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Email: [press@erikson.edu](mailto:press@erikson.edu)

**New Funding to Expand Work of Racial Justice in Early Math Project**  
*Early educator fellowship cohort and national conference part of multi-year plan*

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The Racial Justice in Early Mathematics (RJEM) project – a collaboration between Erikson Institute and the University of Illinois Chicago (UIC) -- was recently awarded a \$900,000 grant from the Heising-Simons Foundation. The grant will support a variety of RJEM efforts, including newsletters, webinars, a national conference to be held in Chicago in 2024, and the development and implementation of an RJEM Teaching Fellowship program. The fellowship program will serve early childhood teachers who are committed to racial justice in their math teaching practices, supporting both their learning and the dissemination of the knowledge their work will generate.

Mounting research indicates the importance of early math (see, e.g., Duncan et al., 2007; Claessens et al., 2013). Large-scale national studies have demonstrated that math skills at kindergarten entry are an important predictor of later math and school success overall. Moreover, some scholars (e.g., Moses, et al., 1989) have suggested that access to math literacy is a civil rights issue. Democracy is strengthened when all people develop quantitative literacy skills that allow them access to math-related opportunities in society, and that allows them to understand the increasingly quantified world around them. Early math is currently being explored as a possible lever to an assortment of advantages, and it is vital that the field engages in discussion and deep reflection about systemic racism in early math education and how it can be dismantled.

The RJEM Teaching Fellowship is a one-year professional development, mentoring, and research opportunity intended to support kindergarten teachers from across the United States. Each of the six fellows will be awarded a stipend of \$7,000 for their participation. Applications are now open and will close mid-February. [Learn more here.](#)

Through individual mentoring sessions and group seminars, fellows will develop a robust understanding of how racial bias can shape early math instruction and young children's learning. The fellows will learn how to implement racial justice centered teaching practices in their classrooms, working to become aware of how implicit bias can affect math teaching, and striving to dismantle systems that promulgate racist ideas. By participating in a network of mentorship and peer support and sharing their experiences with the RJEM team and its Advisory Council of national experts, the fellows will contribute to a growing understanding of how early math teaching can further the cause of racial justice, and in so doing, better prepare young students for a lifetime of math learning success. The project will culminate in a national conference at Erikson Institute in the summer of 2024.

Established in 2019, the RJEM project is led by Dr. Jennifer McCray (Erikson Institute) and Dr. Danny Bernard Martin (UIC). The project draws on the expertise of a diverse group of stakeholders including parents, teachers, community organizers and researchers.

“Many early childhood teachers are invested in racial justice for their students, but there are not a lot of practical resources focused on the math education of younger learners,” says Dr. McCray. “Nor are there collective spaces where teachers can come together to learn and address these concerns.”

“This fellowship will allow six kindergarten teachers to explore practices to help them address racial injustice in their classrooms,” says Dr. Martin. “It will also allow us to learn alongside them and develop responsive resources to help other teachers.”

To learn more about the Racial Justice in Early Mathematics Project subscribe to the RJEM Newsletter by signing the [Call to Action](#).

For interview inquiries or more information, please contact Sheila Haennicke, 708.214.4933 or [shaennicke@erikson.edu](mailto:shaennicke@erikson.edu).

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