ADVANCING BLACK MALE STUDENT SUCCESS FROM PRESCHOOL THROUGH PH.D.

EDITED BY

Shaun R. Harper and J. Luke Wood

Stylus

STERLING, VIRGINIA

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

COPYRIGHT © 2016 BY STYLUS
PUBLISHING, LLC.

Published by Stylus Publishing, LLC
22883 Quicksilver Drive
Sterling, Virginia 20166-2102

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying, recording, and information storage and retrieval, without permission in writing from the publisher.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data
Harper, Shaun R., 1975-
Advancing black male student success from preschool through Ph.D. / edited by Shaun R. Harper and J. Luke Wood.
pages cm
Includes bibliographical references and index.
ISBN 978-1-62036-184-9 (pbk. : alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-62036-183-2 (cloth : alk. paper)
ISBN 978-1-62036-185-6 (library networkable e-edition)
ISBN 978-1-62036-186-3 (consumer e-edition)
1. African American young men–Education. 2. African American men–Education. 3. African American men–Education (Higher) 4. African American young men–Social conditions. 5. African American men–Social conditions. I. Wood, J. Luke, 1982- II. Title.
LC2731.H36 2015
371.829'96073–dc23

2014038098

13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-183-2 (cloth)
13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-184-9 (paperback)
13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-185-6 (library networkable e-edition)
13-digit ISBN: 978-1-62036-186-3 (consumer e-edition)

Printed in the United States of America

All first editions printed on acid-free paper
that meets the American National Standards Institute
Z39-48 Standard.

Bulk Purchases

Quantity discounts are available for use in workshops and for staff development.
Call 1-800-232-0223

First Edition, 2016

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

I

EXPANDING HIGH-QUALITY EARLY CARE AND EDUCATION FOR BLACK BOYS

David J. Johns

The nearly 20 million young Americans under the age of five have their entire lives before them. They have opportunities to be whatever their hearts desire and the chance to influence the world in unknown ways. But by the time they have entered kindergarten, for many, this opportunity has already been stymied. In the United States, low-income and minority children begin kindergarten at an academic disadvantage. In 2006, only 28% of Black 4-year-olds were proficient at letter recognition and 55% were proficient at number and shape recognition, compared with 37% and 73%, respectively, for White 4-year-olds (Aud, Fox, & KewalRamani, 2010). That these gaps are present so early in life indicates that providing high-quality, early learning opportunities in kindergarten may be too late to equitably benefit to these children.

During the critical first years of a child's life, nature and nurture contribute to the cognitive, social, and emotional foundation upon which all future learning and development will be built. This highly complex process—in which a child's experiences at home, in child care, and other early care and education settings, along with his or her interactions with other caring adults, communities, and society more generally—shapes how that child comes to understand his or her place within the world. For low-income Black boys in

particular, we must optimize opportunities early on to close achievement gaps and to ensure that they are prepared to begin elementary school ready to learn.

Students who begin elementary school without access to high-quality early learning programs and support services have a tendency to remain behind throughout their academic careers. This gap has significant implications for the life trajectory of so many low-income and minority students. The groundwork for high school completion, postsecondary success, career success, viable employment, and positive contributions to society is laid in the earliest years of a child's life. Access to high-quality early learning opportunities, for Black boys especially, can be the difference between a pathway that leads to the White House and one that leads to the jailhouse. Beyond the moral imperative to provide all children with the skills needed to be successful in school and in life, research shows that investments in high-quality early learning programs for children from birth through age five include a return of $2.50 to $17.00 for every $1.00 invested. Children who receive quality early learning services are less likely to become adults who live in poverty, require social services, or spend time incarcerated. Quality early learning investments are an economically sound choice for our nation.

For no other community of individuals is the importance of access to high-quality early childhood education and child care opportunities more essential than for Black boys. Nobel laureate economist James Heckman underscores the importance of ensuring that Black boys, especially low-income Black boys, have access to quality early learning opportunities. He states,

> Because of the dynamic nature of the skill formation process, remediating the effects of early disadvantages at later ages is often prohibitively costly. Skill begets skill; learning begets learning. Early disadvantage, if left untreated, leads to academic and social difficulties in later years. Advantages accumulate; so do disadvantages. (Heckman & Masterov, 2007, p. 447)

Additionally, Rashid writes, "It should also be noted that many low-income African American children are enrolled in preschool settings that are less likely to expose them to practices associated with social, emotional, and academic gains. Indeed as it currently exists, the education of young Black children, boys in particular, is largely a national disgrace" (Rashid, 2013, p. 30). To be sure, there is much work to be done to ensure that many more Black boys have access to high-quality early education programs and related support services for children and families.

