

Racial Equity Coalition: Fostering Love and Liberation within our Communities



BACKGROUND

At United Way of King County, we believe that education is a key strategy to ensure that youth of all races, ethnicities, cultures and genders grow up capable of achieving success in an ever-changing world. We support students through a continuum of education from early years through middle school and into college. And we support learning that incorporates the rich culture, diversity and heritage of our many communities into our students' education.

What are we doing? We made an investment in the whole young person not just the one that shows up for the school day. So we sought to build a program led by community-based organizations, that help empower and nurture youth of color and their families, who are their first and most important teachers.

How are we doing it? We started funding the work of the **Racial Equity Coalition (REC)**, a self-formed group of 14 Black, Indigenous and other organizations of color (BIPOC) committed to giving BIPOC youth a holistic education by addressing needs and concerns unique to those youth. REC has launched an after-school program that fosters love and liberation and reinforces students' cultural identity by immersing them in lessons rooted in their own races, ethnicities and heritage.

So, what's Love and Liberation?

“Love and liberation” is a term that embraces a holistic approach to learning. It employs methods that support the liberation and well-being of young people as well as their families and the community. With love and liberation, all students thrive when BIPOC youth are provided with academic support and resources that address such factors as cultural identity, social emotional skills and coalition building.



WHY THIS WORKS

Based on listening in the community and our work in real time, we know that when youth weave together the strengths of the dominant culture with their own history, they do better in school and in life. This strong personal identity increases the relevance of school subjects, builds resilience, and empowers youth to navigate a school culture that does not positively reflect their identity back to them.

“I’ve definitely become more outspoken and confident in youth organizing. I became more independent and got used to taking initiative more often.”

—Youth participant in FEEST

The results? **99%** of Racial Equity Coalition program participants reported having developed a positive cultural identity.

92% of Racial Equity Coalition program participants reported developing a sense of belonging to their schools and/or communities.

In addition, young people in REC after-school programs also report learning how to better advocate for themselves and others.

MEET THE RACIAL EQUITY COALITION



The Timeline

United Way starts Reconnecting Youth campaign to support students who've had their education disrupted before completing high school.

2015

2018

United Way transitions its broad out-of-school-time youth program funding to an intentional focus on nonprofits using a frame of positive cultural identity.

United Way releases Reconnecting Youth Sustainability Report.

2019

United Way and REC awarded government funding through Puget Sound Taxpayer Accountability Account (PSTAA) from King County to supplement United Way's youth positive cultural identity investments.

2020

Three-year pilot begins.

2021

King County releases its report on the pilot and decides whether to continue PSTAA funding for 2024 and beyond.

2023

THE FUNDING

REC uses a participatory grantmaking approach that allows coalition members to determine how to prioritize and allocate funding. For some organizations, this can help shift the dynamic of competition that divides communities into collaboration.

“[REC programming]] has done so much for us, especially with school supplies, homework help, forming groups that help students do their homework, leadership classes, drop-out prevention and drug prevention. It also makes it possible for their parents to learn the same classes so they can work together to be successful at any school.”

Yusuf Bashir, founder and executive director, Falis Community Services

For more information about this program and its impact, please contact **Joy Sebe** at **206.461.5056** or **jsebe@uwkc.org**.