

STANDING IN SOLIDARITY WITH BLACK LIVES MATTER



The response to the homicide of George Floyd, including the unjust killings of Breonna Taylor, Tony McDade, David McAtee, Charleena Lyles, Manuel Ellis and too many others, has led to unrest across our nation. In our communities is a demand for change long overdue. We acknowledge the persistence of racial injustice as a painful reminder of how much work must still be done. Recent events call on us to reflect on the type of educational community our Black students and educators deserve, and the urgency to join our partners in action to transform that community into one that affirms and sustains the students and families we serve.

We will continue to support and advance initiatives that address inequities, disparities, and barriers within the overall educator preparation and workforce system. We will continue to grow to be better partners, to challenge inequitable policy, to listen, to elevate voices of the Black community, and to work in partnership every step of the way.

To further demonstrate our solidarity with the Black community, we will outline the ways in which our agency is actively taking steps to become an anti-racist organization.

Professional learning

Each member of the PESB staff attended the WA DEI Summit together in January. After staff returned, we organized to learn about racial identity development, eliminating institutional inequities, & dismantling structural racism. As a result, we have made several changes throughout our agency.

As a professional learning community, we capitalize on individual expertise to demonstrate the ways in which single issues, such as race, class, and gender, intersect, resulting in multiple forms of oppression for people who represent various categories of difference.

We are prioritizing the reflective learning and stories of staff and board members on our journey to become an anti-racist agency. We hope to make our experiences available to the public and our partners through ongoing communications.

Ongoing job-embedded, professional learning is essential to becoming an anti-racist agency. We have been and will continue to participate in a mandatory, agency-wide book study to build our collective understanding of race and racism.

Internal processes and policy transformation

In addition to learning about the identities of ourselves and others, we are also changing the ways we approach our internal agency work. We have organized ourselves into workgroups to examine our internal processes and design tools to eliminate equity gaps. This includes transforming hiring practices, meeting structures, communication tools, and guidance for project planning and policy development with a focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion.

Partnership and community engagement

Our external work is also under review. We are actively planning ways to be in partnership with the Black community to better inform policy and practice. One particular area of focus is diversifying Washington's educator workforce. We support this major strategy by removing barriers into the profession, revising assessment policies, ensuring instruction of culturally responsive teaching practices, and developing resources for district HR departments to better support their Black educators and educators of color. These strategies increase the likelihood that:

- Black children will experience culturally responsive and sustaining education;
- the school-to-prison pipeline can be disrupted, preventing mass incarceration;
- Black students will be more likely to complete high school prepared for college or career;
- quality education will ensure Black families have access to quality physical, mental, and dental health care; and
- the Black community will experience the full benefits of citizenship of the United States, including life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness.

Commitment to do the work

The beginning of the Declaration of Independence is relatively well-known. What is less familiar to most people is the last line, "... [W]e mutually pledge to each other, our Lives, our Fortunes, and our sacred Honor." We invoke these words to pledge our commitment to racial equity and justice in the work in which we have authority. PESB will continue to stand in solidarity with the Black community because Black lives matter.

#BLACKLIVESMATTER
#BLACKSTUDENTSMATTER
#BLACKEDUCATORSMATTER