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For over 50 years, ParentChild+ has attempted to eradicate the educational opportunity gap for children and families from marginalized communities. From the beginning, our founder, Dr. Phyllis Levenstein, designed the program to equalize access to early childhood education and support so that all children could enter school ready to succeed because every parent has the information, skills, and resources to build school readiness where it starts: the home. Now, building and expanding on that goal and with a growing understanding of the work to be done to overcome systemic racism, ParentChild+ seeks to expand its work with children and families to end racial inequities in the early childhood arena. With a commitment to incorporate a racial equity lens and evolve its operations and practice, ParentChild+ will grow its work with families to build a future where all children, regardless of race and socio-economic status, succeed.

A New Focus and Commitment

Recent events and our growing understanding of the devastating impacts of systematic racism have caused ParentChild+ to take a new look at our own organizational structure, training, and programming, and how we in our national and international work can address structural racism. This examination has prompted ParentChild+ to expand our goal of bridging the opportunity gap, to intentionally include eradicating systemic racism in home visiting, early childhood care and education, and family support work.

We are also reviewing how we approach and partner to provide services to families and children in multi-ethnic, multi-lingual communities. ParentChild+ is committed to embedding its race equity lens throughout the organization: Developing a more inclusive and diversified Board of Directors; hiring national staff who reflect the communities that we work in; being inclusive in our training and curricular materials, content, and approach by utilizing books and toys that give voice to the communities in which we work; and working with our partners and state and local staff to elevate the voices of our staff, families, and communities. We also commit to re-emphasizing a key aspect of our approach to hiring home visiting staff, requiring staff who are community-based, a linguistic and experiential match with the families they are working with, and, as often as possible, parent graduates of ParentChild+.

What is the ParentChild+ Racial Equity Lens?

According to the Government Alliance Racial Equity Guide and Toolkit, a racial equity lens is defined as a means of paying systematic attention to race and ethnicity in

examining and analyzing problems or issues within any social or cultural environment, or relational or group dynamics. It focuses organizations on increasing individual and group skills and capacity to see patterns related to inequities, separating symptoms from causes, seeking effective strategies and solutions, and creating pathways for improving life chances, outcomes, and success for all groups.

Developing and applying a racial equity lens requires looking both internally and externally – building both personal and institutional awareness. It takes into account history, technological and cultural context and patterns, identity, and requires us to institutionalize new policies and practices for improving and equalizing life chances for all groups.

ParentChild+ recognizes that racial equity is critically important to getting to the desired outcomes in the communities in which we work. We must go beyond “closing the gap in education” as a goal, and create benchmarks that lift up all populations, while amplifying voices from communities that have for too long been excluded because of systemic racism. As such, we are exploring the most effective ways to create these new benchmarks, which include, but are not limited to, raising the voices of the families and children we work with, hiring from the community, co-creating new training materials with and for our staff and those implementing the program across the country and internationally, and re-examining our current curricular materials. We will also explore new strategies to “close the gaps” that limit success for families by recommitting to and enhancing our “strengthening families” approach” and embedding it across ParentChild+’s unique practice and all operations.

By adopting this focus and commitment, ParentChild+ seeks to put into action “Racial Justice,” “the systematic fair treatment of people of all races that results in equitable opportunities and outcomes for everyone. All people can achieve their full potential in life, regardless of race, ethnicity or the community in which they live. Racial justice — or racial equity — goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just about what we are against, but also what we are for.”¹

We are committed to early education of children and the strengthening of families that is focused on achieving equitable positive outcomes from the start and that leads to future success and community impact.

ParentChild+ Values

Examining all of ParentChild+’s work through a racial equity lens will enable us to ensure that we are practicing our values at all levels and in all contexts of our work, and are truly

¹ Culturally-Responsive-Education Framework, New York State Department of Education, pg. 61, June 2020.

engaging with our mission to close the equity gap, support parents, and utilize education to provide opportunities. As such we commit to:

- Recognizing that families are always the experts on their own lives.
- Expanding hiring from within the communities where we work and supporting a livable wage for all.
- Building training and professional development that reflects the staff and families that we are working with.
- Taking a deep dive into racial equity issues internally to examine our own culture and leadership and broaden the diversity of our Board of Directors.
- We will take all necessary steps to reflect on our own implicit biases.
- We will stand for equality and against racism.
- We will intentionally work at the local, state and national level to improve racial equity with all systems, i.e. home visiting, health, social services, schools, etc.

