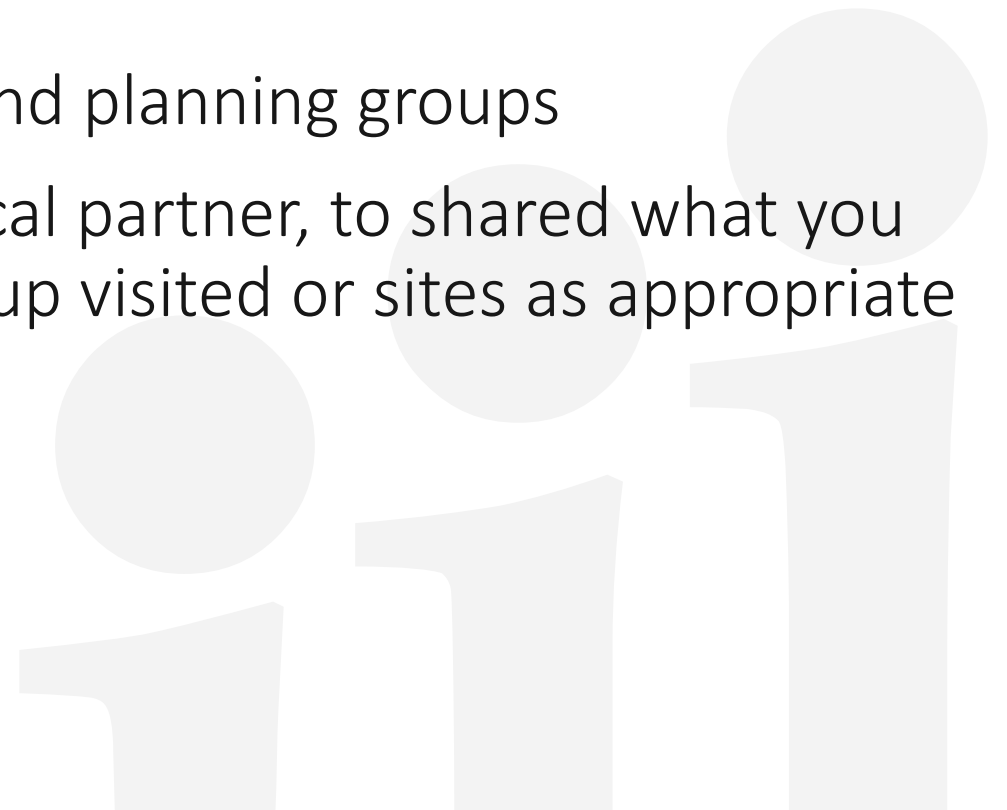
Process: The Visit

- Listening a key skill, do not try to fix anything.
- Plan and pay for **meals and stipends** to programs and individuals. (Virtual or face to face)
- Identify someone to **capture the site visit conversations**, focus on collecting actual quotes not notes from the participants.
- Hold site visit, 60 – 90 minutes per location. Or 45-60 minutes virtual meeting



Process: After the Visit

- Debrief with the cross-sector team immediate reactions right after site visit.
- Discuss a responsive strategy, other essential partners who you may need to communicate with after the visit.
- Process the quotes and create themes
- Share results with other key stakeholders and planning groups
- Plan a return to the community through local partner, to shared what you heard, potential responses and expand group visited or sites as appropriate to increase understanding.





What Families and Providers Say

Create a Protocol – Sample 6-8 questions

- Tell me about your children and family, how are you doing?
- What is important for you and your children right now in supporting your children's growth and development? Are there any areas that you're worried about?
- What programs and services are you using to support you and/or your children?
 - What is working and what is not working?
 - Are there things that other people have in their communities that you don't have?
- How do you get information? (families, friends, doctors, social media..)
- If you could wave a magic wand, what would you do to help young children in your community?

What we hear...

- “She is underweight. She has not been to a specialist in a year. I am about to cry. I have been fighting for her for five years.”
- I get job offers, but I don’t have childcare that works.”
- “Language/culture are sacred.”
(Childcare needs to reflect this.)
- “The system is not designed to support me to be self-sufficient for my daughter.”
- “I don't think we give our single parents the credit for how strong they are when they don't know where dinner will come from.”
- “How do you go back to school when you need to work three jobs to pay rent and can't afford childcare?”

What we hear...

