

Recommendations from the Position Statement

Acknowledge and seek to understand structural inequities and their impact over time. Take action when outcomes vary significantly by social identities (e.g., lopsided achievement test scores, number and frequency of suspensions or expulsions that disproportionately target African American and Latino boys, or engagement with certain materials and activities by gender). Look deeper at how your expectations, practices, curriculum, and/or policies may contribute (perhaps unwittingly) to inequitable outcomes for children and take steps to change them.

Develop trusting relationships with children and nurture relationships among them while building on their knowledge and skills. Embrace children's cultural experiences and the languages and customs that shape their learning. Treat each child with respect. Eliminate language or behavior that is stereotypical, demeaning, exclusionary, or judgmental.

Developing a Strengths-Based Approach When Teaching Black Boys

Every day, educators make choices that benefit some children and families while disadvantaging others. Some of these choices are the result of *implicit bias*, or beliefs and stereotypes that unconsciously affect a person’s understanding, actions, and decisions. Implicit biases are associated with different judgment and treatment of children by race, language, gender, ability and disability, body type, physical appearance, and social or economic status—all of which limit children’s opportunities to reach their potential. In early childhood settings, implicit bias often impacts young Black boys especially, as is clear in the studies that show the disproportionately high number of Black boys who are suspended and expelled from early childhood education programs throughout the United States as compared with their White peers.

As early childhood educators, it is our ethical responsibility to break down systems of inequity and create learning spaces that support *all* children. The chapters in this section outline considerations for how you can focus on the strengths that Black boys bring to the classroom to best support them and their families, as well as strategies for preventing preschool expulsion.

Read and Reflect

As you read the chapters in this section, consider and evaluate your own classroom practices using these reflection questions.

1. In Chapter 11 (page 67), building strong, reciprocal relationships with families is one of the highlighted strategies to help prevent preschool expulsion, a problem that especially impacts Black boys. Why do you think getting to know a family better might help you to support Black boys in your classroom?
2. After reading Chapter 12 (page 71), reflect on some of your own experiences in relation to Black boys and how teachers perceive their behavior.
3. Chapter 13 (page 77) discusses an expanded definition of school readiness that supports Black boys’ frequent desire to be physical. Brainstorm three ways that you can support movement and physicality in your classroom.

