Early childhood is a pivotal life stage. The most important brain developmental period in a person’s life occurs from pregnancy to age 5 and the first few days, months, and years of a child’s life are crucial for health, language development, relationships, social and emotional skills, and more. Positive early childhood experiences (shaped by parents, caregivers, and communities) set the foundation for a child’s ability to achieve their promise - in terms of their future wellbeing, social mobility, opportunity, prosperity and life outcomes. For more visibility into the critical importance of early childhood, check out our "Why Invest in ECD" resource.

Frustratingly, due to structural racism and other systemic inequities, not all children are being set up to fulfill their promise. Across most early childhood development indicators, children of color, children experiencing poverty, and children with special needs face inequitable outcomes, as do the people who support them - their parents and caregivers.

By the Numbers

- Maternal health: [Black and Indigenous women and birthing people are 2.5 times more likely to die during childbirth compared to white women.](#)

- Maternal health: Women of color are twice as likely to experience perinatal mood disorders as compared to White women.²

- School readiness: Fewer than half of US children living in poverty are ready for kindergarten at age 5¹

- High quality, affordable childcare: a mere 10% of childcare settings meet the definition of high quality and the US ranks last among developed countries on affordability.⁴

- Equitable Compensation: childcare providers (who are disproportionately women of color) on average are paid less than half of what kindergarten and elementary teachers make.⁵

While early childhood is recognized as a key lever to address structural racism and systemic inequities, the early childhood development (ECD) field is a complex, fragmented ecosystem with dramatic underinvestment.

It’s characterized by:

- Less venture support for ECD social entrepreneurs (e.g. targeted accelerators, incubators, business coaching, and other supports)
- Less financial capital dedicated to ECD
- Difficulties attracting, compensating, and retaining talent
- Fewer resources to sustain and scale new ideas in the field.

---

**PROMISE'S ROLE**

Our vision is that all children, no matter their background, can fulfill their innate promise.

Our commitment is not only to our kids but to their birthing people, families, caregivers & teachers.

In this work, we center on those who are the furthest from opportunity because of structural and systemic barriers. We know that when we do, outcomes for all groups improve.

**WHAT DO WE DO?**

We support and connect social entrepreneurs in the early childhood field, who are leading and innovating to drive positive outcomes from the prenatal stage through age 5.

We create networks, convenings, programs, and content that are uniquely tailored for ECD social entrepreneurs and the funders, partners, and stakeholders who can help advance their work.

We believe that by building and nurturing relationships and critical connections across the early childhood ecosystem, we will foster opportunities to catalyze innovation and impact in the field.

We focus on influencing key, long-term outcomes in the early childhood ecosystem that will drive progress toward improving outcomes and eliminating opportunity gaps for children, caregivers, and communities.

**WE STRIVE TO SEE:**

1. Transformative and impactful ventures that improve outcomes for children and families at scale.

2. A dramatic influx of capital and talent into the ecosystem that adequately meets the substantial and important needs of the field.

For more information, visit [www.promisestudio.org](http://www.promisestudio.org)
OUR WORK AND IMPACT TO DATE

HEADLINES FROM OUR FIRST FOUR YEARS

Promise is a dedicated team of mission-driven social entrepreneurs with diverse backgrounds spanning birth equity, early childhood education, childcare, K-12 education, ed-tech, family engagement, media, technology and other categories of social impact. We are proud of what we’ve been able to accomplish over the last four years.

**01**
Promise has centered Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in our work

**02**
We’ve supported leaders to envision and execute a bigger, bolder way of achieving impact and growth

**03**
We’ve catalyzed collaborations, providing support so partnerships gain real traction and scale impact

**04**
We’ve contributed to the dismantling of silos in ECD leading to an inflow of new ideas, funding, and talent around unsolved challenges in the field

For more information, visit www.promisestudio.org
01

PROMISE HAS CENTERED JUSTICE, EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION IN OUR WORK.

In order to create equitable outcomes for kids, caregivers, and the community, we have to be intentional about proactively building programs, a team, a venture community, and an innovation ecosystem that are anti-bias and anti-racist. Our work in this area is an ongoing journey, but we are encouraged by our progress.

Ourselves – Anti-Racist Institution Building

- Values: We defined and aligned on our organization’s core values and formalized our commitment to Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion.

- Personal Learning: We created structures for personal and professional development on a variety of core topics such as anti-racism, white supremacy, indigeneity, and liberated gatekeeping.

- Leadership: We evolved from an all-white and male leadership team to one that is bigger and includes women and BIPOC identities.

Our Programming

- Proximate Leaders: We explicitly centered racial equity in our programming and are committed to working more closely with BIPOC and proximate leaders. We prioritized these identities in the selection process for our annual Promising Ventures Fellowship Program, Show+Tell Demo Series, and other programs.

- Equity Advocacy: We chose equity as the main theme for our last two Show+Tell events: Equity & Justice In Early Care and Education and Birth Equity & Justice and nationally promoted the work of 19 innovative ventures working in these spaces.

- Need-finding & Co-Creation: We collaborated with our partners - National Equity Project, Surge Institute, and Bridgespan - to better understand the equity challenges that early childhood nonprofit leaders of color (ECLOC) face. In that process, we convened 38 ECLOC and 17 capacity building providers (many of whom themselves were also BIPOC leaders) to understand their lived experience and the supports they identify as critical to achieving their aspirations for impact. We are in the process of developing programming to meet these needs.

Download our Justice, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion statement here.

