



Organization: RVC (fiscal sponsor of WA-BLOC)

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*\*Every grant proposal must have a member of Seattle Rotary as its primary advocate. The advocate cannot be a staff member of the organization seeking funding.*

Category (more than one may apply):

- The Vitality of Downtown Seattle
- Education & Literacy**
- Food Insecurity

### **Project Name: Freedom Schools Summer Literacy Program**

#### **Project Description:**

For WA-BLOC, literacy is not just about learning to read. Literacy is cultural empowerment, communal wellbeing, freedom seeking, and resistance to deep racial inequities in our educational systems that have created a profound educational debt to children from marginalized communities, particularly Black/African-American communities.

WA-BLOC's Freedom Schools program is a five-week, literacy-based summer learning program serving students furthest from educational justice in southeast Seattle. Our Freedom Schools program is rooted in the Black liberation movement of the 1960s, particularly Freedom Summer (Mississippi 1964) which not only sought to register and turnout Black voters but also to establish Freedom Schools. Freedom Schools – in Mississippi and the deep South in 1964, and ours in Seattle now – are programs designed to fight against separate and unequal education systems. In present day, stark racial inequities persist: in Seattle Public Schools only 28.8% Black students read at grade level, effectively sentencing these students to being functionally illiterate and suffer lower incomes throughout their lives.

WA-BLOC's Freedom Schools Program disrupts deficit-based approaches and counters summer learning loss by providing over 156 hours of high-impact literacy instruction and engagement over summer months through culturally inclusive books and instruction by young adult leaders who reflect the community. Over the course of five weeks, Freedom Schools program facilitates joyful engagement with literacy learning that boosts student motivation to read, generates more positive attitudes toward learning, increases self-esteem, and connects the needs of children and families to resources in their communities and includes five essential elements:

1. **Culturally Reflective Literacy Curriculum** uses a daily age-appropriate, literacy anchor (such as a book, a poem, a video etc.) authored by a Black, Indigenous or Person of Color. The curriculum focuses on literacy

skills, communication, conflict resolution and explores foundational questions of identity and culture, and is designed to meet [Common Core Standards](#), [Washington's SEL Standards](#), and [Learning for Justice's Social Justice Standards](#).

2. **Intergenerational Leadership Development** builds self-reflection, teamwork and leadership skills in scholars, high school-aged interns, and college-aged program educators alike to foster a powerful and connected career pathway of youth and young adult leadership.

3. **Social Action** supports student-led, community-based solutions. In summer 2015, Rainier Beach High School scholars marched and advocated for transit justice, arguing that access to educational, training and employment opportunities for youth should not be dependent on their family's ability to afford a car or transportation. Their action eventually led to free public transit for King County youth in 2022 (24,000+ youth!)

4. **Parent, Family and Community Engagement** fosters trust and agency with Black and brown families and includes culturally inclusive opportunities for families and community to participate in scholar learning via morning Harambee assemblies (kiswahili for let's pull together) as "read aloud" guests, via weekly family engagement workshops, and more.

5. **Nutrition and Health** supports physical/mental/social emotional health and wellbeing of scholars and families by including physical activities, training in restorative practices, free meals/snacks and weekly groceries to families.

## Project Impact:

WA-BLOC Freedom Schools summer program provides a safe, nurturing, restorative, and literature-rich environment during critical summer months that boost the leadership and academic growth of two generations—the children served and the young adult educators who teach and serve them. Summer 2024 will be WA-BLOC's 9th year facilitating Freedom Schools program in the Rainier Beach neighborhood.

### Scholar Participants

For summer 2024, WA-BLOC's Freedom Schools program will serve 60 K-5th scholars attending Emerson Elementary School, in the southeast neighborhood of Rainier Beach, Seattle. We prioritize enrollment for Black/African American students and those who are currently behind in reading scores. Based on historical enrollment data, 78% + of participants identify as Black/African American, 95% + are low income and 29% meet grade level standards in English Language Arts. Significant benefits of participation based on historical data each year include:

- Through pre and post testing, scholars demonstrate **an average increase of eight months in instructional reading levels**.
- **Most scholars (84.1%) have maintained or gained in instructional reading levels** and did not experience summer learning loss.
- **Eighty-two percent of scholars felt more prepared for the upcoming school year** because of participating in Freedom Schools (summer 2023)
- Surveys completed by more than 40 scholars in summer 2023 **showed positive changes in their attitudes towards learning, reading, and character skills. Scholars demonstrated self-empowerment, developed conflict resolution skills, and became more engaged in academic activities** after participation in our Freedom Schools program.
- Most parents perceive positive changes in their children's social and academic confidence. One parent states, "Freedom Schools is the only program that has worked effectively to heal the trauma my children experience in their general school environment during the school year. We are so thankful for [WA BLOC] Freedom Schools." Another says, "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 and she is now an independent reader. Thank you for another amazing year!"

