



Advancing Racial Equity in Early Learning

Vision

There is a new sense of urgency about ensuring that all children are ready for — and successful in — school. The Washington *Early Learning Plan* (ELP), adopted in 2010, has energized early learning stakeholders at the state and local levels, and driven increased investment to implement critical strategies and programs as part of the 10-year roadmap. The plan describes what is necessary to support the healthy development of children and outlines a universal implementation approach, but it does not fully address the impact that race, culture and language have on child outcomes — particularly for children of color. Nor does the plan identify specific strategies to implement the *ELP* to intentionally remove and reduce these barriers keeping children from opportunity. To address those gaps, a committed group of parents, professionals and policymakers developed this *Racial Equity Theory of Change (RE-TOC)* to identify steps to intentionally change policies, practices and systems to implement the ELP in a meaningful way that gives historically marginalized communities access to opportunity.

Developing a Racial Equity Theory of Change

Thrive led a group of over 100 early learning stakeholders in a year-long process to develop a Racial Equity Theory of Change to inform the implementation of the ELP. This series of meetings was designed to be a conversation of stakeholders from across the state, including parents, practitioners, researchers, and community leaders, as well as partners at the Department of Early Learning (DEL) and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI), to closely examine the “opportunity gap” and how it manifests itself in the early learning system. By bringing together a broad and diverse group of partners committed to this work, we have collectively generated a roadmap that:

- Provides a collaborative vision and approach that supports concerted action among decision-makers at all levels of Washington’s early learning system, from parents and child care providers interacting with individual children, to policy makers and funders who influence how the early learning system is designed
- Identifies ACTIONS that allow us to act on WHAT WE KNOW about the best way to implement the POLICIES, PRACTICES, and CULTURAL PERSPECTIVES that support the BUILDING BLOCKS we believe are necessary to realize the OUTCOME we envision for children of color
- Articulates how individuals, organizations and institutions can take both individual and collective action to reduce the opportunity gap

Next Steps

Thrive by Five Washington, with support from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and in collaboration with partners, intends to develop a grant strategy to fund and support targeted and innovative projects that work to make the aspirations of the RE-TOC a reality. Thrive will continue to work with partners to identify the most effective ways to support this community as we individually and collectively take action. We believe that these combined efforts undertaken by early learning stakeholders will collectively create greater momentum and commitment to ensure a future in which race is eliminated as a predictor of progress and success for children birth through 3rd Grade.

For More Information

Please contact Dan Torres, Community Partnership Manager at Thrive by Five with any questions or comments. Dan can be reached at dan@thrivebyfivewa.org or 206.621.5554.