Artwork by Lauren J. Turner
Featured Artist In Show+Tell Birth Equity & Justice

For more information, visit www.promisestudio.org

4/9
WE’VE SUPPORTED LEADERS TO ENVISION AND EXECUTE A BIGGER, BOLDER WAY OF ACHIEVING IMPACT AND GROWTH.

We’ve built a vibrant community of social entrepreneurs with ambitious missions for transformational change in the ECD field.

Ventures in the Promise Venture Network

Serve populations that face barriers to equitable outcomes

Are BIPOC led or founded

We met ventures where they are, offering practical, actionable guidance, coaching, and connections to funders.

Office hours in 2020 alone

We launched the Promising Ventures Fellowship, with our partners Sesame Workshop and The Center on the Developing Child at Harvard University.

Through our deepest level of personalized support, we accelerated 3 cohorts and more than 30 social entrepreneurs in achieving their goals for impact and growth.

Our impact: 94% of fellowship ventures were on track to achieve goals for growth, 100% were on track to achieve goals for impact, and 89% were on track to achieve annual funding goals. (data from 2020 fellowship)

"As a direct result of work done and things I learned through the Promise Venture Studio Fellowship, I was instrumental in securing a 250K grant for Parent Corps!!!" - Kai-ama Hammer, Parent Corps

Year Three Fellowship Cohort:

89% Women

59% Black, Brown, and Indigenous Leaders

For more information, visit www.promisestudio.org
We’ve helped hundreds of ventures communicate their impact, potential and needs and generated over 4,000 direct connection offers for them.

103 ventures have participated in our signature Show+Tell demo series and through the process have clarified and communicated their visions into 3-5 minutes demos of their work. Equally important, they’ve gained transformative connections with funders, partners, buyers and other field stakeholders.

4000+ Connection requests generated through Show+Tell

45 average of total requests to connect per venture

“In all my years as a nonprofit entrepreneur (now almost 20 years), I’ve never had access to such great feedback and training on pitching. It is so rare as an entrepreneur to have time to step back for learning, and even more rare as a nonprofit entrepreneur to have access to high-level business expertise. Already - I feel incredibly lucky to be part of this community.”

- Bethany Robertson, Co-Founder & Co-Director, ParentsTogether

“We continue to use our PVS pitch as an engagement tool; the framework we developed with the support of the PVS team has substantially advanced our communications with prospective investors and partners.”

- Aly Richards, CEO Let’s Grow Kids

We’ve established a growing, comprehensive database of ventures in the early childhood ecosystem.

We’ve established a database of 378 ventures in our venture index and have created a searchable, sortable database tool used to identify partners, customers, and grantees. It has become a comprehensive list of leading organizations creating real change and impact in early childhood.

378 Venture Profiles

“We just published a piece highlighting the opportunity in early childhood. I wanted to thank you for all the energy you’ve invested in the venture index! I used the company list there as a cross reference against Pitchbook for a more comprehensive slice of the ECE market.”

- Chian Gong, Partner, Reach Capital

For more information, visit www.promisestudio.org
We amplify the impact of funders.

We help funders understand the ECD landscape, source high-quality opportunities, amplify the impact of their portfolio, and connect with other funders for greater impact.

"(Promise offers) pragmatic, actionable advice directly to the real leaders in real situations"
- Amy Rodde, Valhalla

82% of funders rate Promise as more helpful than other available resources when it comes to connecting with high-impact ventures.

91% of funders rate Promise as more helpful than other available resources when it comes to showcasing innovation in early childhood

We create space for transformative partnerships.

Then
"We would not have gotten a pilot with Avance were it not for this fellowship (it) led to a pilot with their family child care providers in the Valley (that is) significant because it’s opened us up to a new market.”
Tammy Kwan, CEO, Cognitive Toybox (2019)

Now
"We’re still working with (Avance) and have expanded considerably to support their quality matters work - their work in supporting unlicensed and licensed providers in different cities in TX)
Tammy Kwan, CEO, Cognitive Toybox (2022)

For more information, visit www.promisestudio.org
"Thank you for breaking down the walls in philanthropy and making the process of raising money more transparent and equitable."

Daisy Han, Embracing Equity

"I can’t tell you how many of my work relationships trace back to Promise... (it) is so hard to measure in terms of impact, but I hope you know that your goal of building an early-childhood ecosystem is absolutely happening."

Bethany Robertson, Parents Together

"... today was divinely situated. YOU all were divinely positioned. I am feeling hope in gratitude. Thank you for collectively creating this space."

Early Childhood Leaders of Color Convening Participant
THE ROAD AHEAD:
WHAT’S NEXT FOR PROMISE

Promise exists to catalyze innovation and impact in the ECD ecosystem. We’ve learned what that commitment truly means since we began this journey in 2018.

With new funds flowing into the field and swelling energy around the importance of early childhood, now, more than ever is the time to deeply invest in this work.

For Promise, the road ahead includes:

a. Continuing / deepening Justice, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion in building an anti-racist organization and in our programming
b. Supporting BIPOC and proximate innovators in ECD
c. Accelerating innovations that are poised to drive equity for children and families

Will you join our community as we envision a world where all children can achieve their full potential and promise?

a. Sign up for our newsletter and stay tuned for our updates
b. Get in touch with us if you have any thoughts / ideas / suggestions on how we might work together
c. Join our network if you are an early childhood social entrepreneur
d. Reach out if you’re in our network and we can help!

THANK YOU TO OUR PARTNERS!

For more information, visit www.promisestudio.org