

# Equity Challenge Day 13: Early Childhood

## Something to Consider:

*“We must acknowledge the broader diversity in and of the African American experience and celebrate that all Black children are born geniuses. Black students continue to pursue educational excellence despite the many unnecessary obstacles they face due to constructions and perceptions of race, class, gender, and sexual orientations in America.”*

— *David J. Johns*

## Early Memories and Future Success

From infancy through high school, children's educational outcomes are dependent on the quality of their learning experience. Quality [early childhood education](#), in particular, has been shown to have a significant positive effect on future success, because brain circuits are developing actively then. In fact, 85% of the brain's development happens before a child enters kindergarten. We know how important early childhood education is, and out those who are eligible for Head Start and Great Start Readiness Program (3 & 4 year olds) are making significant gains. As shown in our [Community Assessment on page 30](#), 57% of Ottawa County children do not attend preschool.

Social and emotional health are also key to children's development, we know that poverty, trauma and other [adverse childhood experiences \(ACEs\)](#) can have sustained, negative impacts on children's ability to succeed. [Dr Roy Wade](#) notes that "We see higher levels of childhood adversity among minority populations, but we need to acknowledge the role that historical inequities and disenfranchisement play in creating the environment in which such traumatic experiences are more likely to occur.

### Did you know?

Inequities in education start early with lifelong impacts on children and communities. This gap in opportunity is not due to individual actions, but rather on present social and economic conditions.

- High quality childcare is costly – [an average married couple in Michigan spends 22% of their annual income on childcare](#). Reflect back on Day 12 and consider how the high cost of care acts as a barrier to a family living in poverty's access to high quality programs for their children.
- Until third grade, children are learning to read. After third grade, they are reading to learn. In Ottawa County only 38% of third grade Blacks are reading at or above grade level; while their peers are at 41% Hispanics and 70% Whites.
- Researchers have found that “the persistence of the educational achievement gap imposes on the United States the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession” ([McKinsey & Company 2009, 6](#)).

**Share your reflections** on today's topic on social media using the hashtag [#unitedforequity](#) and tag [@ottawaunitedway](#).

# Today's Challenge

**Option 1:** Listen and watch this TED Talk ([The Economic Case for Preschool](#)) by Timothy Bartik who makes the macro-economic case for preschool education -- and explains why you should be happy to invest in it, even if you don't have kids that age (or kids at all). The economic benefits of well-educated kids, it turns out, go well beyond the altruistic.

**Option 2:** Learn about [Help Me Grow-Ottawa](#) and the [Ages and Stages Questionnaires \(ASQ3 and the ASQ SE2\)](#). They are fun to take as well as confidential and secure! Answer the questions about your child and in a day or two, you'll receive feedback to help celebrate your child's abilities along with age-appropriate activities and even suggested resources to support your family.

**Option 3:** Read this [U.S. News article](#) on how 'Education Inequality Starts Early' for children in households with low incomes.

**Option 4:** Watch this [2-minute CBS News report](#) on how systemic racism persists in early childhood education, where black preschool students are disproportionately facing harsh punishments, like suspension.