Race Equity Framing for Choosing Books in Early Childhood Education

A preliminary look at our book content analysis and a response to our findings.



In January 2019, ParentChild+ began developing a strategic plan for 2020-2025. As we started to envision what the next five years could look like, we knew we would not be able to do it without engaging and incorporating the perspectives of the people working in the field. After conducting a round of focus groups and engaging local site staff at our annual meeting, national center identified important areas that need improving and/or rethinking and the implementation of strategic plan seemed the most appropriate context in which to address them. One of these issues was the lack of racial diversity and representation in the books used throughout our network of sites. This report presents preliminary findings of our book content analysis which reviewed over 550 books, and provides our action steps in response to these findings.



Reflective Practice at ParentChild+



The first step in engaging program staff in this process was to conduct focus groups to examine their interpretations of our program and understand what was working and not working for them. Our research and evaluation department conducted twenty-four focus groups with over 200 site coordinators and early learning specialists in California, Florida, Massachusetts, Minnesota, New York, Pennsylvania, and Washington. Focus group recordings were then summarized to identify recurring themes around program challenges, which were further explored during an all-attendee workshop held at our national conference. Based on our program staff's feedback, one issue was particularly clear - our books were not culturally representative. Our first step in addressing this issue was to conduct an exhaustive review of the books utilized across our program sites.



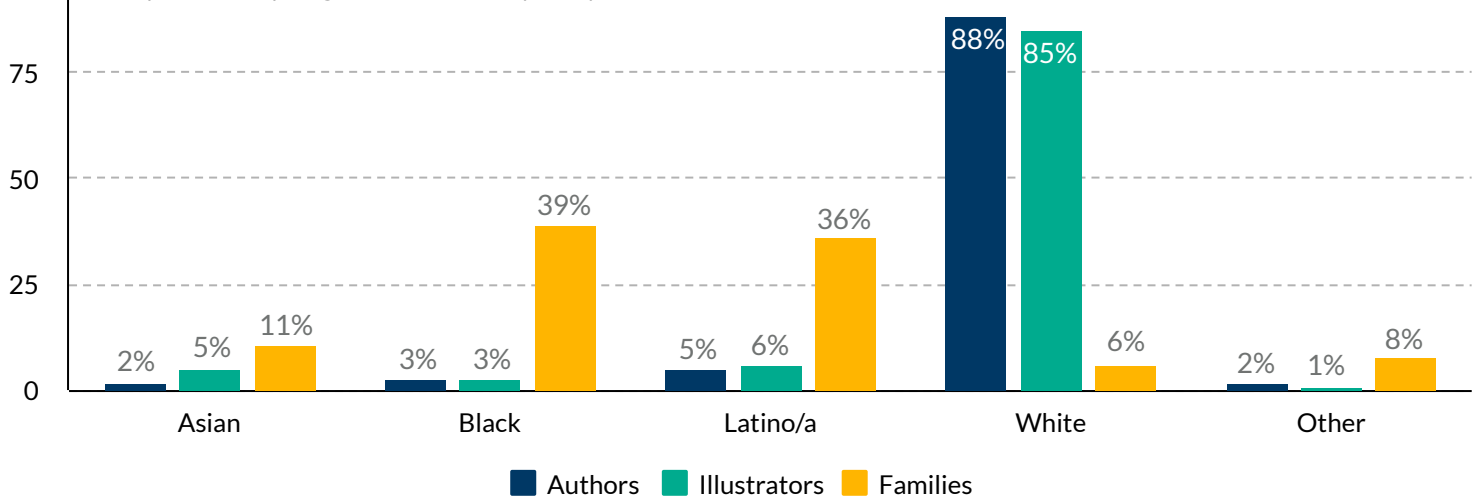
Book Content Analysis Project

First, we identified over 550 books with demographic data on their authors and illustrators that are used across our local partner sites. During this initial examination, we identified an emerging trend - **only 13% of authors and illustrators were people of color.** In comparison, in 2019, **94% of our families and 93% of our family child care providers were people of color.** This discrepancy required immediate attention and action, especially because racial equity is an issue that the National Center seeks to address intentionally through all facets of the Program. In general, racial representation in children's literature matters because it strengthens voices of people from different racial and cultural backgrounds and honors the lives of children of color. When children and families see characters that look and experience life like them, they are self-affirmed. Racial representation of authors and illustrators is equally important because it ensures that stories are being told and illustrated through a non-dominant perspective.