- “I been denied twice by the county for food and cash support, even though I qualify.”
- “We're all just looking for answers not looking for handouts. We want solutions.”
- “Systems don't look at the full family.”
- “We are not pitiful. We are powerful and resilient.”
- “The more help you try to get, the more they try to confuse, and they start to double talk. They need a lot of sensitivity training. Please do not judge me when you see me...”
- “(The) building, it feels old, nasty, dirty. Customer service is bad and is not welcoming.”

Four Frames that Perpetuate Racial Inequity

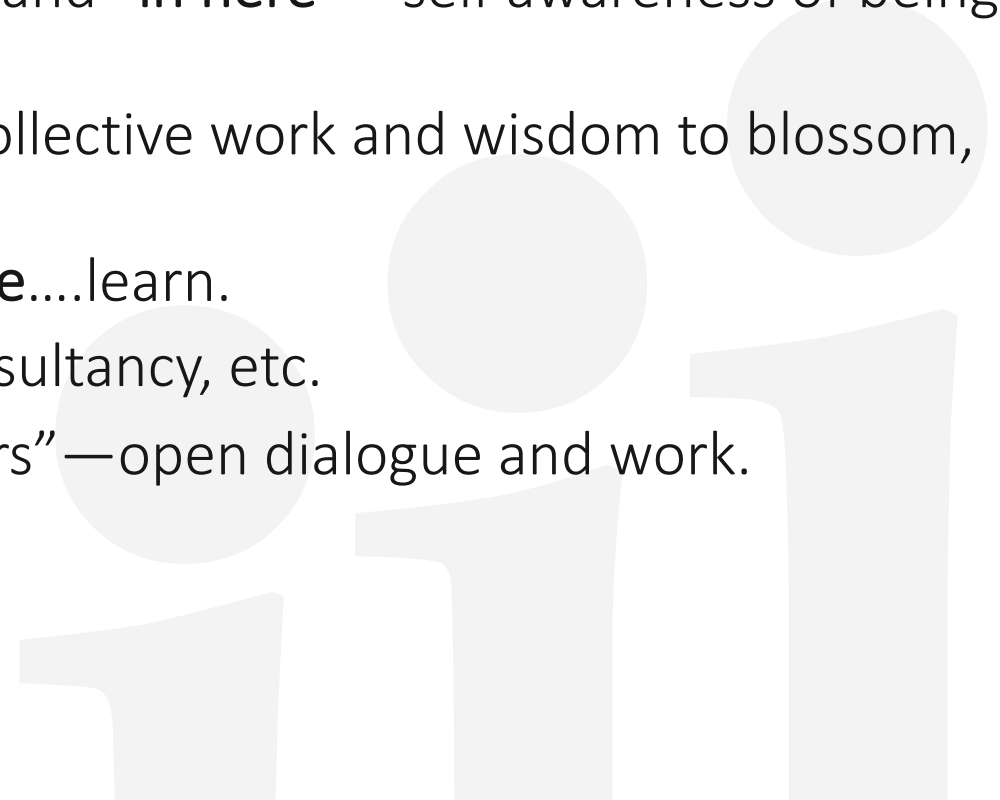
- **Equal opportunity:** employment, education, and wealth accumulation available to all; race is no longer a factor. Minimizing or denying the existence of on-going racial disparities. (Minimizing)
- **Personal responsibility and individualism:** people have control regardless of social position; individual behaviors and choices determine outcomes. Blaming the existence of disparities, when they are acknowledged, on pathologies in non-White groups and communities rather than on structural factors that privilege Whites. (Blaming)
- **Natural Preference:** asserting that factors central to racial privilege and racism (e.g., segregation) are merely normal reflections of each groups' preference to be with "their own kind." (Privilege)
- **Meritocracy:** resources and opportunities are distributed according to talent, effort and achievement, rather than wealth or privilege. Supporting the ideals of equality and meritocracy, while refusing to recognize that the playing field is not level for all in the society (Bonilla-Silva, 2014). (Ideals of Equality)

Sources: Leadership and Race How to Develop Leadership and Contributes to Racial Justice July 2010; Racism without Racist Color -Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequity in American, Eduardo Bonilla-Silva

