



# The Future of Children

Princeton - Brookings

## Research-Practice Partnership Brief

### Scaling Early Childhood Evidence-Based Programs through RPPs

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This brief describes a research-practice partnership formed to scale ParentCorps as part of New York City's Pre-K for All initiative (launched in 2014 to provide free, full-day, high-quality pre-kindergarten for all four-year-olds) and ThriveNYC (launched in 2016 as a city-wide mental health initiative). ParentCorps is an evidence-based enhancement to pre-K to reduce racial and income disparities in children's educational and mental health outcomes. The RPP brought together two organizations: the Center for Early Childhood Health and Development at NYU Grossman School of Medicine (where ParentCorps is based) and the Division of Early Childhood Education (DECE) of the NYC Department of Education. In contrast to the typical "handing off" of evidence-based programs to the system, this partnership provided an opportunity to achieve meaningful impact at scale: as part of the RPP, ParentCorps developers, implementation leaders, and researchers sat alongside policy and practice leaders of the nation's largest school district over five-plus years to engage collaboratively on issues of implementation, evaluation, and improvement of systems-level policies and practice.

In reflecting on the potential for RPPs to build better and more equitable ECE systems, we are motivated by John Diamond's 2021 critique: "RPPs often avoid engagement with critical racial perspectives... With the current attack on critical in race theory and the 1619 project for challenging

White supremacy, and the efforts to consolidate White power through making it more difficult to vote, the urgency of this moment could not be clearer. If we cannot deal honestly with the organizations that make up RPPs as they are, the quest for racial justice will remain elusive."<sup>1</sup>

Throughout our partnership, both organizations invested in racial equity capacity-building. Examples include: research-practice partners engaging in racial equity training, including personally developing the consciousness and skills needed to recognize and interrupt racism in ourselves and others; the DECE investing in training from Courageous Conversations (a protocol for interracial dialogue) for pre-K educators; and ParentCorps strengthening content to scaffold educators in examining their own implicit racial bias and increasing awareness of the extent to which they may be acting on biases in their daily interactions with children and families.

The RPP has provided a context for the critical examination of pre-K policy and practice, with equity as a shared goal. Early on, stakeholders collaborated to build the rationale for prioritizing the DECE's annual allocation of programmatic supports (including a tiered model of ParentCorps)