For generations, Black boys and men have occupied the lowest rungs of almost any quality-of-life indicator used to assess health, well-being, and

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

success across myriad sectors. For example, Black males have extremely high rates of homicide and rising rates of suicide. They are also less likely to have health care coverage. Black men have the lowest rates of employment of any racial group in the United States. In the education realm, nearly 80% or more of Black public school students in the fourth, eighth, and 12th grades are unable to read or do math at grade level (Children's Defense Fund, 2011), and according to the *2012 Schott 50-State Report on Black Males in Public Education*, the overall 2009–2010 graduation rate for young Black men in the United States was only 52%. The graduation rate for young Black men in 14 states is below the national average (Schott, 2012). These enduring and unnerving trends begin during the early years, when Black boys are unable to take full advantage of quality early care and education programs and services. Without such early interventions, we should expect young boys of color, who have not had access to high-quality, early learning opportunities, to continue to face education and employment challenges (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2010; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010). We will not solve the employment and educational crises facing Black boys and men until we ensure that all Black boys have access to high-quality early care and education programs and services.

Because too many Black boys are denied access to the types of experiences that lead to good schools; accredited colleges and universities; and high-skill, high-wage employment opportunities, it should come as no surprise that Black boys are underrepresented in these spaces. Here, I discuss the opportunities that high-quality early care and education programs provide for children and the challenges that parents and families of Black boys face in attempting to access such programs and services.

Early Education and Care Programs and Support

Unlike the "public education system"—a phrase commonly used to refer to state systems of coordinated federal- and state-funded kindergarten through 12th-grade programs and activities—there is no single system for "early learning." *Early care and education* is an umbrella term frequently applied to the range of primarily community-based programs and supports that prepare expectant parents to care for themselves and their young children; provide child care opportunities that enable parents to work; provide children with the skills, experiences, and relationships needed to be successful in elementary school and later in life; and provide preschool opportunities that focus on cognitive, physical, social, and emotional development to ensure that young children successfully transition into kindergarten.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

Two overriding factors affecting early learning opportunities are cost and availability. To be sure, high-quality early care and education opportunities are expensive. Consider, for example, the cost of having the necessary number of qualified adults to ensure a low adult-to-child ratio in center-based child care programs. When children are newborns and infants, more care is required. Retaining professional early care and education practitioners and providing them with professional development is costly. In too many communities where there are significant concentrations of low-income Black boys, these costs can be prohibitive, forcing program operators to neglect professional development or close the program altogether. In addition to the cost associated with a skilled workforce (primarily indicated by experience, credentials, and training) are the expenses associated with ensuring healthy and safe environments, small class sizes, and low adult-to-child ratios, each of which has been linked to improved learning and development outcomes. Likewise, implementing early learning standards that are developmentally and linguistically appropriate (ideally aligned with the curriculum that students will encounter as they continue along the educational continuum); providing screening, referral, and support services for children with developmental delays or disabilities; and providing other supports for children and families add to program costs as well. In addition to these central costs are the costs associated with providing nutritious meals and providing full-day, full-year care. In what follows, I explore cost and availability as they relate specifically to child care, Head Start, and prekindergarten programs and services. We must take advantage of opportunities to improve access and reduce costs in ways that will increase the educational and life choices and chances for young Black boys.

Child Care

In the United States, more than 11 million children under the age of five are in some type of child care arrangement each week (Laughlin, 2010). On average, children of working mothers spend 35 hours a week in child care, many with multiple care arrangements to enable parents to work during both traditional and nontraditional working hours (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2006). These facts become important when one considers that less than 40% of Black children live with two parents and nearly one in two Black children live solely with their mother, compared with fewer than one in five White children (Children's Defense Fund, 2011). Thus, child care becomes an essential work support for the parents, and it also provides opportunities for young children to develop foundational skills in the areas of vocabulary, letter-word recognition, spelling, and pattern and color identification. For parents, particularly single parents who need a place for their children while they work to support the family, child care is critical.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

