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## Asset-Based Kindergarten Readiness For Black Children In Preschool And The Implications For Racial Equity

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ASSET-BASED KINDERGARTEN READINESS FOR BLACK CHILDREN IN PRESCHOOL  
AND THE IMPLICATIONS FOR RACIAL EQUITY

by  
Jocelyn E. McQuirter

A capstone submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Arts in Education

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

Spring 2020

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## **Project Summary**

To address disparities in early childhood education, the Capstone Project sought to answer the research question: *How might teacher preparation utilize an asset-based approach to reduce bias in Kindergarten readiness for Black children in lower socioeconomic status households?* The exclusive professional development targeted educators and administrators including preschools and childcare centers. The development centered participants employed in Hennepin County regardless of experience working with African American children and/or living in low-income households. Participants experienced the website as a means for pre-service or in-service professional development. While the focus of the website centered on Black children, the framework is of value to those historically marginalized including race/ethnicity, socio-economical, gender, religion, and learners with learning differences.

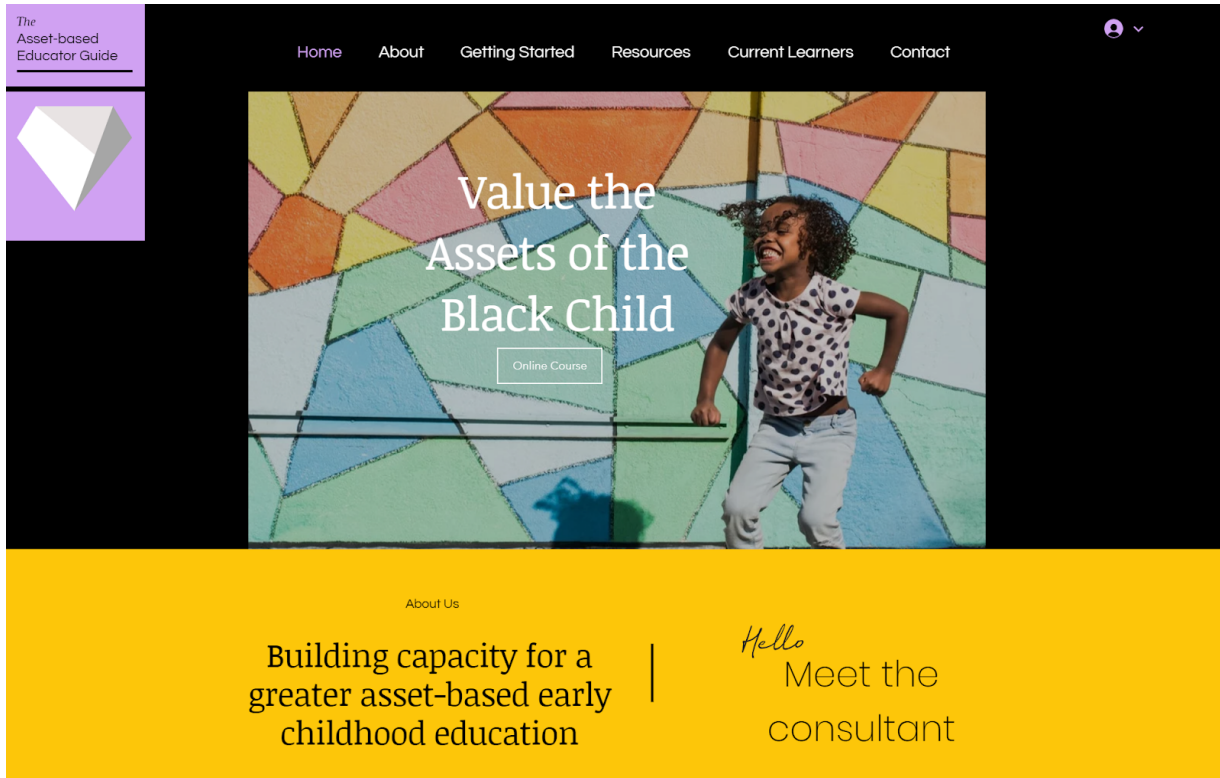
The exclusive website included six learning modules that provided learners a basis for understanding the context and application of asset-based thinking. Before beginning the professional development, two electronic forms were required for educators to complete. Preschool center administration (e.g., center director) verified educators' names and email addresses to generate access to the course. While sections of the website remained publicly available including About Us, Getting Started, and Resources tabs, the learning modules were designed exclusively for approved learner access only. In order to maintain the intellectual property and make data-informed decisions focused on the early childhood educator professional's audience, the decision was made to keep the full website access exclusive. Approved participants started the course by completing a user profile which detailed a high-level summary of their demographic and work history information.

