



WA-BLOC

# ANNUAL REPORT

2022-2023

Building Leaders of Change through  
Transformative Education and Social Action

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# About Us

We are WA-BLOC, a majority Black-led grassroots organization rooted in south Seattle with a mission to build and nurture intergenerational leaders through transformative education and revolutionary social action. We envision South Seattle as an epicenter where Black and brown youth and families thrive and our school communities are joyful, restorative spaces of high quality learning. Our programming is designed to build strong, literate, and empowered scholars prepared to make a difference in themselves, their families, communities, nation and world. WA-BLOC partners with southeast Seattle Public Schools, community partners, and most importantly, our students and families, to create a collective vision for equitable education that is culturally responsive, trauma-informed and restorative.



Since launching our organization in the summer of 2016, we have served thousands of BIPOC K-12 scholars, employed 90+ Black and brown college-aged leaders from our south Seattle neighborhood, trained hundreds of educators and administrators in Restorative Justice practices, cultivated the foundation for school-wide Restorative Practices in multiple schools, supported student-led direct action leading to significant policy change, and provided transformative summer programming for hundreds of Black and brown scholars and families.



# Our Team



Left to right, top to bottom: Anab Nur, Sierra Parsons, Katie Brantley, Lena Nguyen  
Laura Wright, Mari Ramirez, Keisha Kelley

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# Goals for 2022-23

We had a tremendous 2022-23 year and are excited about the progress we've made towards our goals. Our primary goals for this past year were:

- Continue and expand our (elementary) school-based Restorative Justice programming in Seattle Public Schools
- Increase the number of students and educators trained and activated in their school communities as Restorative Practitioners
- Cultivate relationship and partnership with Seattle Public Schools Restorative Justice team and collaborate to build a unified framework for Restorative Practices and systems change in Seattle Public Schools
- Facilitate in-person Freedom Schools Program @ Emerson Elementary School Summer 2022 for 50 K-5th graders (after two years of virtual programming) to prevent summer learning loss and increase scholar reading levels
- Design new summer Freedom Schools Critical Literacy Curriculum and (elementary) Restorative Justice community building curriculum to support school-wide implementation of Restorative Practices.







# Turn up for Freedom Schools!

After two years of virtual programming, our Freedom Schools program returned to Emerson Elementary School for summer 2022. The Freedom School program model has positively impacted youth for over three decades through a focus on academic growth and social action. This summer our program in particular excelled in building authentic community and relationships, exploring issues impacting our community, improving scholars' reading and writing skills, and nurturing scholars' confidence and positive self image. 50 K-5th graders participated (78% of participants identified as Black/African American; 95% low income). Based on post assessments and surveys:

- 91.3% maintained or gained in instructional reading levels and did not experience summer learning loss
- Scholars demonstrated an average increase of 7 months in instructional reading levels (12 months for K-1)
- 93% scholars agreed Freedom Schools helped them in Academic Engagement, Conflict Resolution Skills, Self-empowerment, Civic Engagement
- Scholars also showed positive changes in all five competencies of social and emotional learning (SEL) skills (self awareness, self management, responsible decision making, social awareness, relationship skills)
- Scholars responded that Freedom Schools helped them prepare for school



"I love that my child looked forward to coming to Freedom Schools every day. She got up on her own and took initiative to get herself ready. I love the independence and confidence boost. Thank you for another amazing year!"

—parent of Freedom Schools scholar



## Schools as Agents of Change

Freedom Schools provides scholars with a safe space to be themselves and to lead exploration of difficult but important issues that they may not have opportunities to deeply engage with during the school year (immigration, racism, climate change, disability justice, media influence, etc.).

Over the course of five weeks, scholars prepared for a Day of Social Action (DOSA), an important part of each Freedom Schools summer. Scholars then brainstormed how they wanted to take action against gun violence and climate change; they went to the local library branch to research these topics, used that research to write speeches, and planned a march around the school neighborhood. Scholars' families and Emerson Elementary Administrators attended DOSA and reflected on the "clear joy and confidence scholars experienced this summer.





# Creating sense of belonging; healing in schools through Restorative Practices

## School Partnership Work

In addition to our continued partnership with Emerson Elementary (year 5!), this year we were able to support several additional school communities including Pathfinder K-8, South Shore K-8, Madrona Elementary, and Dunlap Elementary. This work included leading professional development trainings for staff, co-leading circles in classrooms, engaging staff with critical Race and Equity conversations, and more. We are hopeful for the new beginnings of these school partners!