The work of Jack Shonkoff at the Harvard Center on Developing Children and others underscores the belief that quality child care provides children with early opportunities to develop and sharpen foundational skills (Vandell et al., 2010). High-quality care provides opportunities for children to be screened for developmental delays or disabilities. Developmentally appropriate instruction can bolster intellectual, linguistic, social, and emotional skills and behaviors, including positive health and development more generally. This point is especially true for low-income, disadvantaged students. However, too few boys of color have access to the types of programs and providers who have the skill and experience to assist in the development of preliteracy and prenumeracy skills. The implications for these missed early opportunities are significant. Consider, for example, that Black babies at 24 months old scored significantly lower than White babies on the cognitive assessment administered as part of the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study (Halle et al., 2009). These gaps are only widened when Black boys miss out on quality early learning opportunities. Moreover, failed opportunities to develop foundational skills or to be identified for needed supports contribute to statistics such as the following: Black and Hispanic males constitute almost 80% of children and youth in special education programs, and Black male students are 2.5 times less likely to be enrolled in gifted and talented programs, even if their prior achievement reflects the ability to succeed (National Education Association, 2011). Black male students compose 20% of all students in the United States classified as mentally retarded, despite representing only 9% of the total student population (Codrington & Fairchild, 2012). These challenges could be mitigated if we ensure that all Black and Latino boys, in particular, have access to high-quality early learning and development opportunities.

Unlike K–12 public education, which is largely financed by federal, state, and local governments, the cost for child care is largely borne by parents and families; for too many low-income, minority families, the cost of high-quality care is simply beyond reach.[1] The recent economic crisis, coupled with the high cost of child care and variance in state investments in programs and subsidies, has left many parents unable to pursue center-based care, using, instead, informal care (such as leaving children with grandparents or in multiple arrangements with friends and other caring adults). For those who do pursue center-based facilities, the costs can be an extreme burden. According

[1] The federal government supports child care by providing grants to states primarily through the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG). States use these funds to subsidize the cost of child care for low-income families. Additional federal support is provided through the Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program, the Social Services Block Grant (SSBG), or state funds.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

to the Government Accountability Office, the number of children receiving child care assistance between fiscal years 2006 and 2008 declined by 170,000 children (10%) (United States Government Accountability Office, 2010). The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services estimates that only 17% of eligible children receive assistance (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2010). For too many parents, especially those of Black boys, the inability to afford and access high-quality child care results in the loss of opportunities to develop foundational skills to ensure that children start kindergarten ready to learn.

In 2010, the average annual cost of full-time, center-based child care for an infant ranged from $4,650 in Mississippi to more than $18,200 in the Washington DC, and the average cost of center-based care for a preschool-age child ranged from $2,450 in Louisiana to $10,400 in New York (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2006). Compare these figures with the average yearly tuition and fees for public higher education, which is $7,600 (College Board, 2010). The average cost of infant care in a licensed center exceeds the cost of public college tuition and related fees in 36 states. Nationally, the cost for full-time care for an infant ranges from 7% to 16% of the median income for married-couple families with children; for single parents, the cost of center-based infant care exceeds 10% of median income in every state. For too many parents of young Black boys, the cost of a quality early learning opportunity is simply too high.

In addition to the cost of quality child care, availability is also a significant hurdle. A study of child care in 13 economically disadvantaged communities found that the supply of child care falls short of the demand. Among other things, the study found that, in the communities studied, nearly half of the children under age 6 who needed care had no access to licensed or regulated child care; parents in these communities paid as much as 70% of their total income for full-time child care of infants and toddlers (with some parents paying more than two thirds of their income for full-time care for preschool-age children; National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2006). The communities in the study, which included Atlanta, Denver, Des Moines, Oakland, and Providence, highlight the significance of poverty in the lives of the children and parents. The study draws direct connections between the overrepresentation of young children raised by single parents, who need support to work, and the lack of access that such families have to high-quality care that is affordable or supplemented by state support or subsidy. The study also underscores the fact that the cost of high-quality child care is often prohibitive for those who would benefit the most from early care and education programs and supports (National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies, 2006).

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

In addition to cost and accessibility, the following issues must also be addressed:

- Improved safety in and of the child care centers, including required background checks for caregivers, unannounced site visits by licensed and authorized inspectors, and increased health and safety standards.
- Increased parent and family engagement to ensure that parents (especially young, single, or first-time parents) have the information and tools needed to maximize their children's learning and development in the early years of life and to ensure that they are viewed and treated by practitioners as valued partners in the education and development of their children.
- Adjustment of reimbursement rates at the federal and state levels to account for actual costs for care.
- Federal, state, and local support for child care more generally should be adjusted to help many more Black boys gain access to quality child care programs that will ensure they begin school ready to learn, which can be accomplished by prioritizing children and families with the most significant need.

Head Start and Early Head Start

Head Start and Early Head Start circumvent the high cost of quality early care and education programs by providing federal support to programs that agree to serve low-income, disadvantaged children and families. In this regard, the program addresses access and affordability by covering the costs for families that meet certain income eligibility criteria, mainly families that would otherwise fail to enroll children in center-based programs.

