

Leading the Way for Men in Child Care

An Ode to Male Leadership in ECE

by Cecilia Scott-Croff, Calvin E. Moore, Jr., and Jean Y. Plaisir



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Cecilia Scott-Croff, Ed.D., is a National Council on Black American Affairs (NCBAA) Fellow, Salzburg Fellow, Borough of Manhattan Community College (BMCC) Leadership Fellow and Global Leader. She serves as president of the New York Association for the Education of Young Children (NYAEYC) and is in her 18th year as the executive director of the BMCC Early Childhood Center Inc. where she is also an adjunct assistant professor.



Calvin E. Moore, Jr., Ph.D., was appointed CEO of the Council for Professional Recognition in May 2020. He's the council's first CEO to hold its early education credential, the CDA®, and a former member of the council's governing board.

He is the author of "The Thinking Book Curriculum: For Early Childhood Professionals," "Men Do Stay: Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Male Early Childhood Teachers," and many other books. Moore has received a literary award from AIM and New Light Ministries for his book, "Agape Declarations," the Maria Otto Award for Leadership from the National Family Child Care Association and the Billy McCain, Sr., Memorial Award from the Alabama Head Start Association.



Jean Y. Plaisir, Ph.D., is a full professor in the teacher education department at Borough of Manhattan Community College, City University of New York. Plaisir holds a doctorate and two master's degrees from Columbia University Teachers College, with studies in TESOL, comparative and international education, and applied linguistics with an emphasis in bilingual education and information technology. He completed his undergraduate studies at Hunter College/CUNY, where he earned a bachelor's degree in classical studies (Latin and Greek) and romance languages (French and Spanish literature). Plaisir has been featured on a variety of publications and recruitment efforts seeking to increase men's participation in the early childhood education workforce.

Men's involvement in early childhood education (ECE) is an endeavor worth promoting, supporting, and encouraging in both personal and professional life. The rationale is simple: young children will benefit from positive, high-quality teachers of all genders who can teach them about different ways of nurturing, learning, and growing up as authentic and empathetic people. Such an understanding is crucial for exposing young children to different models of femininity and masculinity that can provide them with the tools to create more diverse, equitable, and inclusive spaces and relationships in the future. The two teacher educators featured in this article have committed themselves to teaching, supporting, and mentoring men in the sector to help achieve this noble outcome. Through their extensive record of leadership, practice, and scholarship, both Calvin E. Moore and Jean Y. Plaisir have contributed an illuminating body of work and cultivated a life's commitment to recruiting and supporting men in this sector.

Meet Calvin E. Moore, Jr., Ph.D.

Upon his return from military service, Calvin Moore once pondered what to do with his life. Owing to the prodding of his persistent aunt, he decided to seek employment in early childhood education. Moore earned his CDA and began his journey on the path to leadership. His work in early childhood education was inspired by his own experience

with early care. Moore attended a Head Start program as a child and his engagement with the staple program came full circle when he was appointed regional manager of Atlanta's Head Start Administration. He did not stop there, instead, he began to write and share what he learned about working with children. His book "Men Do Stay: Recruiting and Retaining Qualified Male Early Childhood Teachers" challenges harmful stereotypes about men that hinder their advancement in our field. Moore elevates the need to celebrate and support men in early care and education.

Moore and I met and have admired each other's work from afar for many years. You can't help noticing him when he enters a room. He is approachable, listens attentively, and is forever smiling. Known as "a natty dresser", he never fails to tell you two things about himself, how he entered the field with only his CDA and how it is a great first step. Although a doctorate-level professional, he still holds on to his credentials and is committed to increasing awareness across the country about the impact of the Child Development Associate Credential. To date, there are more than one million recipients of the CDA credential.

Meet Jean Y. Plaisir, Ph.D.

