



# Promoting Equity in Arkansas' Early Childhood System: Supporting Teacher Competencies in Working with African American Male Children



Presented by  
*Jacqueline Govan, ELAN Fellow*  
Head Start State Collaboration Office  
Little Rock, Arkansas



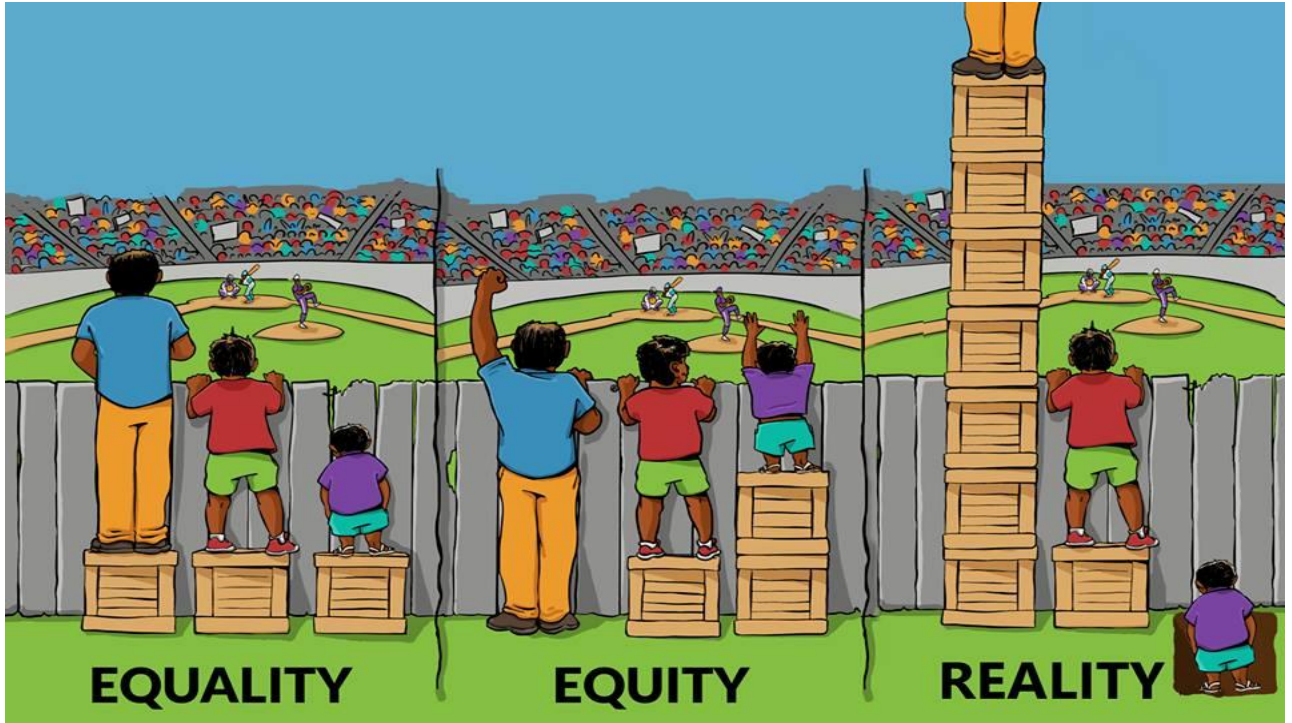
## ELAN's National Goals

- ❖ Support leaders in developing:
  - ❖ the **will and skill** to question personal assumptions, and institutional and structural policies and practices, and
  - ❖ **work collaboratively to develop a blueprint** to promote early childhood systems that are **explicitly and measurably equitable** and excellent for all children.
- ❖ Build the capacity of fellows to use a racial equity lens:
  - ❖ to **critically examine institutional and structural** policies and
  - ❖ practices in the distribution of state and federal resources (funding and services).
- ❖ Advance change to avoid disadvantaging racially and ethnically diverse children, families and members of the early childhood workforce.



## ELAN Theory of Change





“**E**ducational equity stands at the center of our nation’s growing effort to reform and improve public schools and provide greater educational options to every family.”



## History and Purpose



*The Arkansas' Civil Rights Heritage trail acknowledges the sacrifices and achievements made by those who have fought for justice in the State of Arkansas: "The Little Rock Nine."*

Arkansas' vision for a comprehensive, racially equitable, high-quality early childhood system is one that ensures that all children have an opportunity to develop and reach their full potential, without experiencing discrimination or bias.