Advancing Racial Equity in Early Learning DRAFT Outcome Map Early learning, and all things that are related (prenatal care, maternal health, healthy families), are seen and valued as foundational to a healthy, fair and equitable society.			
OUTCOME: Programs, policies and funding decisions to implement the <i>Early Learning Plan</i> are well informed and prioritized in response to the experience, perspective and needs of people of color.			
A Community Voice and Influence – There are expanded pathways for voice and influence of those furthest from opportunity	B Deliberative Bodies - Decision makers and funders at organizational, regional, tribal and state-levels make funding and policy decisions that genuinely reflect and meet the requirements of communities of color	C Practice Informed by Multiple Diverse Stories and Measures – Decision-makers and practitioners use qualitative, quantitative, and experiential data to make decisions that consider the perspective, experiences and requirements of children and families of color	D Early Learning System Design and Implementation – State, local & tribal agencies consider historical and current realities of children of color in program design, implementation and coordination
<p><u>Policies:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Pathways exist for community voices to exercise influence and power in discourse and decision-making processes 2 Funding and support are available to allow/honor individual (e.g. parents/guardians), organizational and tribal capacity to participate equally in decision-making processes <p><u>Practices:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 There are planned processes to connect decision makers with members of diverse communities 4 Communities of color are intentionally reached and engaged by meeting in places convenient to them, providing interpretation services and using varied solutions to promote access 5 Leadership coaching or mentoring is available within organizations to support racial equity advocates 6 Local communities engage a broad array of parents and professionals in local work and receive support and guidance as to how. <p><u>Cultural Representations:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Those who serve children are valued as experts in the field 8 Tribal nations, communities of color, and families are viewed as having important insight and wisdom 9 It is readily acknowledged that one cultural voice does not represent all 10 Children see people who are like them as teachers and community leaders 	<p><u>Policies:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Important questions about impacts on communities of color are candidly shared during the deliberation process 2 Programs and policies value, enable and define appropriate customization to meet individual child and family requirements 3 People of color are intentionally represented in hiring, appointment and s/election of decision makers <p><u>Practices:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 A consistent, collaborative and transparent approach to decision-making is intentionally and honestly inclusive of people of color 5 Decision making bodies actively engage with members of diverse communities before making impactful decisions 6 Policy making is underpinned by the coordinated action of diverse players, including the racial/ethnic Commissions, the Governor’s Office, agency leaders and legislative caucuses 7 Regular thought provoking experiences exist to help decision makers be insightful about how structures impact those furthest from opportunity 8 Ensure decision do not broaden the opportunity gap <p><u>Cultural Representations:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 8 Advancing racial equity at organizational, local and state levels is a strategic approach for reducing the opportunity gap and enriching society 9 Decision makers value and are able to individualize strategies in ways that target the unique strengths and requirements of different communities 	<p><u>Policies:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Accountability processes and measures evolve with and are adaptable, holistic and consider the requirements and successes of children and families of color 2 Education, experience, demonstrated commitment and reflection of children’s culture are valued in assessment of quality of early learning programming and professional qualifications 3 Educational equivalency and/or competency assessment processes exist to honor the importance and support the development and progression of early learning professionals who reflect children’s language and cultures as part of the early learning workforce <p><u>Practices:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4 Decisions are aimed to consider the experience and meet the self-identified requirements of communities of color 5 Data are gathered, analyzed and presented with intentional consideration of the cultural belief and framing in which the data is defined, collected and interpreted 6 Decisions affecting the early learning workforce identify a corresponding plan/pathway/monetary incentive to ensure that implementation is equitable and serves children and families in ways that genuinely meet the diverse interests of children of all races/ethnicities <p><u>Cultural Representations:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 7 Communities of color are engaged in determining what is credible and relevant data, how data is collected, and how data is used before decisions are made 8 Community stories are treated with equal importance in the development of approaches that are reflective of the requirements of communities of color 9 Promising practices specific to communities of color are recognized as a critical strategy for meeting diverse needs 	<p><u>Policies:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 Interactions and relationships among state, tribal and local agencies are coordinated to deliver results for children of color 2 Services, structures and supports are planned and implemented to encourage effective transition among care settings and along each child’s developmental path that are aligned with the family’s values and cultural beliefs <p><u>Practices:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 3 State, tribal and local entities work in concert to ensure effective coordination of decision making and action 4 Decisions are informed by a deep awareness of the different situations of children and families and systems are designed to ensure access and choice 5 Feedback loops provide information and knowledge about the experiences and perspectives of people of color that informs design and refinement of early learning systems <p><u>Cultural Representations:</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 6 Cultural competency and linguistic relevance are seen as hallmarks of quality
Race is eliminated as a predictor of progress and success for children from birth through eight			

