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SEQUAL San Francisco: Black Early Educators Assess Their Working Conditions

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University of California Berkeley

CSCCE Center for the Study of Child Care Employment

## SEQUAL San Francisco

# Black Early Educators Assess Their Working Conditions

## Background

This brief explores emerging patterns in Black early educators' responses to the San Francisco SEQUAL survey carried out by the Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE) in January-March 2025. To better understand their current working conditions—including professional and personal well-being, workplace supports, adult learning opportunities, decision-making power, and economic conditions—we examined the responses of 39 Black center-based teachers and assistant teachers and, when appropriate, compared their experiences to those of their 675 colleagues of other races and ethnicities.

### Key Findings

1. **Black early educators in San Francisco receive compensation comparable to their peers**. Unlike statewide and national patterns where Black educators earn less than educators of other races and ethnicities, Black educators in San Francisco earn similar wages, have equitable access to benefits, and expressed slightly less concern related to job security.

2. **Black early educators are highly educated and experienced.** Two thirds of Black educators hold an associate degree or higher and report working in the field of early care and education (ECE) for an average of 15 years. While Black educators also report similar access to training and professional development, the content does not always align with their needs or interests.

3. **Responses illustrate gaps in staffing, resources, and collaboration between Black early educators and their peers.** Compared to educators overall, fewer Black educators report adequate staffing, sufficient access to outside resources, that their input is valued, or that they work as part of a collaborative team.

### Implications for Policy and Practice

Although Black center-based teaching staff in San Francisco do not experience the racial wage gaps evident throughout California and the United States, compensation is only one aspect of an educator's working conditions. In comparison to their colleagues of other races and ethnicities, emerging patterns in the data indicate that fewer Black early educators in San Francisco report benefiting from supportive working conditions. Addressing the barriers and gaps in support identified in this brief will require sustained, well-resourced interventions that center Black educators' experiences and needs.

# Key Finding 1: Black early educators in San Francisco receive compensation comparable to their peers.

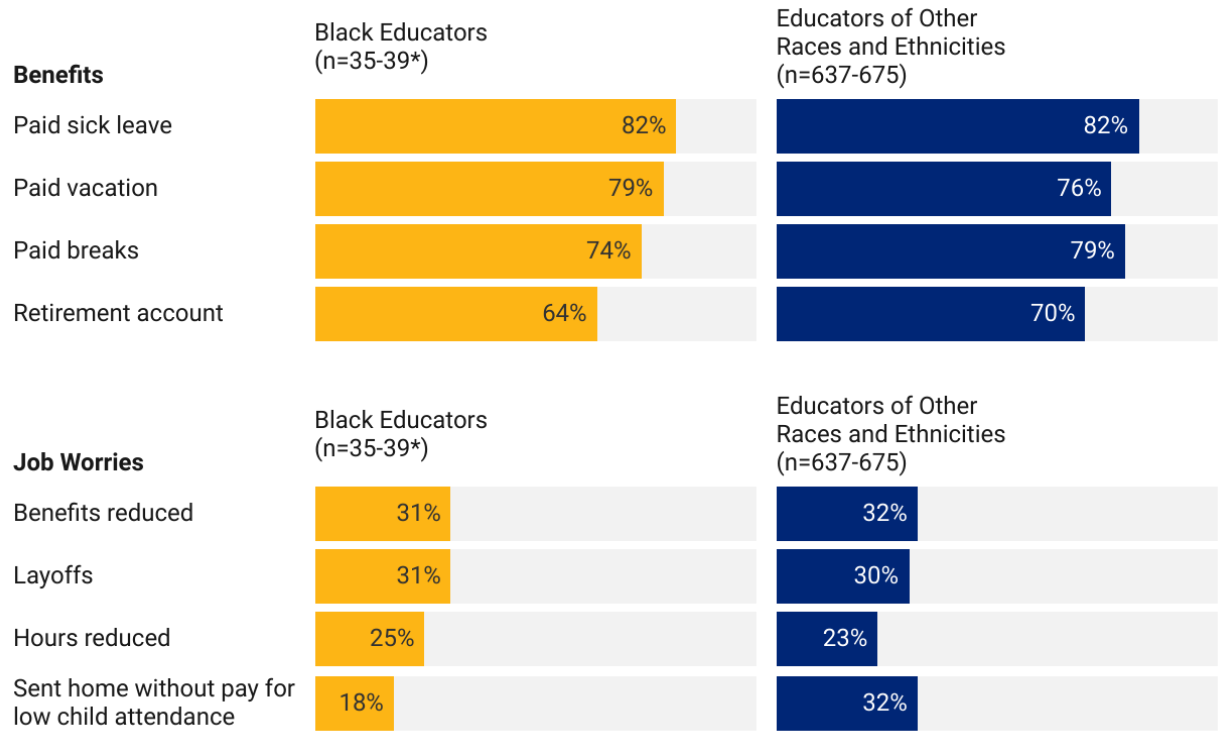
Black center-based educators (teachers and assistant teachers) in San Francisco[1] earned the same median hourly wage ($32.00 per hour) and a similar range in hourly wages as their colleagues of other races and ethnicities. Previous analyses of early educator wages throughout the state of California reveal significant racial wage disparities, with Black teachers making 86 cents for every dollar earned by a teacher of Asian descent (Kim et al., 2024). This wage differential adds up to $6,000 less annually for Black educators across the state. However, these disparities were not noted by respondents in San Francisco, indicating that local investments in early educator compensation are working to level the playing field.

