

Read Ahead's Anti-Racism and Anti-Oppression Commitments October 2020

Since 1991, Read Ahead has provided mentorship for thousands of students, but we have for too long ignored the systemic racism and inequities that pervade public education, philanthropy, and the non-profit sector in which Read Ahead operates. Like so many others, we are horrified by the senseless murder of George Floyd and many other Black human beings at the hands of law enforcement before and after that incident. We have been grappling since May 2020 with how systemic racism permeates all aspects of day-to-day life in America.

We realize that for Read Ahead to have the greatest possible impact on our community, it is imperative that our staff and board engage with intentionality in the ongoing individual and collective work needed to undo the corrosive impact of systemic racism, and that we put equity at the center of everything we do. Elevating the voices and perspectives of Black, Latinx, Asian, Indigenous, people of color, and historically marginalized groups is essential, and we believe that by building trust and collaborating we can co-create better outcomes for everyone.

The set of commitments below represents a first step toward becoming the type of pro-Black, anti-racist, and anti-oppression organization we strive to be. Accountability is paramount to advancing in this work, and we commit to holding ourselves accountable and measuring our progress, which includes sharing regular updates internally and externally. We invite the entire Read Ahead community to hold us accountable as well. You can contact us [here](#).

Read Ahead Staff Leadership	<p>We commit to confronting our privileges and how we have benefited from systemic inequities and white supremacy. We acknowledge our responsibility to ensure that equity is at the center of all aspects of our work.</p> <p>We recognize our responsibility to actively drive this work forward and commit to creating spaces in which voices from across the organization are elevated, valued, and heard. We will demonstrate our commitment to becoming a pro-Black, anti-racist, anti-oppression organization through our words, actions, and resource allocation. We will continue to listen, learn, and hold ourselves accountable to these responsibilities.</p>
Board of Directors	<p>We are forming a standing committee on the board to ensure that diversity, equity, and inclusion remain centered in our work, and that we continue to learn, identify specific and measurable improvements we can make in our recruitment, decision-making, and governance practices to advance that goal, and hold ourselves accountable to these commitments. We commit to ensuring our board is representative of multiple perspectives, experiences and backgrounds, including race and ethnicity, and that all voices are heard and valued.</p>
Read Ahead Staff Team	<p>To become actively anti-racist, we will continue to educate ourselves, evaluate our progress, and hold ourselves accountable to make progress. We are working with a facilitator to support our growth.</p> <p>We commit to adopting a framework for decision-making that centers equity.</p> <p>We will build and apply equitable hiring practices to eliminate bias. We commit to re-evaluating our recognition and promotion processes to create clear paths for internal leadership and growth.</p> <p>We will foster a culture of belonging where all teammates' voices, especially those working most closely with our students and families, are elevated and embraced.</p>
Mission, Vision, and Values	<p>We will evaluate Read Ahead's mission, vision, and values through a diversity, equity and inclusion lens, to understand whether they reflect our commitment to becoming an actively anti-racist, anti-oppression organization.</p>
Students and Families	<p>We commit to centering the voices of our students and families. We recognize the power and agency our students and families hold and will develop ways to more empathetically engage, listen, understand, and empower them as partners in our mission.</p>
Mentors	<p>We recognize that representation matters, and that our mentors are our partners. We commit to recruiting more diverse mentors and measuring our progress towards this goal.</p> <p>We will build systems and structures to ensure our mentors are prepared to work with students effectively, within and across differences. We will support mentors to understand how systemic racism impacts our students' experiences, and we will engage them as active partners in our work.</p>