The Head Start program was created in 1965, during President Lyndon Johnson's War on Poverty and the implementation of Great Society programs, to address challenges faced by students entering kindergarten who did not have the skills and experiences necessary for success. Conceived initially as a summer program to close gaps between low-income children and their more affluent peers, the program proved to be what many parents and educators knew to be the case: While helpful, six weeks of summer school could not overcome five years of poverty and a lack of access to high-quality early childhood education and care programs. In 1981 the program was codified in federal law, asserting a national interest in expanding access for disadvantaged children and families.

Head Start participants must meet income-based eligibility criteria; families must earn less than 130% of poverty-level income, although providers

have flexibility to enroll students from higher-income families up to 10% of the total program enrollment.[2] Additional requirements designed to ensure that the program provides disadvantaged children and families with high-quality service include requiring that, as of 2013, half of all teachers and paraprofessionals (i.e., trained teaching assistants) possess bachelor's degrees, and all program staff possess at least an associate's degree. Recent reauthorization of the Head Start Act also includes program performance standards that govern health, safety, and curricular goals and objectives.[3]

A recent impact study of the Head Start program compared the cognitive development, social and emotional development, and physical health outcomes of Head Start program participants to a control group of students who were attending private preschool programs or who were not enrolled in any formal program. The study explored the impact of the program for 3-year-olds who spent two years in the program and 4-year-olds who spent one year in the program before starting kindergarten. The study found that access to Head Start has a positive, statistically significant impact on children's preschool experiences, school readiness, language and vocabulary skills, and socio-emotional development, including more positive relationships with parents. Specific to Black children, the report found that 4-year-olds experienced "favorable impacts in the social-emotional domain at the end of kindergarten as reported by teachers. Black children in the Head Start group were reported to have reduced inattentiveness; fewer problems with structured learning, peer interactions, or teacher interactions; and better relationships with teachers" (U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, 2010, p. xxvii). While the long-term effects of Head Start require additional research, the program's ability to close gaps and prepare low-income and minority children for kindergarten is difficult to deny. For decades now, the program has improved life opportunities for Black boys as well as other low-income, minority, and otherwise disadvantaged children and families.

We can celebrate the success of Head Start, but more Black boys should have access to the program. Currently, according to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, a total of 965,196 children are served in Head Start and Early Head Start programs. Less than 40% of the eligible 3- and 4-year-olds below the poverty line are currently served by Head Start. Even more disappointing, Early Head Start programs are serving less than 4% of children under the age of 3 who are living below the poverty line. Much more

[2] For example, to be eligible for Head Start under 2013 federal poverty guidelines, a family of two would need to earn less than $20,163 and a family of four less than $30,612.
[3] For additional information see the Improving Head Start for School Readiness Act of 2007.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

needs to be done to increase access to these programs while continuing to ensure that the gains made during these early years are sustained in elementary school. Existing investments can be strengthened if elementary schools (preschool through third-grade teachers and school leaders in particular) and Head Start programs collaborated to provide joint development for students and to ensure their successful and seamless transition into elementary school.

Preschool Education

Prekindergarten (pre-K) programs are an essential component of the early care and education continuum; however, too many Black children do not have access to quality pre-K programs. While provided in myriad forms and for different reasons, pre-K programs are primarily initiatives that are funded, controlled, and directed by a state, city, or other locality, and designed to serve 3- and 4-year-old children in a group setting for a minimum of two times each week. Most quality programs focus on closing existing gaps and preparing children for a successful transition into elementary school.

The NIEER 2010 *State of Preschool Yearbook* includes an analysis of nine studies from 10 states, adding to the research that underscores the short- and long-term effects of state pre-K programs on children's learning and development (Barnett, Carolan, Fitzgerald, & Squires, 2012). The analysis demonstrates the ability of quality pre-K programs to produce significant learning gains in language, literacy, mathematics, and socio-emotional development, as well as reductions in grade repetition and special education participation. More than 1 million children today have access to pre-K programs, and research shows that these children do better in school from their first day of kindergarten through their postsecondary years. Compared with peers who did not attend a pre-K program, students who did attend pre-K programs have higher achievement test scores, repeat fewer grades, need less special education, graduate from high school at substantially higher rates, and are more likely to attend college (Barnett, 2008; Barnett & Masse, 2007; Lynch, 2007; Schweinhart et al., 2005; Temple & Reynolds, 2007). Additionally, also consistent with research on quality child care programs and services, a study of a pre-K program in Tulsa, Oklahoma, found positive learning and socio-emotional outcomes for all children, with particular emphasis on the most disadvantaged.