Additionally, Black educators in San Francisco have access to benefits similar to other center-based educators, including paid vacation and sick leave (see **Figure 1**). They also responded similar levels of worry about job security and in some cases even less. Indeed, compared to all other educators, a smaller proportion of Black educators expressed concerns about being sent home without pay when child attendance is low (32 percent and 18 percent, respectively).

[1] For this Black educator-focused data brief, we applied race/ethnicity weights to correct for the under-representation of Black educators in our survey sample. Because this analysis centers on racial equity and comparisons between Black educators and educators of other races and ethnicities, ensuring proportional representation was critical. The weights adjust our sample to match the actual racial and ethnic composition of San Francisco's ECE workforce (per California Early Care and Education Workforce Registry data), ensuring Black educators' experiences are accurately represented and comparisons between groups are not biased by sampling differences. Furthermore, these findings reflect emerging patterns and not necessarily statistically significant differences.

**Figure 1. Early Educators' Agreement Regarding Workplace Benefits and Worries**

San Francisco SEQUAL, 2025




* Interpret with caution (n<40).

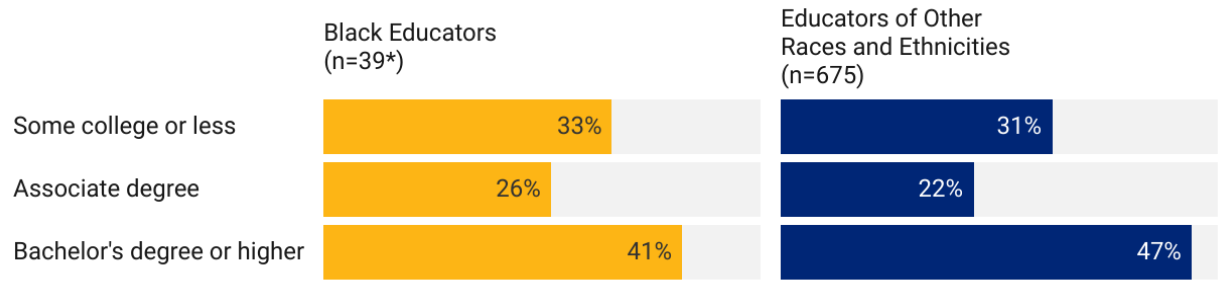
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

# Key Finding 2: Black early educators are highly educated and experienced.

Two thirds of Black center-based teaching staff in San Francisco hold a post-secondary degree, and more than one third (41 percent) of Black early educators responding to our survey have earned a bachelor's degree (see **Figure 2**). Black educators in San Francisco likewise demonstrated exceptional commitment to the ECE field, averaging 15 years of experience.