### High School and college-aged young adult educators

WA-BLOC's Freedom Schools program also provides training, mentorship, and employment opportunities for (~5) high school students and (5) college-aged educators in our community. Through Freedom Schools these young adults receive:

- **80 hours of CEU educator training** including: Child Development: Site Culture and Climate Management, Trauma Sensitive and Responsive Care for Students, Creating Community In and Outside of Your Classroom, Critical Literacy Theory and Components, Lesson Plan Writing, Collection, and Feedback, Student-led Social Action, Restorative Practices in School Settings, and more.
- Ongoing summer mentorship and **weekly 1:1 coaching by certified teachers**
- **Full-time employment** during summer months @\$26-28/hr
- A structured, positive community and learning environment that reflects their cultures and identities.

### **Community Benefits:**

Our surrounding community benefits from Freedom Schools in several key ways:

- Freedom Schools fills a critical need for full-day, high impact, free summer learning programming in our southeast Seattle community. Seattle Public Schools only facilitates a small number of elementary remedial summer learning program sites (~4) throughout Seattle and quickly fills, while other summer programs charge fees that families with low incomes cannot afford.
- Businesses and residents benefit from community engagement and social action design elements of our Freedom Schools program. Throughout the program, students research and inquire about issues impacting our community, resulting in student-led projects addressing these issues. Past projects have included: building a community garden to address neighborhood food insecurity; an anti-bullying campaign; "Keep it Clean" campaign addressing climate justice and neighborhood litter; transit equity and more.
- Freedom Schools provides training, mentorship, and employment for young adults in our neighborhood who may otherwise struggle to have summer employment or participate in positive community engagement during summer months. Over the years, this pipeline of leadership development has resulted in over 90 young people in our community receiving employment and furthering their education in career pathways like teaching, community leadership, and others.
- Community teaching artists, educators, leaders, and neighbors have direct ways to connect and participate with Freedom Schools program and students through daily read aloud, afternoon enrichment activities, and social action projects to promote community wellbeing and importance of literacy.

### **Project Sustainability:**

WA-BLOC has facilitated the Freedom Schools program free of cost to students in families in our southeast Seattle community consecutively since 2016 and has served over 2,000 students and families through program sites at Rainier Beach High School, South Shore K-8, Summit Sierra, and Emerson Elementary School. Over the years, we have developed the internal staff capacity and processes needed to sustain this program. This includes a permanent, year round Program Director role, 3-5 year program strategic plans with fiscal feasibility, program operation manuals and training guides, and more. We have also cultivated a tremendous network of established and aligned community partnerships and relationships that we continue to nurture to support program efforts and sustainability.

### **Rotary Club Acknowledgement and Project Involvement:**

The Rotary Club of Seattle will be acknowledged for its involvement in Freedom Schools through a special recognition in our monthly newsletter and social media postings including Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn and any news media providing coverage of the program. We will also provide a special recognition during our end of summer scholar showcase and include the contributions of the Club in all program reporting.

Seattle 4 Rotarians will be invited to be guest readers during our daily morning motivational assembly “Harambee.” Harambee (kiswahili for ‘Let’s Pull Together’) is a 30-minute, high energy gathering dedicated to whole group affirmation, community building, music and movement. In particular, the five minute “read aloud” by family and community members that takes place each morning fosters culturally responsive family and community connections and witnesses to why reading and succeeding in school are so important. Rotarians are also invited to support designated activities including afternoon enrichment, neighborhood walking tours/human library guests, scholar-led community action projects (occur last week of program) and our end-of-summer scholar showcase.

**BUDGET DETAIL**

Please supply a detailed Project budget including Funding Sources.

<b>EXPENSES</b>		<b>FUNDING</b>	
<u>Expense Category</u>	<u>Amount</u>	<u>Sources of Funding</u>	<u>Amount</u>
Staffing (includes Site Director, Site Coordinator, Site Assistant, 5 college-aged educators for 9 weeks; 2 weeks training, 1 week site set up, 5 weeks program, 1 week site wrap up) @ average \$30/hr X 360 hours X 8 staff) + payroll taxes	\$86,400	William H Donnor Foundation	\$20,000
Staff Training (materials, food)	\$1,000	Charlotte Martin Foundation	\$15,000
Books, Curriculum (scholars keep books at end of program to build home libraries) - purchased wholesale Third Place Books and Mutual Aid Books	\$12,000	Titcomb Foundation	\$4,500
Daily Bus Transportation (First Student) \$700 per day for 25 days	\$17,500	Individual Donor pledges	\$6,000
Contractors: Enrichment Providers (BIPOC-led activities like STEM, art, music, fitness, gardening and more 2 hours/day)	\$6,000	In-Kind - City of Seattle Food Service Program (daily breakfast and lunch)	\$4,000
Snacks	\$2,000		
SPS School Facility Rental	\$4,000		
Program T-Shirts	\$750		
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$140,209</b>	<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$49,500</b>