



EARLY CHILDHOOD EQUITY FUND

As Oregon becomes more diverse, it's imperative that our state invest in culturally-specific programs that lead to better outcomes for children of color. In Oregon, 36.5% of babies born are children of color and in five Oregon counties most of the under-five population are children of color, primarily from Latino families. Three additional counties are projected to see their under-five populations shift to majority children of color in the near future. While families of color and their young children are a large and growing part of Oregon's early learning community, they do not have access to programs specifically designed to meet their cultural or linguistic needs.



- A report by the Coalition of Communities of color finds disparities in access to pre-k experiences for children of color. Only 16% of Latino children, 27% of Native American children, 41% of Asian children and 32% of African American children have access. In the state's publicly funded Head Start program, 7,947 children - about half of the program's population - are children of color.
- In the state's largest home visiting program, 323 families of color enrolled in 2013-2014, and 232 remained in the program after a year. State funding for home visiting is restricted to three evidence-based models, without flexibility for culturally specific models.

The state's current list of funded programs each play an important role in the lives of the families they serve. They are a valuable and necessary part of Oregon's early learning system; however, Oregon must do more to meet the needs of children of color.

Despite strong results, current state funding for early childhood education is restricted to a small number of programs, keeping organizations that provide culturally specific programming from accessing public funds. Oregon needs a way to address this disparity. Oregon has many well-established, culturally specific early learning/parenting support programs that have a track record of supporting school readiness and family stability, and excel at recruiting and retaining families of color and families that do not speak English into their programming. Consider the outcomes that Latino Network's program, Juntos Aprendemos, is able to achieve for Spanish speaking families:



- 84% of children in the program increased their recognition of written letters and 85% entered kindergarten with an increased ability to match letters with their sounds
- 89% of children in the program increased their ability to count and 92% entered kindergarten with an increased ability to match numbers and quantities.
- 95% of parents report reading with their children at least 3 times each week.
- 100% of children were registered for kindergarten on time.

"In Juntos I have learned how to read stories to my daughter. I've noticed a big change in her, because even though she doesn't know how to read yet by herself, she pays more attention when I read, and she memorizes the whole book so she can read it back to me."

- Ventura Park Juntos Aprendemos parent participant

Through the creation of an Early Childhood Equity Fund, dedicated to culturally specific early learning services, Oregon can take an important step toward closing this opportunity gap for children of color in communities across the state.