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Racial Justice in Early Math Project Receives \$800,000 *Grant to support new research and tools for preschool teachers*

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More educators and young children will benefit from racial justice practices in early math, thanks to new research, tools and increased awareness funded through an \$800,000 grant recently awarded to the Racial Justice in Early Mathematics Project (RJEM). Erikson Institute's Jennifer McCray, research professor, co-leads the RJEM project with Danny Bernard Martin, professor of education and mathematics at the University of Illinois Chicago. In partnership with Martin and the RJEM Local Planning Committee, McCray and her team will develop and manage the activities and deliverables funded by the award, which will run from January 2025 through December 2026.

Racial justice in early mathematics refers to efforts that identify how racial injustices manifest in early math education and co-create practices that foster more racially just teaching, learning, and researching in early math.

The grant, awarded by the Heising-Simons Foundation, funds activities to realize RJEM's goals, which are: to grow the community of stakeholders committed to racial justice in early mathematics; create learning opportunities for educators, administrators and researchers so they can center racial justice in their work; conduct research; and develop resources to share with larger educational audiences including parents, community organizers, funders and policymakers. Specific activities will include:

- Planning and hosting the First RJEM Immersive Learning Experience, an intensive, four-day professional development event for teachers, administrators, and researchers seeking to center racial justice in early math in their work;
- Developing and publishing a toolkit to help teachers implement the RJEM Organizing Framework;
- Planning and hosting the RJEM 2025-26 Webinar Series for a national audience;
- Conducting research centered on the impact of the RJEM Teaching Fellowship on the fellows' practice;
- Quarterly RJEM newsletters;
- Convening an Advisory Committee to contribute to all RJEM project activities and act as ambassadors for the work.

The RJEM work will be shaped by a Local Planning Committee (LPC), composed of Erikson's Early Math Collaborative team working with staff from the University of Illinois Chicago. Priscila Pereira, full-time director for RJEM, will continue to lead activities and operations under the new grant.

"One of the most important things we have been learning at RJEM is how difficult – if not impossible—it is to do racial justice work in math education on your own," says McCray. "Being part of a cohort of colleagues who share your wish to disrupt racism in early childhood settings is the best way to move the needle forward."

"We are excited about our emerging organizing framework for racial justice in early mathematics. This framework offers a vision for racial justice in early math, draws attention to the multi-level influences on RJEM, and provides multiple points of entry for different stakeholders to work toward their visions." says Martin.

In 2024, RJEM hosted the First National Meeting of Racial Justice in Early Math. This two-day event gathered over 100 participants from across the nation. It hosted 19 sessions on relevant topics, including classroom practices, school administration, family engagement, theoretical framings, language, immigration, math identity and socialization.

Learn more about the Racial Justice in Early Mathematics Project [here](#).

For interview inquiries or more information, please contact Sheila Haennicke, 708.214.4933 or shaennicke@erikson.edu.

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