## The Problem...

Arkansas has a high expulsion rate for African American (AA) males in its early childhood programs with many sent home to parents who do not understand neither the process nor what to do about it. Many teachers think the problem is solved once they remove a child who is disrupting their classroom, but, on the contrary, those teachers are setting the stage for that child to enter into a world of crime, violence, and incarceration. Four areas have been researched for this project:

- Poverty
- Achievement Gap
- Teacher Effectiveness
- **Expulsions/Suspensions**



### Poverty and Achievement Gaps in Arkansas



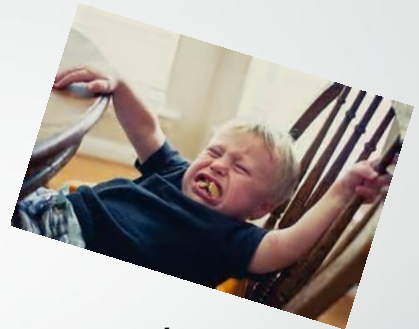
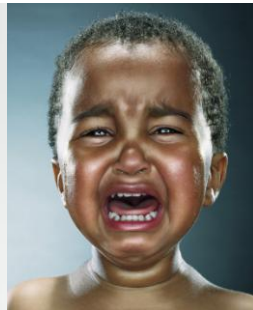
## The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools





## Why Focus on Expulsion and Suspension?

- Suspension and expulsion are stressful and negative experiences that can impact child outcomes.
- Expulsion or suspension early in a child's education predicts expulsion or suspension in later school grades.
- Young children who are expelled or suspended are as much as **10 times** more likely to:
  - Drop out of high school,
  - Fail a grade
  - Be incarcerated