Each module provided opportunities to reflect on identity, understand systems change and educators' leadership capacity, context-setting on asset-based versus deficit lens thinking, and learn effective approaches for the classroom. For the introductory lesson, discussed was critical consciousness, the ability to be aware of one's identity in relation to one's students including power and privilege. The module grounds the learner through an introductory Ted Talk where the term and its context in education is explained. Following the video, the educator is directed to recall what stood out from the video and consider work connections they may be reflecting on. The learning module ends with the educator responding to four prompts that allow space to unpack their identity, challenges, and anticipations of the learning journey. The modules remained consistent in design which included high-level content and context using elements like video and articles. Additionally, to help participants process the material, the modules included "stop and think" reflection activities where educators would respond to a relevant prompt to support processing and retaining the content learned.

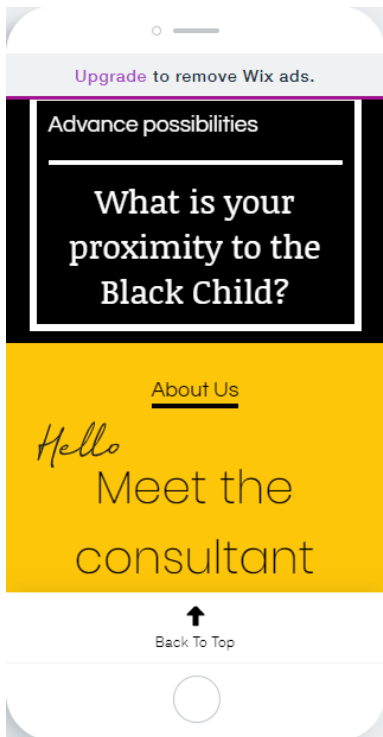
The researcher designed the website with a commitment to data privacy and steps to protect participant data. The pre and post assessment answers and scores were utilized exclusively for participant's personal growth. As learners navigate the learning modules, they were welcome to share as much or as little. Response aims were meant to support participants in recognizing their assumptions and biases along with how such perspectives influence their teaching. Throughout the learning, educators were encouraged to share with the anticipation that the more they shared and reflected, the deeper their personal learning might be. Because of the protected data commitment, participants could participate without feeling that learning would impact their standing with employers.

## The Project: Professional Development Website

Note: To maintain the intellectual property and focus on preschool educators, site access was exclusive for learner access only. Website: <https://jmcquinter01.wixsite.com/assetframing>



Desktop and mobile friendly learning formats.





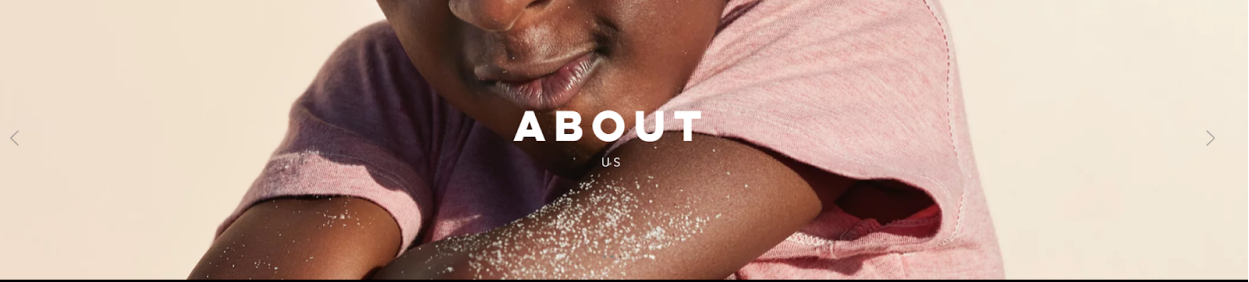
Education at every stage is an opportunity to reach one's fullest potential.

Early childhood education is a time of discovery, socialization, and unmatched brain development compared to any other time in a person's life.

Yet...not every child is fostered to succeed and embrace their identity in the "common" learning space. Education disparities existed then and remain an issue in the education system now.

Click the underlined text to read more.

High-level data on racial inequities that exist for Black children:



We're here to help you take your positive impact in early childhood education to the next level. This is how we do it.