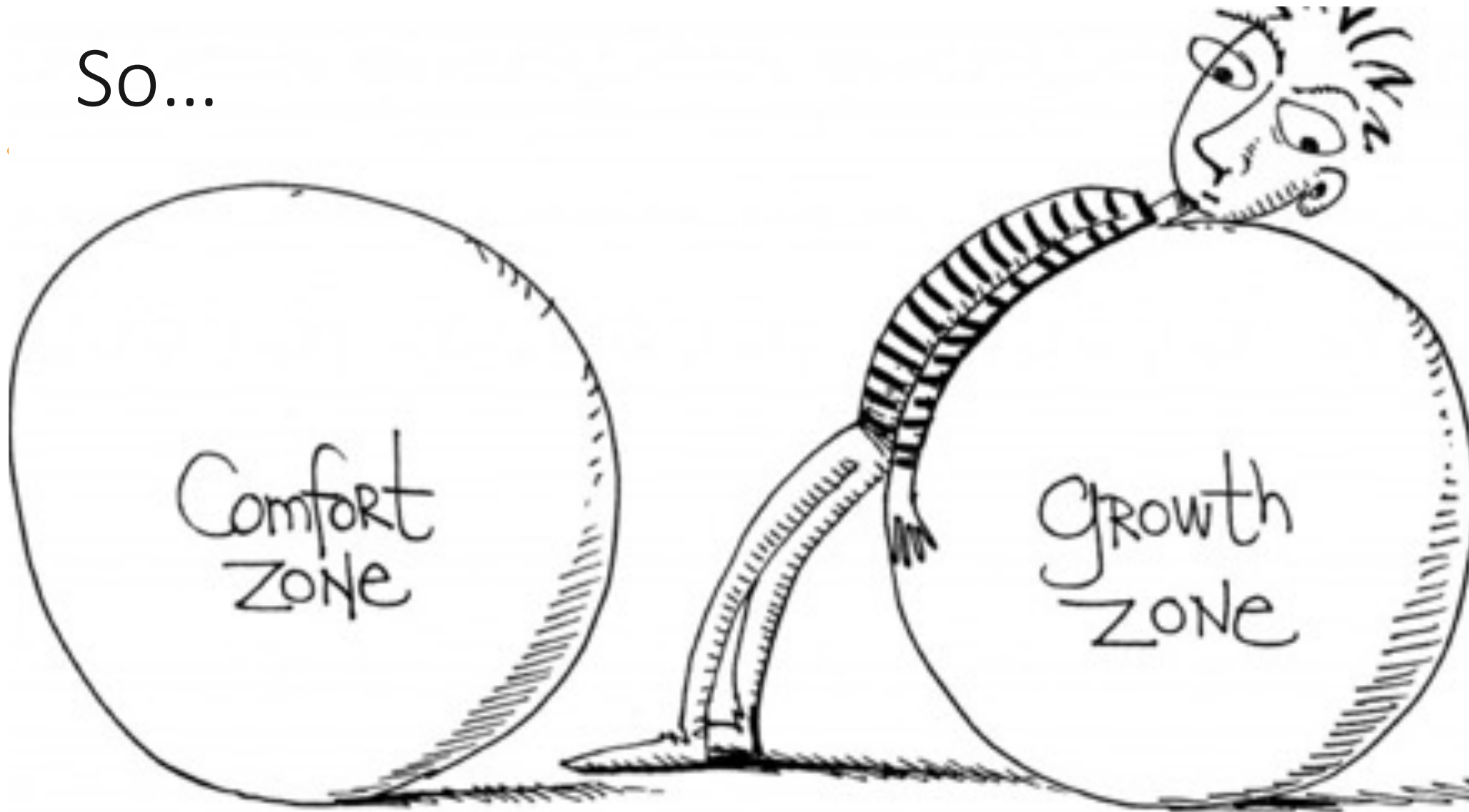
Leading with Race Requires Systems Leadership

While many have a vision for equitable systems or equity in their own work efforts, achieving these goals requires:

- **Deep commitment** to the work of racial equity.
- **Strong communication skills.**
- Recognizing that problems are both “**out there**” and “**in here**” —self awareness of being part of the solution and the problem.
- **Building and sustaining relationships**, allowing collective work and wisdom to blossom, attention to process.
- **Practice, practice, fail, reassess, practice, practice....learn.**
- **Use of tools**, e.g., systems mapping, inquiry, consultancy, etc.
- **Open boundaries**, tables and spaces to “outsiders” —open dialogue and work.
- **Build networks.**



So...



Lean...

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We invite you to use this PowerPoint or any of its slides in your racial equity work. If you do use any of these materials, we only ask that you cite the source in the following way:

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Thank You

