

Literacy, at the core, is a social justice issue. The ability to read gives one the ability to fully participate as a citizen of the world. When you look at the history of oppression, from the ancient Greeks to American slavery—all oppressors limit access to literacy as a key strategy to amass and retain power.

**Black lives matter.** We know and express that in the work we do and in the children we reach; however, now is the time for us to state it loudly and explicitly. Page Ahead stands in solidarity with those protesting the unjust murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, Tony McDade, and countless more. We stand in solidarity with those protesting the pervasive racism and oppression that helped lead to their deaths.

As an organization that works to close the literacy gap for students in Washington, we see firsthand the systemic inequities in our society every day. Page Ahead serves children in communities experiencing low income across Washington. But when 90 percent of the children we serve are children of color, it's a grim testament to just how systemic inequities in education, housing, access to credit, healthcare, and criminal justice have a compounding negative impact on people of color, especially Black and Indigenous families.

Words matter.

And our actions matter. Page Ahead recognizes we must do more and do so with urgency and humility.

We will join with like-minded organizations in amplifying voices that Black Lives Matter, and that institutional racism must end.

We will listen even more. We will go deeper, examining more fully how we are part of systemic racism and how we can bring more self-awareness to break that cycle.

We publicly recommit to our equal-opportunity and equity-minded hiring practices, board development efforts, and volunteer recruitment. The philanthropic and education sectors in the Seattle area have historically been very white spaces, and it is incumbent on organizations, including Page Ahead, to dismantle barriers to diverse participation—a process which will only benefit us all.

We are also more determined than ever to continue our mission to deliver books to kids who need them. Books that are as diverse and wonderful as the children we serve.

Page Ahead will continue to use its buying power to push publishers to increase the number and variety of diverse children's books available. It's crucial that all young readers see themselves in the books they read. As an organization that purchases and gives away more than 180,000 books each year, we can and will work even harder to ensure books celebrate children of color.

We will also ask our partners, donors, and community to prioritize seeking out diverse books for the children in their lives and show the industry that there is a demand from buyers of all backgrounds.

We can't hesitate. Children of color, especially Black children, are too often furthest from educational justice in our schools. That is wrong. Those children's lives matter. **Black lives matter.**