## Figure 2. Early Educators' Educational Attainment

San Francisco SEQUAL, 2025



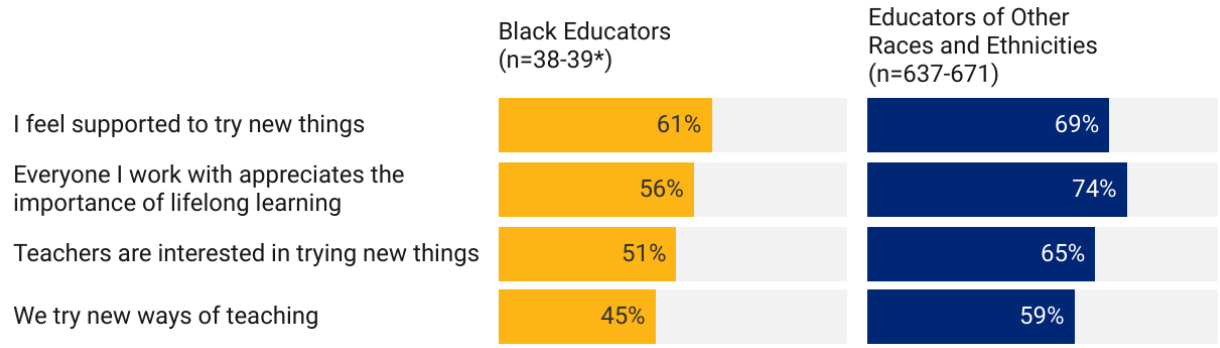

* Interpret with caution (n<40).
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

In addition to their formal degrees, **nearly all Black educators in San Francisco also reported participating in ongoing professional development, with 92 percent receiving job-related training in the past year.** Black early educators reported high rates of mentorship and conference attendance, as well, a testament to their commitment to continuous learning and improvement. However, fewer Black educators reported having a choice in professional development, and an even smaller proportion indicated that training content met their needs and interests. Compared to 73 percent of educators of other races and ethnicities, only 58 percent of Black educators in San Francisco said they had a choice in professional development opportunities. Black educators were also less likely than teaching staff of other races and ethnicities to indicate that training was available in key areas, including