At age 17, following the death of his father in 1978, Jean Plaisir came to the United States from Haiti to join his mother and his youngest sibling. At the urging of his mother, he assumed an active role as the representative of the family, got involved in decision-making, listened to worries, and provided much-needed social and emotional support in the household. He looked after his younger siblings and served as the father figure for his 2-year-old brother. A few years later, Plaisir helped to raise two nephews whose father was absent in their lives. From the mid-1980s to about 2007, he was deeply involved with his local church as a Sunday school teacher and a youth minister in Manhattan's Upper West Side, Manhattan Valley, and West Harlem where he started off working in various capacities as a tutor, teacher, and program leader serving primarily young Black and Brown men and women. In those roles, he made strong connections with many families and youths. Little did he know that his devotion to serving young people in his family as well as his extensive records of community service would pique a professional interest in promoting and mentoring men who work with children from PreK and beyond.

I met Plaisir some 16 years ago at the beginning of my tenure at Borough of Manhattan Community College, a place we fondly call "BMCC". We have worked to support each other since. BMCC serves just under 17,000 students seeking increased opportunities for academic advancement,

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they may obtain an undergraduate degree from one of 150 majors to choose from. Plaisir maintains a deep connection with the Childhood Center at BMCC where he assigns students to complete their internships, and whenever he spots a new male in the classroom, he always explores possibilities for supporting and encouraging him to pursue higher learning and credentials. Thus far, he has impacted the lives of countless men in and outside the education field.

In 2009, Plaisir made a passionate call urging the New York City public school system to commit resources to attract and retain more male teachers in its schools. “New York City public schools need more male teachers,” he said. His clarion call reached the ears of many elected officials and inspired the New York City Department of Education and the City University of New York (CUNY) to jointly develop a teacher education initiative called “New York City (NYC) Men Teach.” One of the primary goals of NYC Men Teach is to recruit, develop, and mentor Black and Brown men to teach in the city’s schools.

Plaisir’s research is focused on developing strategies to increase the footprints of males in ECE, and he is a founding member of the NYC Early Childhood Research Network, which brings together researchers, policymakers, funders, and others to promote actionable research that will inform public policy for children from birth through age eight. He is also involved in collaborative work and research activities with colleagues from more than fifteen countries, and his scholarship is recognized both nationally and internationally.



How do we retain and increase positive Black and Brown male role models for our field?

Uplifting More Male Voices in Early Care and Education

The question becomes, how do we retain and increase positive Black and Brown male role models for our field? How do we begin to plant those seeds that allow us to continue to cultivate male leadership, and why is it so hard? Here are some thoughts:

Pay disparities turn away early childhood professionals with impressive academic pedigrees because they earn far less than those in public schools with the same credentials. (A person with an MBA earns far more than someone with an MS ED.) This must change.

The juxtaposition between the stigma males have faced for years for choosing careers in early childhood and the desire to earn a living wage discourages men from joining the sector. A male teacher says, “I love the work but can’t live on the pay.”

The undervaluation of Head and Heart work deters many men and women from working with children.

Lack of qualified mentors and ongoing support drastically impacts the retention of males in ECE.

There are few opportunities for male teachers to share their own lived experiences.

If the field created a platform for more males to share their trajectory into ECE, it certainly would give our field a boost.

Featuring Jean Y. Plaisir and Calvin E. Moore in this issue provides an opportunity to learn about their journeys in ECE. They are mindful and nurturing men who positively impact the lives of children in their respective families—each one has two daughters and other children that they nurtured—and they have been serving as mentors to male teachers in the field. Both Moore and Plaisir continue to produce much-needed educational research to shed light on men who work with young children.



THE WHOLE child ALPHABET

How Young Children
Actually Develop Literacy

by Stacy Bengé, M.S.



The Whole Child Alphabet is a lively and intelligent book that transforms how educators approach literacy. Connecting movement, play, and child-led activity to the foundational skills necessary for early literacy development, *The Whole Child Alphabet* is a timely invitation to active, joyful learning.

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