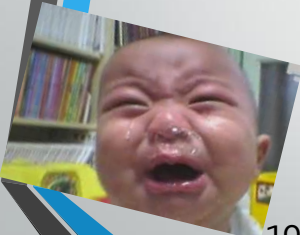


***16% of children screened in Arkansas Pre-k programs have serious behavior problems***

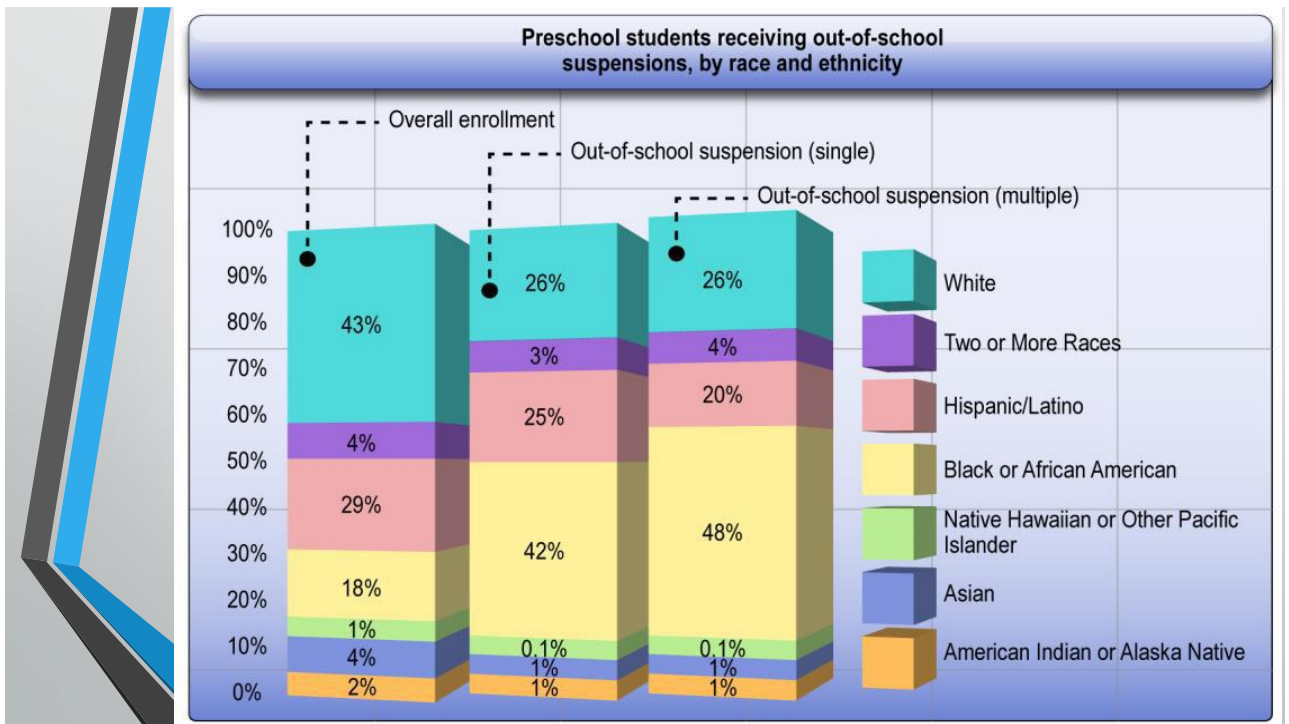
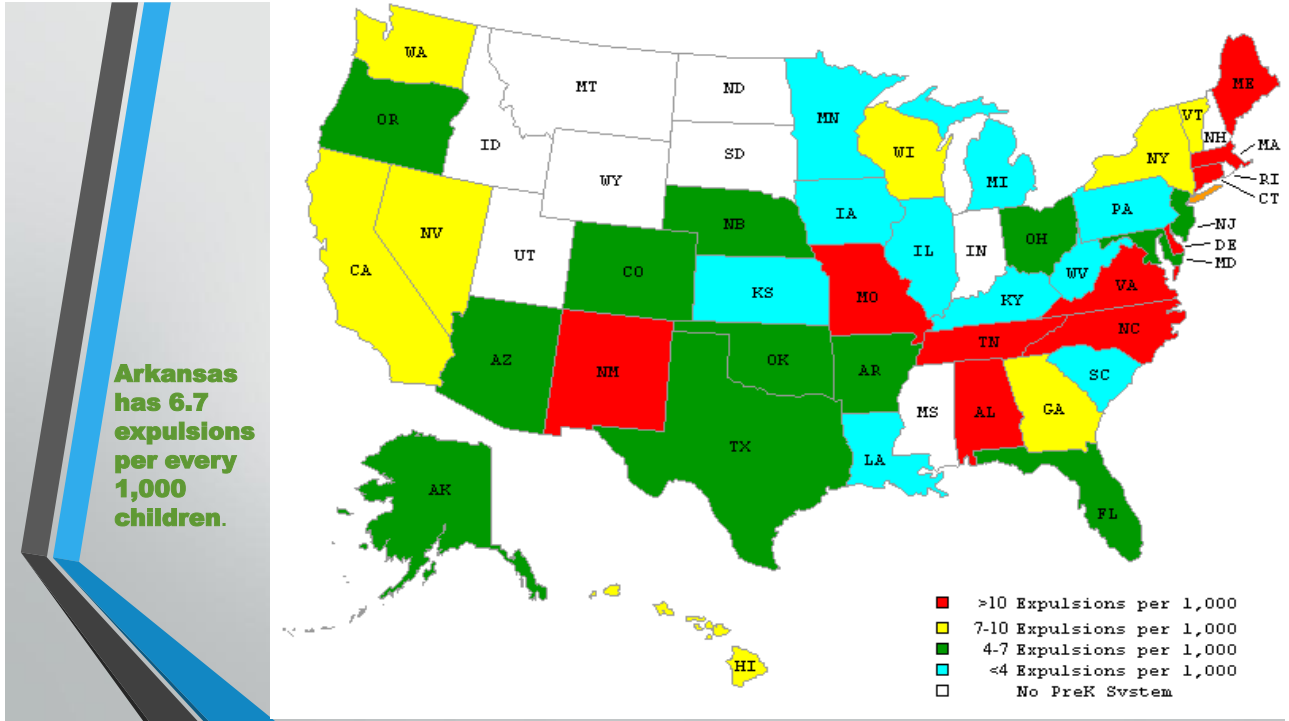
Pre-K Expulsion Rate = 6.7 / 1,000

K-12 Expulsion Rate = 2.1 / 1,000



10.4% of Pre-K teachers expelled at least 1 child in past year due to behavior problems