What We Must Know--Mapping the Local Change Landscape

A Community Voice and Influence – There are expanded pathways for voice and influence of those furthest from opportunity	B Deliberative Bodies - Decision makers and funders at organizational, regional, tribal and state-levels make funding and policy decisions that genuinely reflect and meet the requirements of communities of color	C Practice Informed by Multiple, Diverse, Stories and Measures – Decision-makers and practitioners use qualitative and quantitative data to make decisions that consider the perspective, experiences and requirements of children and families of color	D Early Learning System Design and Implementation – State, local & tribal agencies consider historical and current realities of children of color in program design, implementation and coordination
<p><u>Advocacy and Community Organizing Groups</u> (e.g. Children’s Alliance; el Centro de la Raza; League of Education Voters; Moms Rising; One America)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> authentically engage and partner with people of color focus activity on priorities raise awareness of diverse requirements promote common message <p><u>Service Providers</u> (e.g. Housing Authorities; Refugee Federation(s); Within Reach; Washington State Migrant Council; SeaMar Community Health Centers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistently and genuinely engage and partner with people of color focus activity on priorities raise awareness of diverse requirements help to cultivate champions <p><u>Existing Formal Pathways</u> (e.g. American Indian Health Commission; Cultural Commissions; Head Start/ECEAP Policy Councils; School Boards; State Boards)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> consistently engage and partner with people of color focus activity on priorities raise awareness of diverse requirements ensure opportunities for feedback <p><u>Associations & Collaborations</u> (e.g. Assn of Washington School Principals; Early Learning Action Alliance; Early Learning Regional Coalitions; Tribal Leaders’ Congress on Education; Parent Teacher Associations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> reliably engage and partner with people of color develop staff to strengthen leader advocacy focus activity on priorities raise awareness of diverse requirements promote common message help to cultivate champions 	<p><u>Decision-Making Bodies</u> (e.g. Legislature; City Councils; ELAA; Early Learning Regional Coalitions; State Boards; Tribal Councils)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> frame the decision process focus activity on priorities promote common message raise awareness of diverse requirements choose the people who testify <p><u>Funders</u> (Department of Early Learning; Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction; Thrive by Five Washington; DOH; DSHS)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> frame the decision process focus activity on priorities promote common message raise awareness of diverse requirements <p><u>Private Funders</u> (Gates Foundation; Multicare; Robert Wood Johnson; Kellogg; Corporations)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> frame the decision process focus activity on priorities promote common message raise awareness of diverse requirements <p><u>Advisors/Staffers</u> (City of Seattle; Congressional and State Caucus staff people; Governor’s Policy Staff; Governor’s Council on Disparities; Nonpartisan Committee Staff; ELAC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> focus activity on priorities raise awareness of diverse requirements promote common message choose the people who testify share racial equity tools and approaches 	<p><u>Sources of Data</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> establish a baseline collect ongoing data disaggregated by race/ethnicity to measure progress identify qualitative sources of data <p><u>Education</u> (e.g. OSPI; DEL; Washington Federation of Independent Schools; ESD’s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide a measure of school readiness provide a measure of progress <p><u>Early Learning</u> (e.g. Working Connections Child Care; Child Care Aware; KidsCount; WaKIDS; Early Achievers)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide measures of service need provide measure of access/utilization provide measure of quality provide data on the impact quality measures have on culturally responsive service provision <p><u>Home Visiting Programs/Intensive Service Organizations</u> (e.g. DOH; DEL; Thrive by Five; Wellspring; REWA)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide measure of service need provide measure of access/utilization provide outcome measures <p><u>Public Assistance Agencies</u> (e.g. DSHS; WIC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide measures of access and utilization fund access to needed supports 	<p><u>State Collaborations</u> (e.g. State Local Coordination effort; Interagency coordination: DEL, DSHS, OSPI, DOH, Thrive; Washington Early Learning Partnership; Early Learning Action Alliance; ELAC)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide venues to incorporate the perspectives of people of color in program design include historical and current context in planning and deliberations suggest and implement coordination strategies ensure opportunities for feedback <p><u>Local Collaborations</u> (e.g. Early Learning Regional Coalitions / Infant/Toddler Regions (merging); WaKIDS Early Learning Collaboration and Family Connection components; PTSA’s)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> provide venues to incorporate the perspectives of people of color in program design include historical and current context in planning and deliberations suggest and implement coordination strategies ensure opportunities for feedback <p><u>Community Representatives</u> (e.g. Tribes’ early learning coalition; Tribes’ early learning governance structure; Cultural Commissions; Urban League)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> collaborate to represent the voice of Tribes and other communities of color connect groups with state and local collaborations

What We Must Do-- Assessing Your Capacity, Planning, & Gearing Up for Action

A. RAISE AWARENESS

1. Shift the discourse about race and opportunity, providing information, education experiential/shared learning and reflection, and mentoring about racial equity
2. Develop and share communication materials to raise awareness about what racial equity is and is not and why it is important
3. Develop and share tools to support champions advance racial equity
4. Provide opportunities for shared conversations on lived experiences that impacted individuals from communities of color

B. ADVOCATE

1. Advocate with and for the requirements/interests of people of color
2. Advocate for RETOC strategies to be implemented/used in policy agendas, grant strategies, etc.
3. Advocate for capacity and funding in communities
4. Develop and use disaggregated school district-level birth through eight information to identify ways to improve opportunity for children and families far from it
5. Cultivate champions for racial equity among colleagues and community members
6. Engage, educate and mobilize communities to advocate.
7. Solicit and use stories and other data to focus attention on and illustrate how decisions (will) effect communities of color

C. LISTEN, ENGAGE & LEARN

1. Partner with communities in making decisions about defining outcomes for their community
2. Create feedback loops that allow community participation to continuously improve practice
3. Partner with tribal leadership in defining desired outcomes and participating in decision-making processes/entities, from the beginning
4. Partner with people of color (particularly parents and educators) in defining desired outcomes and participating in decision-making processes/entities, from the beginning
5. Develop methods for engagement and partnership other than “meeting participation” or “membership”, resulting in a broad community member participation
6. Ensure access by creating flexible tables/venues/locations/methods of participating in meetings and other decision-making conversations in order to create access

D. BUILD RELATIONSHIPS AND TAKE ACTION

1. Provide mentoring in leadership
2. Actively recruit a diverse group of professionals who are knowledgeable about and take action for racial equity
3. Initiatives and decision making bodies use a racial equity lens as a foundation in the creation of work plans and demonstrate racial equity as a priority
4. Actively engage and partner with school districts, using WaKIDS data and other information to implement racial equity strategies
5. Invest in projects that promote race equity for children birth through eight. Provide funding and support to remove barriers to participation by communities of color in processes that impact children and families