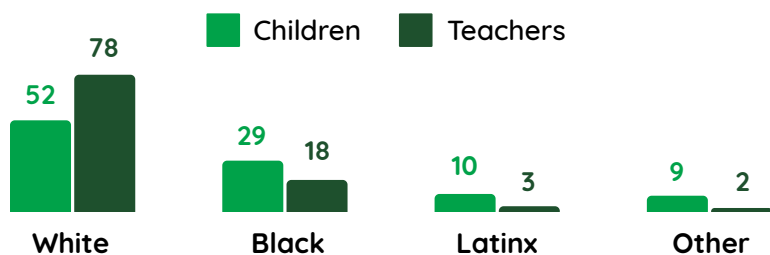


# 'WHERE ARE THE TEACHERS WHO LOOK LIKE US?'

## The Racial/Ethnic Disparity Between GSRP Teachers and Children

**Figure 1. Racial/Ethnic Makeup of GSRP Children and Teachers in 2021-22 (% of Population)**



Michigan's Great Start Readiness Program (GSRP) participants have become more racially and ethnically diverse in recent years. In 2021-22, GSRP provided 36,415 disadvantaged four-year-olds with high-quality preschool. Although the racial/ethnic makeup of the GSRP teachers largely matches with the state's population, the data shows that 78% of the teachers are White, significantly over-representing the 52% of the White students.

While the academic effects of racial matching between children and teachers are debated, increasing data implies that teacher-child racial matching impacts young Non-White children's behavior and how early childhood education (ECE) teachers respond.<sup>1-3</sup> Some studies found that Black and Latinx children paired with teachers of the same race tend to have fewer reported behavioral problems than those with White teachers.<sup>1-2</sup> Research suggests that families may connect more to ECE teachers matching their own racial/ethnic background,<sup>4</sup> which can increase their involvement with their child's program.<sup>5-6</sup> Similarly, families with a recent immigration experience feel more comfortable with ECE teachers with a similar culture or with whom they have a shared language.<sup>6-7</sup> Encouraging greater teacher racial/ethnic representation can help support Non-White children and families feel more understood by GSRP staff and allow GSRP to better reflect Michigan's increasing diversity.



Equitable and representative employment in government funded ECE for low-income children is a nationwide concern. In 2020-2021, only **eight states** had a percentage of White Head Start teachers equal to or less than to their percentage of White Head Start children.<sup>8</sup> A systematic review of current ECE hiring and credential practices is needed to prevent potential structural barriers for Non-White ECE teachers and create equitable employment opportunities for all.



To learn more about GSRP teacher-child racial representation by grantee, visit GSRP's [Staff vs Children Racial Disparities Map at cep.msu.edu/GSRP](https://cep.msu.edu/GSRP)

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