observation and assessment (62 percent, compared to 73 percent), supporting children with challenging behaviors (30 percent, compared to 50 percent), working with families (30 percent, compared to 47 percent), and supporting dual language learners (29 percent, compared to 50 percent).

Likewise, as seen in **Figure 3**, a smaller proportion of Black educators agreed that their centers foster a community of learning. Fewer Black respondents, compared to respondents of other races and ethnicities, agreed that their colleagues and centers encourage them to try new approaches or appreciate the importance of lifelong learning, which suggests that workplace culture may not fully support their professional growth.

**Figure 3. Early Educators' Agreement That Programs Foster a Community of Learning**

San Francisco SEQUAL, 2025




* Interpret with caution (n<40).
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

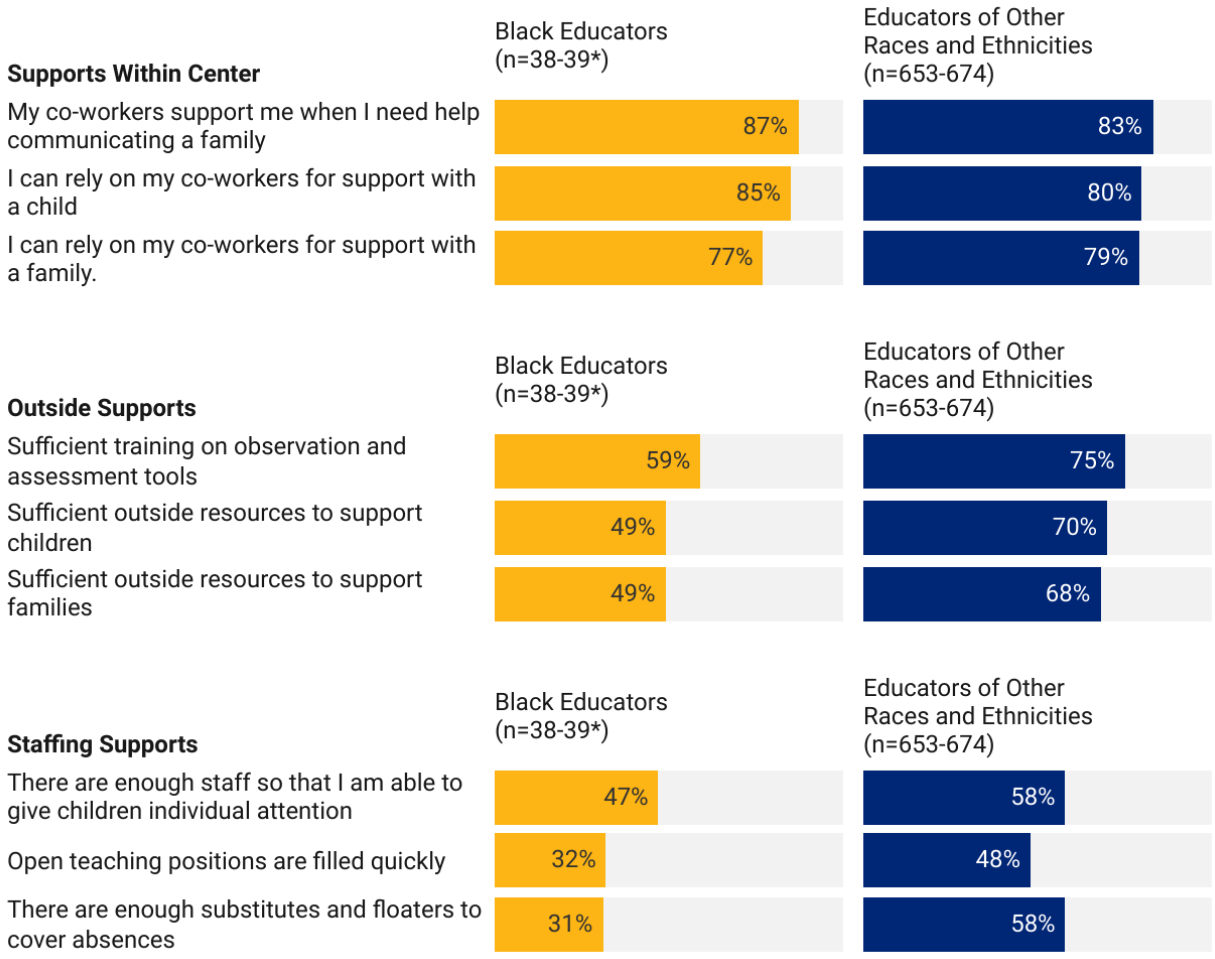
# Key Finding 3: Responses illustrate gaps in staffing, resources, and collaboration between Black early educators and their peers.