For poor Black boys, pre-K programs can provide one final opportunity to close or overcome gaps resulting from missed early learning opportunities. Prior to the Great Recession, many states committed resources and passed legislation to support the expansion of pre-K programs. Pre-K access increased from 700,000 in 2001 to more than 1 million in 2013, reflecting the fact that six states expanded pre-K programs for 4-year-olds and that

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

other states worked to supplement their existing investments in those programs. However, tough fiscal and political climates have resulted in several states reducing investments in their pre-K programs and services, which has compromised their quality.

Much more research is needed to identify specific relationships between Black boys and pre-K programs. Anecdotally, we know that Black boys are more likely to be located in states where pre-K programs and services are available (e.g., urban localities in the Northeast and Southeast); however, Black boys are also likely to be in places where the quality of such programs is questionable. For example, Florida invests less than $2,500 per child in pre-K and requires that educators possess only a Child Development Associate (CDA) credential—the minimum requirement for early childhood education professionals. For Black boys in low-income families, Head Start programs in places such as Florida are likely to be of higher quality than state pre-K programs.

In addition to increasing access to pre-K programs, much work must be done to improve existing program quality. There are several ways to measure the quality of pre-K programs. The National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC) uses early learning program quality standards, which include looking for credentialed and experienced educators; opportunities for educators to participate in meaningful professional development; small class size and low teacher-to-student ratios; and screenings for and referrals to health, developmental, and other support services, including nutritious meals—each of which is critical to ensuring that students are healthy and able to focus on learning and development. Also important is considering the ways in which resources (provided by participating parents and families or through state subsidies) affect a program's ability to "purchase quality." For example, state investments in pre-K range from less than $1 million in Arizona to more than $790 million in California and Texas. The average state spends $4,831 per child enrolled in pre-K, almost half the amount spent per child in Head Start ($9,198), and a third of the amount spent per child in kindergarten through grade 12 ($12,404). Accounting for the variance in investments across states, average per-child spending now is almost $700 below the level of spending in 2000–2001. This decline in investment has only been exacerbated by the recent economic crisis, further constricting the ability of low-income minority families to access quality pre-K programs.

To contextualize the importance of this point, consider the availability of quality pre-K programs in the five states with the highest number of Black children under 6 years old—in order, they are Georgia, Florida, Texas, New York, and California.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

- In 2010 nearly 37% of 4-year-olds and 90% of 3-year-olds in Georgia were not enrolled in a state pre-K, Head Start, or special education program. State spending in Georgia has decreased steadily since 2001, with an average of $4,206 per child in 2010.
- In Florida, 22% of 4-year-olds and 91% of 3-year-olds were not enrolled in a state pre-K, Head Start, or special education program. State investments have fluctuated since the program was first established in 2005.
- In Texas, 43% of 4-year-olds and 86% of 3-year-olds were not enrolled in a quality pre-K program. The program began in 2005 to provide a half-day preschool education to Texas's at-risk 4-year-olds. Texas spent an average of $3,686 per child enrolled.
- New York's universal pre-K program was established in 1998 to provide all 4-year-olds in the state with pre-K education; however, inadequate funding has prohibited the program from achieving the goal of serving all eligible children. The program was flat funded in 2010, with the state expending an average of $3,503 per child enrolled.
- California was among the earliest states to fund preschool education, beginning in 1965. In 2010 California did not provide preschool services to 69% of eligible 4-year-olds and more than 80% of eligible 3-year-olds. During the same time, the state invested an average of $5,571 per child enrolled.

In each of these states, the number of eligible children who are not served is too high.

Efforts to Support Black Male Learning and Development From Birth

America needs a highly skilled workforce and cannot afford to have a group as large as the current generation of Black boys fall by the wayside because they miss early opportunities to develop critical language, literacy, numeracy, and socio-emotional skills. While such high-quality early learning opportunities face many challenges, some policies, programs, and people are getting it done—"it" being supporting the academic, social, and emotional development of Black boys at the earliest stages possible. Three issues are critical to educating and supporting Black boys to succeed academically and beyond. First, strong direct service program models that employ a holistic strategy are needed in low-income minority communities. Second, more skilled teachers that understand Black culture and learning styles are needed; educators in

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

early education must be trained to understand and support the cognitive, social, and emotional needs of young Black boys. Their early education would likely be greatly strengthened if more Black males were to enter the profession in the early years and throughout the teaching continuum. Third, early childhood and elementary school leaders need to be connected to one another to provide support, professional development, and peer learning.

Here I discuss three programs that encompass these key components: the Harlem Children's Zone, the Call Me MISTER (Mentors Instructing Students Toward Effective Role Models) program, and the Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC).