WA-BLOC Restorative Practitioners Lead a circle for school partner

## New Partnership with City of Seattle and opportunity for expanded services

This year we were able to establish pivotal relationships with the (newly formed) Seattle Public Schools Restorative Justice team along with the City of Seattle Department of Education and Early Learning (DEEL) that are contributing to a cross-sector collaboration expanding restorative justice in Seattle Schools. Through this partnership, WA-BLOC led “Introduction to Restorative Justice Practices” series with a focus on elementary school implementation for school leaders and educators. In total, 30 folks/(repping 9 Levy-funded schools) completed the Intro to RJ series. After completing the Intro to RJ series, schools were able to consult with WA-BLOC for an 10 additional hours to further cultivate RJ practices in their classroom/school community based on their respective school's vision/needs/strengths.



Intro to Restorative Justice training for elementary educators and leaders

## New Partnership with SPS RJ Team

Restorative Practices have been happening for a long time in both our schools and communities without the support or recognition from our institutions like Seattle Public Schools. After years of community advocacy for Restorative Practices, SPS hired a 1.0 FTE RJ Program Manager in Spring of 2021. It is important to us that SPS is led and informed by youth and practitioners who have been doing this work for a long time. So, this past school year, WA-BLOC co-hosted a two-part “Restorative Justice Kickoff” event for SPS educators and building leaders to build community with one another, explore what is working well and supports are needed for RJ practices/systems in schools, and building shared vision/framework for Restorative Justice in SPS. The events averaged 85 folks each session with representatives from 26 schools and included 16 community practitioners.



SPS RJ team, WA-BLOC and Huayruru hosting Kickoff event for SPS educators and leaders in Spring 2023



# Highlight: Emerson Elementary School X WA-BLOC

## The Data Shows!

Since launching our year round partnership with Emerson Elementary in 2018, suspensions have decreased by 90% and school climate surveys show significant increases in student feelings of caring/belonging, fairness, and addressing conflict. 100% of staff have been trained in Tier 1 and 2 Restorative Practices (ongoing with yearly turnover). This year, our Restorative Justice Coordinators facilitated x number of Tier 1 restorative interventions and x number of tier 2 interventions. Former Principal, Erin Rasmussen says, *"Partnering with WA-BLOC to implement Restorative Practices and Systems at Emerson has been one of the most transformational and impactful work that I have been part of."*

## The Zone - Student-led Restorative Practices

Student leadership for Restorative Practices in schools is essential! Through our 8 week program "The Zone," students gain skills in social emotional learning, circle keeping, addressing conflict and peer mediation, and leadership. By the end of the program, students become certified "Peacekeepers" and support their peers and classrooms through leading community building circles and activities and peer mediation. At Emerson Elementary School, 60 4th-5th graders completed the program this school year. For 5th grade graduates moving on to Aki Kurose, we've connected with the school's Restorative Justice Coordinator to help build a pipeline of student leadership for restorative practices.



Two Emerson Eagles student Peacekeepers

## Family Engagement through Restorative Practices

WA-BLOC also engages families in Restorative Practices. This year, we hosted two "Restorative Justice Family Nights" during which Emerson families and community members came together to learn about restorative practices in the school community and how they can implement practices at homes. Student Circle Keepers led a presentation and families had the chance to sit in circles facilitated in their home languages (6 diff languages offered) and share their hopes for their children.



Centerpiece activity from RJ Night

## Weekly Community Building Circles in Classrooms

Twice a week, every classroom (yes every!) participates in a community building circle based on different themes of identity, community, and culture through a curriculum guide co-created by WA-BLOC and Emerson teachers. Weekly community building circles help classrooms and schools build values and shared agreements/guidelines that can be returned to if/when issues arise in a restorative way. Community building circles also create collective experiences and ways to learn about our peers and teachers in unique ways. By establishing regular community building (Tier 1) circles and practices, Tier 2 (conflict and harm) instances reduce.