## Eliminating Strike Outs in Early Education Settings

	Strike One	Strike Two	Strike Three
	<b>Boys</b> 3½ times more likely than girls	<b>African Americans:</b> Expelled at 2 times rate of European Americans And 5 times rate of Asian Americans	<b>The system:</b> Private and faith-based child care And Long school day
	<b>4-year-olds</b> 50% more likely than 3's 	Make up 18% of preschool enrollment, but 48% of preschool children suspended more than once.	High teacher-child ratios And High teacher stress / feeling hopeless

### Behaviors are:

- Hard to manage
- Disrupt the class
- Difficult to control
- Can be unsafe
- Can make teachers feel ineffective
- Can anger parents

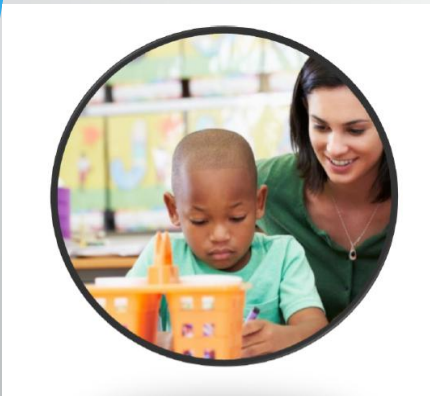




- Most problem behaviors can be addressed by looking at adult behaviors:
- Building positive relationships
- Putting preventive classroom strategies in place
- Specifically teaching children social and emotional skills
- Increasing positive behavior supports for children who need more help
- Designing Cultural and Diversified Teacher Competencies



## Supporting Teacher Competencies in Working with African American Male Children



*Teacher-educators have used various methods to foster change in teachers' thinking, attitudes, and behaviors regarding cultural diversity, but these efforts have produced mixed results because they often focused on content rather than the process of cross-cultural learning.*

*Children from culturally diverse communities, poor children, and children from marginalized racial groups have better educational outcomes when teachers have knowledge and practice skills that support home culture and language (Au & Mason, 1981, 1983; Dee, 2004; Knapp & Associates, 1995; Pewewardy, 1994).*

*Research suggests that both pre- and in-service early childhood teacher trainings have failed to prepare educators who can effectively teach children for whom English is a new language or second dialect, children of color, and children from economically marginalized communities (Ray & Bowman, 2006; Ray, Bowman, & Robbins, 2006)*

## Cultural Competence



*... requires that organizations:*

- have a defined set of values and principles, and demonstrate behaviors, attitude policies and structures that enables them to work effectively cross-culturally.
- have the capacity to (1) value diversity, (2) conduct self-assessment, (3) manage the dynamics of difference, (4) acquire and institutionalize cultural knowledge, and (5) adapt to the diversity and cultural contexts of the individuals, families and communities they serve.
- incorporate the above in all aspects of policy making, administration, practice, service delivery and systematically involve consumers, families, and communities



### ELAN PROJECT GOALS



Create an awareness of equity issues in the state;

Create an improved Early Childhood system and a racially balanced Professional Development System that result in the dismantling of structural inequities that limit opportunities for AA children and their families to succeed;

Revise the state's Core Knowledge and Cultural Competencies for teacher preparation to ensure that teachers are aware, prepared to teach, and work with children of color;

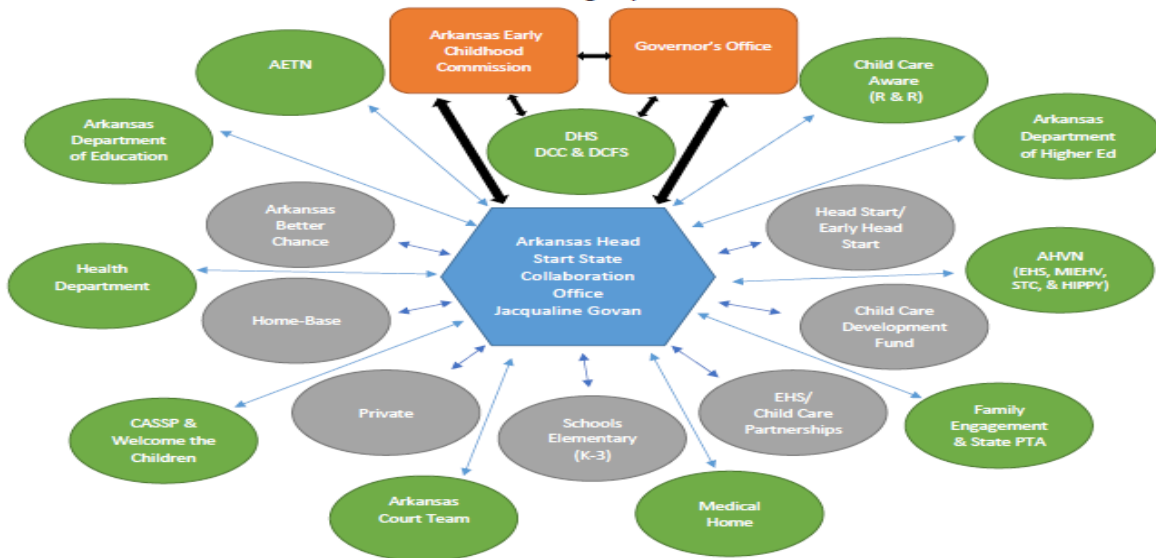
Outline concrete strategies, policies, and practices for early childhood programs to improve outcomes for African American males including:

- Creating interventions for African American males who show early signs of academic troubles;
- Closely monitoring the rigor of instruction and content they receive;
- Using aggressive recruitment strategies to hire more African-American males as teachers/role models; and Educating teachers to intentionally work with children of color.

Rewrite the rules to create recommendations to change laws, policies, and practices to address structural, institutional, and racial barriers identified in the state's professional development and early childhood systems.

## Arkansas' Equity Leader Action Network Sociogram

A sociogram is a graphic representation of a group's interpersonal relationships used to define, reveal, and sometimes discover a group's structure.



## What the ELAN Project Work Will Look Like...

- Statewide Equity Awareness
- Statewide Equity Survey
- Statewide Equity Cafes
- Equity Self-Assessment
- AR Paper: State Recommendations for Policy and/or Procedure Changes

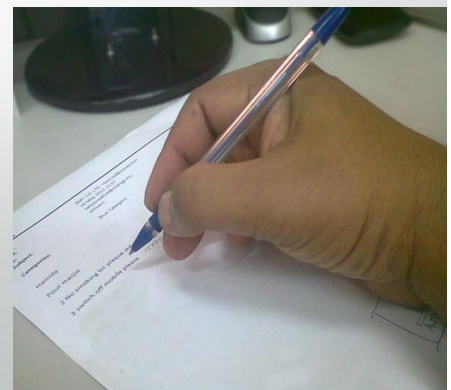




A set of one or more measurements that identify racial inequities using a specified population in the early childhood field will be used. For example, in a study of teacher effectiveness, the determinants of how that teacher works with African American males, with the unit of observation being the teacher in the classroom, one data point might be the strategies used or not used in teaching African American male children. Other data points may include race, gender, different racial perspectives from groups of people (parents, EC professionals, administrators, etc.), and before and after racial equity survey analysis.

## Rewriting the Rules for Institutional Change

Data suggests that important measures such as teacher effectiveness, racially integrated early childhood programs, and a change in class size can improve things for AA male children. Evidence shows that desegregation can bring with it stronger teaching, better financing, a more genuinely diverse group of children's backgrounds and abilities, and therefore better outcomes for children.





## Desired Outcomes:



- Arkansas has an early childhood professional development system that addresses racial equity, racial disparity, structural and institutionalized racism, and equality.
- Arkansas has in place a quality professional development registry (PDR) that captures data to support an equitable professional development system that links ECE professionals with key content, knowledge, and cultural competencies that prepares them for their work with children of color (African American males).
- Arkansas has in place an ELAN State plan that addresses recommendations to change laws, policies, and/or practices that address structural, institutional, and racial barriers identified in the state's professional development system.
- Arkansas' early childhood professionals and state partners are knowledgeable about racial equity, racial disparities, structural, and institutionalized racism.
- ***Arkansas has in place a BehaviorHelp initiative in order to assist programs who are in compliance with the new policy change (July 1, 2016), which states that no child will be expelled from any early childhood program in Arkansas.***
- ***AR Fatherhood and Family Initiative: Fathers Engaged and Empowered to Learn (FEEL)***



**ELAN Moving Forward...**

**D**ifferent  
**I**ndividuals  
**V**aluing  
**E**ach other  
**R**espectful  
**S**triving  
**I**ntellect  
**T**alents  
**Y**ears.



To push for excellence today

without continuing to push for access  
for less privileged students  
is to undermine the crucial  
but incomplete gains that have been made.

Equity  
and excellence  
cannot be divided.

Ernest L. Boyer