Harlem Children's Zone

The Harlem Children's Zone (HCZ) is the brainchild of educator Geoffrey Canada. HCZ has become a national model for providing high-quality wraparound supports to ensure that children and families, beginning before birth, have the services and supports needed to begin kindergarten ready to learn, and to ensure that these children graduate from high school ready for college and beyond. The cognitive, physical, social, and emotional supports that HCZ provides often supplement the resources that are missing in economically depressed communities (e.g., parks and recreational facilities and access to quality before-school, after-school, and summer learning programs). The ambitious project began in the 1990s as a one-block pilot. It now encompasses 100 blocks of Central Harlem, in which Black boys constitute 45% of those served. The cornerstones of HCZ are the baby college, workshops for expectant and first-time parents; a full-day pre-K program; Promise Academy, an extended-day charter school; health clinics and community centers that are accessible to students, family, and community members; and social service and other supports that specifically address the challenges plaguing students and families in Harlem. For example, TRUTH is a youth violence prevention program that employs the arts, technology, physical activity, and other innovative methods to engage and enrich the lives of its youth participants. HCZ is anchored by an intentional commitment to supporting children and their families as early as possible. By providing parents with the information and resources they need to be successful, HCZ works to disrupt the cycle of poverty in Harlem, creating a cadre of adults who understand all that is required to ensure their children's academic and life success.

The Obama administration and Congress, through the appropriations process, have provided support for replicating the HCZ strategy. In 2012 the U.S. Department of Education awarded $10 million in federal funds to assist in the development of promise planning grant applications from more than 300 communities across the country. This commitment was reinforced

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

when Congress most recently provided another $20 million to spur further investment in such initiatives.

Call Me MISTER

The Call Me MISTER program works to increase the number of prepared and committed educators from among underserved, socioeconomically disadvantaged, and educationally at-risk communities—principally Black men. Activist and scholar Jawanza Kunjufu frequently writes about the specific challenges facing Black boys in education. The author of works such as *Countering the Conspiracy to Destroy Black Boys* and *Black Students. Middle-Class Teachers*, Kunjufu discusses the fact that White female teachers constitute 83% of the U.S. elementary teaching force while Black educators make up less than 6% of teachers, and less than 2% of that 6% are Black men. Citing correlations between the attitudes and expectations that White teachers bring with them to public schools where Black boys are overrepresented and these boys' academic performance, Kunjufu calls for recruiting and retaining more Black male educators.

While additional research is needed on the exact benefits of having Black male teachers teaching Black boys, my own experience as a Black male kindergarten teacher has led me to believe that there is value in children seeing Black men in a space in which we rarely work. Kunjufu (2002) cites research that finds a 4% increase in student test scores when the teacher is of the same race, suggesting that there are possibly statistically significant implications of more minority teachers entering into and remaining in the (early learning) workforce. Too many schools throughout the country fail to employ Black men as educators or school leaders, instead providing opportunities for these men to clean the schools, drive school buses, work security, or teach physical education.

The Call Me MISTER program is designed to overcome these challenges. Housed at Clemson University, the program provides academic support services and uses incentives such as loan- and debt-forgiveness programs to attract participants. It also leverages the collective resources of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in South Carolina, including Benedict College, Claflin University, Morris College, and South Carolina State University. Each of these institutions supports the program.

The Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color

The Coalition of Schools Educating Boys of Color (COSEBOC) is a network of schools committed to increasing access to and improving the quality of educational opportunities available to boys of color. Founded by educator

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

Ron Walker, COSEBOC has been successful at bringing educators together with school and community leaders and providing professional development to increase a school's capacity to support the positive development of low-income and minority males. In 2012 COSEBOC launched a partnership with McComb Public Schools in Mississippi to provide culturally relevant professional development services for pre-K and elementary school teachers and leaders. More than half of the kindergarteners served by Kennedy Early Childhood Center in the McComb school are Black boys. To support Black male students, Kennedy is working to recruit more male educators; has established a "boys of distinction" program that provides students with a mentor to ensure that their social and emotional development is supported; and is providing staff with professional development, including a study of behavioral and academic opportunities that support Black boys. While just beginning to address early care and education, the program is positioned to play a critical role in identifying and disseminating promising practices to further support Black boys early on. COSEBOC has an annual conference.

Advancing Success in Preschool and Early Childhood Education

Federal, state, and local policymakers each have a role to play in assisting states, schools, and communities as they increase access to early learning programs while improving the quality of existing programs. These goals require that elected officials, parents, families, communities, and other stakeholders work better together on the following issues:

1. Coordinate the work of existing programs, which includes strengthening collaboration among early care and education programs and elementary schools.
2. Provide funding for programmatic enhancements, including creating, renovating, or modernizing classrooms and centers and improving standards, curricula, assessments, and related professional development.
3. Recruit, provide professional development for, and retain qualified and committed educators—teachers and leaders—especially Black male early-learning educators.
4. Educate the public so that more people understand the importance of early learning. Parent, family, and community engagement is especially important. More low-income, minority, young, and single parents must be educated about the critical importance of high-quality early formal care and education. To be effective, this awareness must be accompanied with resources and support so that parents and families know what is expected

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

of them and can overcome any barriers preventing them from being active and engaged partners in their child's learning and development.