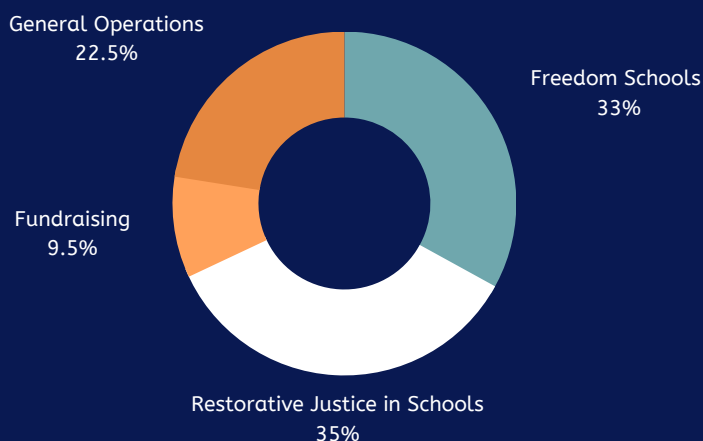
Student Circle @ Emerson Elementary





# Financials

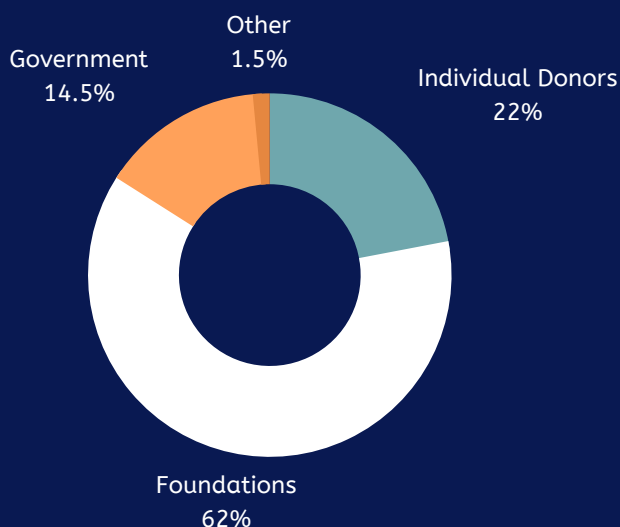
## Total Expenses: \$734,431



## Key Takeaways

- This fiscal year, as part of our goal to have thriving and equitable compensation structure at WA-BLOC, we implemented a base pay salary of \$70,000 and adopted an annual COLA increase for all permanent staff. We have also invested in a monthly wellness stipend for each staff person to contribute towards personal wellness and healing.
- To meet the needs of our growing school-based Restorative Justice programming, we hired three new staff this year - two Restorative Justice Coordinators (Mari and Lena!) and a Curriculum specialist- Anab!

## Total Revenue: \$767,390



## Key Takeaways

- This fiscal year marks our final year of grant funding with two multi-year funding partners including Social Venture Partners and The Satterberg Foundation. Significantly, these funding partners were WA-BLOC's first multi-year funding as an organization and provided us the opportunity to build organizational capacity and sustainability during the early stages of our organization.
  - **Social Venture Partners:** For the past five years, SVP has supported WA-BLOC with a 30K per year grant along with capacity building support and networking opportunities. SVP was our first multi-year grant as an organization and it's hard to say if we'd be here without them! One of the most impactful supports we received from them was finding a values-aligned fiscal sponsor (RVC Seattle!) and transitioning to RVC's operational support program in 2019. We are grateful for all of the great folks we have met through SVP!
  - **Satterberg Foundation:** Starting in 2018, WA-BLOC has been a recipient of Satterberg Foundation's Core Support grant for five years. Similar to SVP, this unrestricted funding has been monumental in helping our organization in our early years gain sustainability and grow our capacity with unrestricted funds- allowing us to be responsive and adaptable to the needs of our schools and community, especially through the pandemic.



## By the Numbers

- 85K** Paid in living wages for Black and Brown young adult summer program educators and high school interns
- 260** Seattle Public School district employees who participated in WA-BLOC Restorative Justice trainings and events in 2022-23
- 36** First time donors to WA-BLOC in FY23
- 60** 4th-5th graders trained as Peacekeepers for their school community
- 15K** Worth of BIPOC-authored children's books distributed to K-5th graders to build + contribute to their home libraries
- 7 months** average increase in instructional reading levels for scholars participants in Freedom Schools during the summer
- 9** New school communities engaged in WA-BLOC restorative justice programming
- 1000+** BIPOC books donated to Southend school libraries
- 42** Monthly donors to WA-BLOC

## Publications and Awards

2023- [Social Venture Partner Spotlight Organization](#)  
2023- [Seattle Public Schools Community Partner Recognition](#)  
2023- [WA Alliance for Gun Responsibility Guest Blog](#)  
2022- [Rainier Beach Action Coalition Unsung Hero Award](#)

# THANK YOU!



The WA-BLOC team wants to extend our heartfelt gratitude and appreciation to our partners, donors, and supporters for continuing to believe in and invest in transformative education and educational equity for Black and brown you in Southeast Seattle! With new staff, new school partners, and expanded programming, we are thrilled to see what the 2023-24 year has in store!

## Website

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## Facebook

 [Wa-BLOC](https://www.facebook.com/Wa-BLOC)

## TikTok

[freedomsschools](https://www.tiktok.com/freedomsschools)

## How to give to WA-BLOC

**Online:** [wa-bloc.org/get-involved](http://wa-bloc.org/get-involved)

**Mail:** Make a check out to **WA-BLOC** and send to:

RVC Seattle attn WA-BLOC  
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Seattle, WA 98118