Black center-based teachers and assistant teachers feel well supported by their co-workers and well resourced within their centers. Regardless of race or ethnicity, around 80 to 85 percent of early educators indicated they could rely on colleagues for help with individual children and families (see **Figure 4)**. However, in comparison with their colleagues of other races and ethnicities, fewer Black educators reported adequate program staffing at their centers or sufficient external resources to support children and families.

Furthermore, smaller proportions of Black educators agreed that their programs had enough substitutes (31 percent, compared to 58 percent of educators of other races and ethnicities), sufficient staff to give children individual attention (47 percent, compared to 58 percent), and adequate outside resources to support children and families (49 percent, compared to 70 and 68 percent, respectively). While a variety of program characteristics might contribute to these differences, many Black educators perceive their programs as lacking the resources they need to thrive.

## Figure 4. Early Educator' Agreement Regarding Staffing Supports and Resources

San Francisco SEQUAL, 2025




* Interpret with caution (n<40).
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

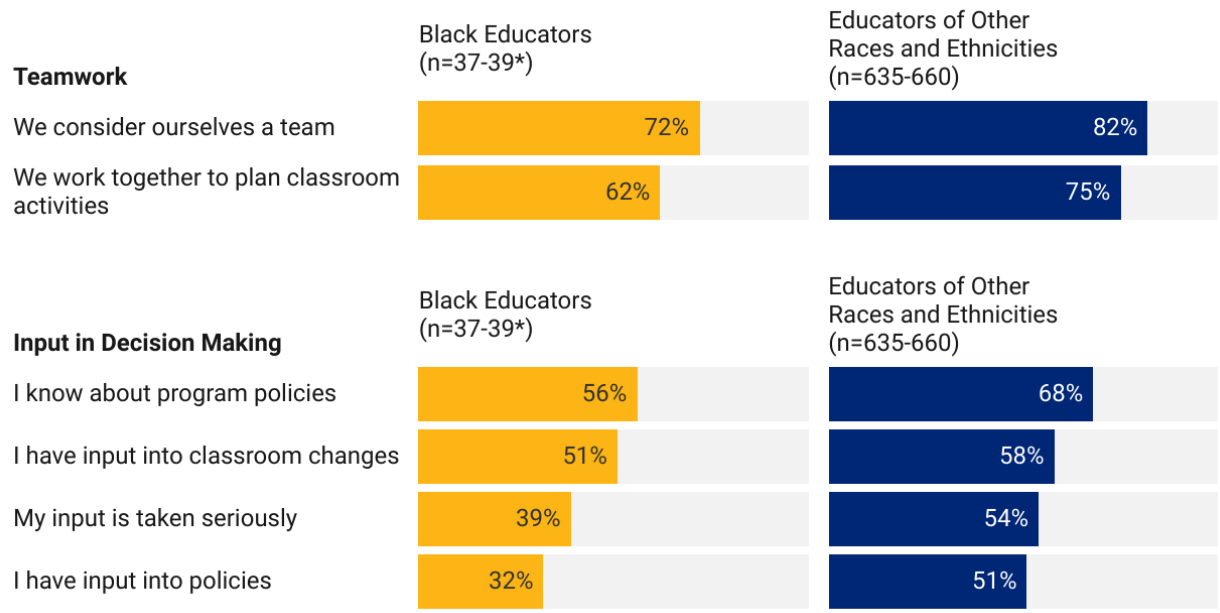
Furthermore, Black educators responded less favorably about elements of their workplace culture. A smaller proportion of Black educators in San Francisco reported having input into decisions and collaboration within their workplaces compared to educators of other races and ethnicities. As shown in **Figure 5**, fewer Black educators reported being kept abreast of program policies (56 percent, compared to 69 percent of educators of other races and ethnicities), having input into policies (32 percent, compared to 52 percent), or having their input taken seriously (39 percent, compared to 56 percent).

Changing the lens from the overall culture at their center to the culture within their individual classrooms, fewer Black educators agreed with statements about teamwork with their co-teachers, including having input into the design and planning of classroom activities. Ensuring access to resources, supporting educators' autonomy, and providing opportunities for educators

to have input into program and classroom policies may contribute to higher levels of educator collaboration and satisfaction.

## Figure 5. Early Educators' Agreement Regarding Teamwork and Input in Decision Making

San Francisco SEQUAL, 2025




* Interpret with caution (n<40).
Source: Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley

# Policy Recommendations

The San Francisco Department of Early Childhood is making significant progress in early educators' working conditions, including compensation. While many responses from Black center-based teaching staff indicate that their working conditions are similar to—if not better than—those of their colleagues of other races and ethnicities, they also reveal areas where targeted interventions could further strengthen working conditions for all. The following recommendations work to strengthen conditions related to professional development, staffing, access to resources, and educator input and autonomy. Addressing these recommendations and the disparities identified in this brief will require sustained, well-resourced interventions that center the experiences and expertise of early educators, particularly those of Black educators.

**Enhance professional development relevance and choice.** The San Francisco Department of Early Childhood can work with Black early educators to ensure training topics and modalities meet their professional needs and interests. Centers can increase educator choice by creating individualized professional development plans. Likewise, public agencies can expand content in areas where gaps exist, such as observation and assessment, supporting children with challenging behaviors, and working with families.

**Expand opportunities for educator input and collaboration.** ECE partners in San Francisco can support centers to create formal structures for collaborative planning and decision making, including dedicated time for planning with colleagues. Processes and opportunities can also be developed to allow educators to provide input into classroom and program policies.

**Improve staffing and access to resources.** The San Francisco Department of Early Childhood can invest in substitute pools to maintain adequate staffing ratios. Additionally, ECE program partners can help strengthen connections between programs and external resources for children and families, recognizing that access may vary across neighborhoods and groups of educators.

**Foster learning communities.** Early educator affinity groups can support programs in creating authentic learning communities where educators can engage in ongoing professional dialogue and reflection on practice.

# References

Kim, Y., Austin, L.J.E., & Hess, H. (2024). *The Multilayered Effects of Racism on Early Educators in California: An Examination of Disparities in Wages, Leadership Roles, and Education.* Center for the Study of Child Care Employment, University of California, Berkeley. https://cscce.berkeley.edu/publications/report/effects-of-racism-on-california-early-educators/




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## About CSCCE

The Center for the Study of Child Care Employment (CSCCE), founded in 1999, is the national leader in early care and education workforce research and policy. CSCCE provides research and analysis on the preparation, working conditions, and compensation of the early care and education workforce. We develop policy solutions and create spaces for teaching, learning, and educator activism. Our vision is an effective public early care and education system that secures racial, gender, and economic justice for the women whose labor is the linchpin of stable, quality services.