Politically, work must also be done to improve access to affordable, quality child care and Head Start and pre-K programs and services.

Child Care

To strengthen and improve the child care system, Congress should reauthorize the Child Care Development Block Grant (CCDBG). Established in 1996 as part of the welfare reform legislation, the block grant provides child care subsidies to low-income families that meet eligibility requirements tied to state-determined income thresholds. Through reauthorization of this important bill, Congress would ensure that high-quality child care is affordable and attainable for low-income, disadvantaged families. Specific policy reforms that should be included in this reauthorization are as follows:

1. **Ensuring that all child care programs meet reasonable health, safety, and child development standards**, including making sure that all personnel are trained to provide first aid and cardiopulmonary resuscitation and in how to prevent sudden infant death syndrome. Background checks should be mandatory to ensure that adults who work with children have not or will not cause them harm.
2. **Providing incentives and resources so that programs participate in Quality Rating and Improvement Systems (QRIS)**. These programs are designed to identify and monitor programs as they take steps toward improving quality, such as increasing the number of certified providers, reducing adult-to-child ratios and class size, and converting from half-day to full-day care.
3. **Supporting state efforts to increase the supply of care in particular areas of the state**—for example, those areas with significant concentrations of low-income children and families, or with high school dropouts and un- or underemployed youth and adults. Such efforts would include higher subsidy reimbursement rates, bonuses for educators and other financial incentives for providers, or collaboration grants to fund collective community efforts to provide high-quality child care programs and services.
4. **Expanding research and technical assistance in the classroom.** Classrooms should incorporate trends in educational practice, and providers must have the support they need to meet the demands of young children and their families.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

While many of these recommendations require funding, which would be difficult to attain given the present national economic and political environment, several steps that do not require new funds can be taken to improve child care. Among the most significant is increasing coordination among child care programs, other early care and education programs, and elementary schools. Providers, educators and school leaders, and parents and families should be aware of the opportunities available to them, and of the expectations for them. This approach can mitigate many of the existing challenges facing young Black boys before they begin elementary school. For example, joint professional development in which child care providers learn alongside pre-K through third-grade teachers may enable teachers and child care providers to better support children as they mature and matriculate. Similarly, parents, guardians, and caretakers who are informed about their options can make thoughtful decisions about their child's learning, including how to be an effective partner in supporting achievement and positive development. Collaboration can provide new ways to leverage resources, improve quality, and increase access.

Head Start

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services has continued to implement changes that were included in the 2007 reauthorization of Head Start—chiefly, designing a process through which grant recipients demonstrate their ability to improve achievement; close opportunity gaps for low-income, disadvantaged children and families; and increase school readiness. In addition to these efforts to improve program quality, more funding is needed to increase access. Nonprofit and for-profit entities, including colleges and universities, should consider the merits of operating Head Start programs in collaboration with experts who are skilled in responding to the challenges facing the populations that the Head Start program serves. For example, HBCUs and community colleges can operate Head Start programs that provide students who would like to enter education and related fields with practical opportunities to understand and intervene in the lives of disadvantaged students and families.

Pre-K Programs and Services

Recent advocacy efforts have pushed for the federal government to authorize grants to support the expansion of pre-K. The recent fiscal crisis makes this request seemingly implausible; however, in the absence of new federal funds, state and local governments can take steps to improve the quality of existing pre-K programs while increasing state funding to expand access as well. To

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

improve quality, for example, states can implement new or improve existing early learning standards to be developmentally and linguistically appropriate and to align with K–12 standards and related professional development systems. Over time, work must be done to thoughtfully and appropriately align these learning standards with assessment systems; however, this action must not be done in ways that push down the expectations or practices currently undergirding many K–12 assessment systems or that unfairly penalize early educators or children themselves.

States can also work with institutions of higher education to increase the number of individuals who are certified and trained to work in early childhood education and care programs—by providing scholarships, providing loan- and debt-forgiveness incentives to potential participants, and working to ensure credit transferability within and across the postsecondary education system. Additionally, federal, state, and local leaders must continue to face tough challenges head on in the years ahead, and they must resist the urge to scale back early care and education programs.