By prioritizing this going forward, we are demonstrating our commitment to cultural humility and strengths-based practices. A race equity orientation toward book selection is especially important because we know that children's uniquely rich and complex identities, experiences, families, cultures, and backgrounds shape their learning and development

Once completed, our book content analysis will explore various concepts including engagement components, parenting themes, routine themes, relationships among characters, racial and cultural representation, positive, and negative messaging, educational components, and much more. A full report of findings will be made available, as well as additional recommendations for program practice.

Racial representation of book authors and illustrators compared to program families (2019)



Action Steps

Now, you might be asking yourself, "What do we do with all this information?" Below are some steps we are taking as we assemble a new list of recommended books for our sites and that local sites can take as they select books for their families and community.

- Look up the author and illustrator before purchasing the book**
 Each of the most frequently used books were written by White authors. It is essential to take a few minutes to Google search who the authors and illustrators are before buying books. You may be surprised to find that many books with characters of color represented are created by White authors and illustrators.
- Consider books published after 2014**
 In 2018, the Cooperative Children's Book Center released a report that discussed the diversity gap in children's books. Although the number of children's books by or about people of color remains extremely low, there has been an increase since 2014.
- Accept the reality of classic books**
 Classic books often hold sentimental value when they remind us of happy memories of our childhood. However, you do not do justice to books you love when you are not open to critiquing them. It is okay to love a book while also knowing it is not the best book choice for our program families and providers.
- Explore diverse book list resources**
 Many organizations and bookstores dedicate their work to literature written by and about people of color. It is important to seek out these resources. Some resources are the African American Literature Book Club, American Indians in Children's Literature, and Asian/Pacific American Award for Literature winners.

We are issuing these guidelines to support a course correction and to advance racial equity, a cornerstone value of ParentChild+.



Book Recommendations

Below are eight books by and about people of color that we recommend. In addition to these books being culturally representative of our families and providers, they present healthy relationships within families, communities, and with oneself. They can also be used for identifying shapes, colors, and other early childhood educational components.



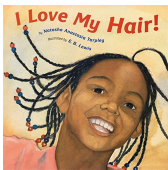
A Big Mooncake for Little Star

Author and
Illustrator: Grace Lin



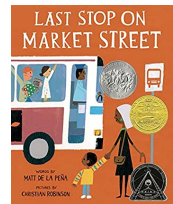
Every Little Thing

Author: Cedella Marley
Illustrator: Vanessa
Brantley-Newton



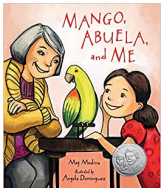
I Love My Hair!

Natasha Anastasia Tarpley
Illustrator: E.B. Lewis



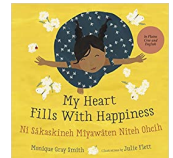
Last Stop on Market Street

Author: Matt de la Peña
Illustrator: Christian
Robinson



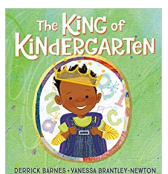
Mango, Abuela, and Me

Author: Meg Medina
Illustrator: Angela
Dominguez



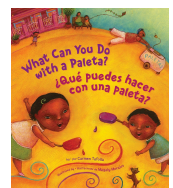
My Heart Fills with Happiness

Author: Monique Gray
Smith
Illustrator: Julie Flett



The King of Kindergarten

Author: Derrick Barnes
Illustrator: Vanessa
Brantley-Newton



What Can You Do with a Paleta?

Author: Carmen Tafolla
Illustrator: Magaly
Morales

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[Caring Through Crisis:](#) An Actionable Conversation on Building Education Equity

From the Frontlines: Home Visiting During COVID-19 (Panel)

Early Education as a Critical Social Determinant of Health (Panel)

[Windows, Mirrors & Doors:](#) The Importance of Representation in Books for Young Black Children

Building an Inclusive World: Creating Children's Books with Strong African American and Black Characters (Panel)

The Importance of Multi-Cultural Books for Social and Emotional Learning (Panel)

Charlotte Media

We wanted to make sure that you had seen [this video](#) and this [WSOCTV piece](#) featuring our work in Charlotte in the COVID context.

We have also put together [a video](#) featuring an ELS in Charlotte discussing her work and her own experience with ParentChild+ in Charlotte throughout the pandemic.

Additionally, we were featured in this [WFAE piece](#) that came out just before the shutdown took place.