### Course Objectives

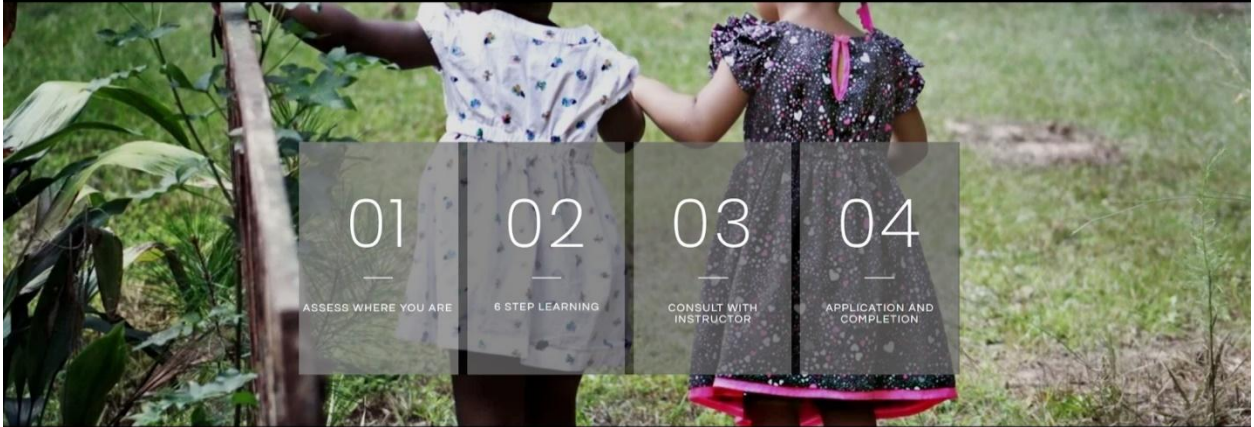
Aims for learning

After the completion of the course, participants will:

- ▶ Understand the distinction between deficit thinking and asset-based framing.
- ▶ Recognize the education system-level impacts and build leadership capacity for change.
- ▶ Foster strategies to advance asset-based thinking in the learning environment.
- ▶ Engage in reflection, introspection, and continued ways to advance self in a culturally connected practice.

## The Learning Journey

At a glance



# Learning at a glance



Module 1: Foundations

## Critical thought

Learn what educators can do to critically reflect during the course and beyond.

Get started →



Module 2: Systems and Leadership

## The Big Picture

Systems change, disparities, and what the everyday educator can do to influence change.

Get started →



Module 3: Key terms

## Asset-based

Learn the difference between deficit lenses and asset-based approaches.

Get started →



Module 4: Asset-based approaches

## Classroom Examples

Learn approaches to how and what you teach to be a more conscious educator.

Get started →



Module 5: Plan and Do

## Learning in action

Try out what you learned and reflect on ways to improve and plan future experiences.

Get started →



Module 6: Reflection

## Then and Now

What does the future hold for you, your preschoolers, and ways deeper impact is possible?

Get started →

## The course differentiation

Why participate

The training understands that no one educator can undo the decades of inequality and inequities in the education system.

Yet, for all that troubles education, I believe there are enough well-intentioned stakeholders - educators, parents/caregivers, administrators, policymakers that can commit to change where they can.

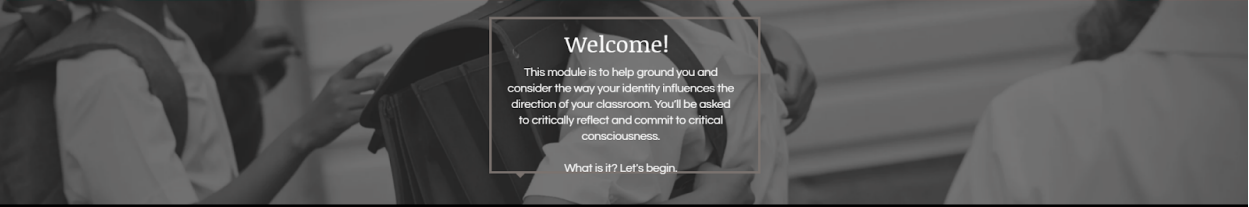
As your consultant through the training, it's important to know that growth is gold wherever you are in the stages of learning. I'm here as a resource and the rich resources are here for your advancement.



Module 1

# Foundations

Building a critical consciousness



## Welcome!

This module is to help ground you and consider the way your identity influences the direction of your classroom. You'll be asked to critically reflect and commit to critical consciousness.

What is it? Let's begin.

## What is Critical Consciousness?



The consciousness gap in education - an equity imperative | Dorinda Carter Andrews

# Resources

Know More, Do More

Hover and click the resource(s) title you'd like to learn more about. Note, resources will direct you to websites outside of this professional development space.

### The Basics

- Brookes Publishing Anti-Racism Early Childhood Resources
- Leveraging Students' Cultural Wealth
- 50 State Survey of Standards, Teacher Cultural Competencies
- The Power of Asset Framing
- The Conscious Kid
- The Wake Kindergarten
- The impact of not teaching children about race (video)

### Multi-media

- Brookes Publishing Anti-Racism Early Childhood Resources
- Black Authors of Children's Books
- Leveraging Students' Cultural Wealth
- 50 State Survey of Standards, Teacher Cultural Competencies
- The Power of Asset Framing
- The Conscious Kid
- The Wake Kindergarten
- Positive Racial Identity, Sharif El-Mekki
- The impact of not teaching children about race (video)

### Articles

- The urgent need for anti-racist education
- You can't love your Black children if you don't know them, Bettina Love
- What does valuing student's language actually mean?

### Data and Advocacy

- Minnesota Department of Education Kindergarten Readiness
- Minnesota Compass, Quality of Life Indicators
- Wilder 2018 Research: Early Childhood Education, Risk, Resilience and Resiliency
- National Association for the Education of Young Children, Equity Statement
- Video: A Tale of Two Teachers, Melissa Crum (12 mins)

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- Hey Black Child, Sankofa Read Aloud <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ca9aqf1k1Y4>
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