Conclusion

We cannot afford to wait for policies to be developed, codified, and funded before addressing the challenges or taking advantage of the opportunities outlined previously. Each of us is morally responsible for investing the time and resources required to change the life of a single child by ensuring that he or she has every opportunity to gain the skills and experiences needed for success. Sometimes this step is as simple as showing up and serving as a positive and stable presence in the life of a child. By investing in the early years—ensuring that young Black boys optimize opportunities and are supported as they transition through school—we can disrupt generations of poverty and improve families, communities, and our country. These investments will ensure success for Black boys and men; they will also have a profound, immutable, and positive impact on our national economy. We owe it to our children, and we owe it to ourselves, to teach the babies, including our boys of color.

References

Aud, S., Fox, M. A., & KewalRamani, A. (2010). *Status and trends in the education of racial and ethnic groups.* (NCES 2010-015). Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Institute of Education Sciences.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

Barnett, W. S. (2008). *Preschool education and its lasting effects: Research and policy implications.* Boulder, CO: Education and the Public Interest Center & Education Policy Research Unit.

Barnett, W. S., Carolan, M. E., Fitzgerald, J., & Squires, J. H. (2012). *The state of preschool 2012: State preschool yearbook*. New Brunswick, NJ: National Institute for Early Education Research.

Barnett, W. S., & Masse, L. N. (2007). Comparative benefit–cost analysis of the abecedarian program and its policy implications. *Economics of Education Review*, *26*, 113–125.

Children's Defense Fund. (2011). *The state of America's children, 2011*. Washington, DC: Author.

Codrington, J., & Fairchild, H. H. (2012). *Special education and the mis-education of African American children: A call to action*. Fort Washington, MD: The Association of Black Psychologists.

College Board. (2010). *Trends in college pricing, 2010.* New York: Author.

Halle, T., Forry, N., Hair, E., Perper, K., Wandner, L., Wessel, J., & Vick, J. (2009). *Disparities in early learning and development: Lessons from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study—Birth Cohort (ECLS-B).* Washington, DC: The Council of Chief State School Officers.

Heckman, J. J., & Masterov, D. V. (2007). The productivity argument for investing in young children. *Review of Agricultural Economics, 29*(3), 446–493.

Kunjufu, J. (2002). *Black students. Middle-class teachers*. Sauk Village, IL: African American Images.

Laughlin, L. (2010). *Who's minding the kids? Child care arrangements: Spring 2005 / Summer 2006*. Washington, DC: U.S. Department of Commerce, Economics and Statistics Administration.

Lynch, R. G. (2007). *Enriching children, enriching the nation: Public investment in high-quality prekindergarten.* Washington, DC: Economic Policy Institute.

National Association of Child Care Resource and Referral Agencies. (2006). *Child care in thirteen economically disadvantaged communities*. Arlington, VA: Author.

National Education Association. (2011). *Race against time: Educating Black boys.* Washington, DC: Author.

National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. (2007). *The science of early childhood development: Closing the gap between what we know and what we do*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University, Center on the Developing Child.

Rashid, H. M. (2013). Significant—but not sufficient: Quality early education and the development of young African American boys. In National Black Child Development Institute, *Being Black is not a risk factor: A strengths-based look at the state of the Black child* (pp. 28–31). Washington, DC: National Black Child Development Institute.

Schott Foundation for Public Education. (2012). *The urgency of now: The Schott 50-state report on Black males and public education*. Cambridge, MA: Author.

Schweinhart, L. J., Montie, J., Xiang, Z., Barnett, W. S., Belfield, C. R., & Nores, M. (2005). *The High/Scope Perry Preschool Study through age 40: Summary, con-*

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com

clusions and frequently asked questions. Ypsilanti, MI: High/Scope Educational Research Foundation.

Temple, J. A., & Reynolds, A. J. (2007). Benefits and costs of investments in preschool education: Evidence from the child-parent centers and related programs. *Economics of Education Review*, *26*, 126–144.

United States Government Accountability Office. (2010). *Child care: Multiple factors could have contributed to the recent decline in the number of children whose families receive subsidies.* Washington, DC: Author.

U.S. Chamber of Commerce. (2010). *Why business should support early childhood education.* Washington, DC: Institute for a Competitive Workforce.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. (2010). *Estimates of child care eligibility and receipt for fiscal year 2006*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Office of Human Services Policy.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. (2010). *Head Start impact study final report*. Washington, DC: Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation, Office of Human Services Policy.

Vandell, D. L., Beksky, J., Burchinal, M., Steinberg, L., Vandergift, N., & NICD Early Child Care Research Network. (2010). Do effects of early child care extend to age 15 years? Results from the NICHD study of early child care and youth development. *Child Development, 81*(3), 737–756.

Sample Chapter www.Styluspub.com