

Educators' Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

January 2018

Upcoming Social Equity Educator (SEE) meeting

All Seattle Education Association (SEA) members who believe in bringing social justice ideas into our classrooms and union are welcome and encouraged to attend. Our next meeting is:

When: Sunday February 4th – 10:00am-12:00 pm **Where:** Rainier Beach Community Center (8825 Rainier Ave S, Seattle, WA 98118)

For more information contact us: socialequityeducators.org or text: 206-550-1609

SEA Stands in Solidarity with the Seattle School Bus Drivers!

by Matt Maley

After a one day strike of school bus drivers on November 29, Teamsters Local 174 returned to the negotiating table with First Student, part of a multinational corporation based out of the UK that pulled in \$7.1 billion in adjusted revenue in 2016. However, on January 6, the Teamsters rejected their next flimsy offer by 85%. Representing 400 drivers in King County, the drivers are fighting for healthcare and retirement benefits. According to the union, “fewer than 7% of First Student drivers in Seattle are covered under the Company’s health care plan”. They are willing to go out on an indefinite strike if First Student does not come back with an improved offer.

During the second week of January, educators represented by the Seattle Education Association, by a 93% vote, agreed to a solidarity walkout. Should the Teamsters engage in an ongoing strike, SEA members would walk out on a Wednesday during the early release time for professional development. This is after both the students and the school buses will have departed for the day so as not to impact student instructional time.

In order to help the Teamsters win a strong contract and get back to work in a short time, if an ongoing strike happens, all students, parents, and community members who are able should join the SEA educators in solidarity on the picket lines before and after the school day at the South Park or Lake City First Student locations.



If First Student continues to put forward inadequate proposals, educators should be ready to take more militant steps to support the drivers who are so crucial to equitable access to our public schools. This may have to include more than just a solidarity walkout during professional development, but an ongoing strike of our own where we shut the school system down until First Student meets the Teamsters demands.

Check out the full article here: <http://socialequityeducators.org/2018/01/15/sea-stands-in-solidarity-with-the-seattle-school-bus-drivers/>

Social Equity Educators stands in solidarity with Maru Mora-Villalpando



We are outraged at the racist attempt by the Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to target Maru Mora Villalpando, a local area immigrant rights activist and leader of the Northwest Detention Center Resistance, for deportation. Maru is a tireless fighter for immigrants, their families, and the community in general. Just last year, members of SEE worked closely with Maru to lead a campaign to try and stop the deportation of Cynthia Vanessa Iraheta López, a mother of two children.

As her press release states, “ICE is now purposely targeting people such as Mora-Villalpando who are organizing against the agency and the Trump administration’s racially-motivated deportation agenda.” The aim is to frighten immigrants and silence any resistance to the racist mass deportations of the Trump administration. If they can deport a leader of the immigrant rights movement, they hope it will have a chilling effect on any future organizing against deportations. We cannot allow this to happen. Check out SEE’s website to find the full article, press release, and to learn more about how you can support Maru. Please, sign her petition:

<https://action.mijente.net/petitions/ice-serves-deportation-notice-on-undocumented-leader-for-organizing-detained-immigrants>

<http://socialequityeducators.org/2018/01/20/social-equity-educators-stands-in-solidarity-with-maru-mora-villalpando/>

Social Equity Educators contract survey

The Seattle Education Association’s contract with SPS expires in August 2018 before the next school year starts. Soon contract negotiations will begin. SEE put together this contract survey to find out what issues are most important to SEA members. Please, take the time to fill this out and encourage co-workers to do so as well. We will compile the results and report on them in future issues of Educators’ Vision: <https://goo.gl/forms/iRK9qWirF2I8V63a2>

National Black Lives Matter at School Week: February 5-9th

By Jesse Hagopian, educator at Garfield High School

A new uprising for racial justice is being organized by educators around the country who have declared February 5-9th “Black Lives Matter at School Week.” Educators will be wearing Black Lives Matter shirts to school and teaching lessons related to the movement in cities such as New York, Chicago, Boston, DC, Baltimore, Philadelphia, Seattle, L.A., Detroit, the Bay area, and beyond. This national mobilization is a completely grassroots effort organized by educators and their social justice caucuses. They have issued three national demands for the movement:

- End Zero Tolerance and Implement Restorative Justice
- Hire More Black Teachers in Our Schools
- Black History/Ethnic Studies Mandated in K-12

In addition, educators in Seattle added two more demands: **Fully fund and detrack our schools.** Educators will teach about different themes from the Black Lives Matter platform each day of the Black Lives Matter at School Week. A growing number of prominent activists, scholars, and educators have endorsed this action, including #BlackLivesMatter co-founder *Opal Tometi*.

This movement started in Seattle last year when John Muir Elementary wanted to have a celebration of Black lives by having African-American community members come to the school to celebrate the students on their way in by giving them high-fives and then holding dialogues during school. A group called Black Men United to Change the Narrative helped organize the action. Teachers designed a Black Lives Matter shirt. When word reached the media about this action, John Muir received many racist messages attacking educators for having the audacity to declare that their Black students’ lives are important. Then a hateful individual made a violent threat against the school. In response, the school district announced it was going to cancel this celebration of Black lives at John Muir.

But to the teachers’ and the community’s great credit, they carried on—many of the teachers wore their shirts and many of the community members showed up anyway. It wasn’t as large as it would have been without the threat, but these teachers showed real bravery.

Those of us in the Social Equity Educators (SEE), a rank-and-file organization inside the Seattle Education Association, reached out right away to those teachers and invited them to our meeting to share their story.

Black Lives Matter at School Week: Final Rally

facebook.com/events/163779640906782/

When: Friday February 9 from 6-8pm

Where: Cleveland High School (5511 15th Ave S, Seattle, WA 98108)

What: This event will feature students, educators, parents, and activists discussing their vision for supporting Black Lives at School. In addition, it will feature musicians, poets, and other artists like the Northwest Tap Connection. All are welcome!

These are the nationally agreed upon themes for each of the five days:

Monday February 5: Restorative Justice, Empathy, Loving Engagement. In addition, this will be the day where all the demands for the week will be announced.

Tuesday February 6: Diversity, Globalism

Wednesday February 7: Trans-Affirming, Queer Affirming, and Collective Value

Thursday February 8: Intergenerational, Black Families, and Black Villages

Friday February 9: Black Women, Unapologetically Black.

Teachers are encouraged to teach lesson plans on these themes each day. Seattle educators from the SPS Ethnic Studies work group have provided curriculum for any interested educator to use:

<http://www.seattlewea.org/center-for-race-equity/Black%20Lives%20Matter%20Week%20Resources/>

People were so moved by their work that we decided we needed to show solidarity. We agreed the best way to do that wouldn’t be to just pass a resolution saying we support them, but to take it a step further and spread this action to every school. When we brought it to the meeting of the union’s Representative Assembly, we weren’t sure what to expect. But SEE put the resolution forward and it passed unanimously.

The #BlackLivesMatterAtSchool movement erupted in Seattle on October 19th, 2017 when thousands of educators said, “Black Lives Matter: We Stand Together.” Hundreds of families and students did too. Many of the shirts also included the message “#SayHerName,” a campaign to raise awareness about the often invisible state violence and assault of women in our country.

This action attracted national news. It spread to Philadelphia when social justice educators in the Caucus of Working Educators Racial Justice Committee within the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers expanded the action in Seattle to last an entire week. Educators in Rochester, NY held a similar action.

Seattle’s Black Lives Matter at School action led to the formation of a successful campaign for Ethnic Studies in the public schools and has helped inspire educators around the country to teach against anti-blackness. Join the movement this year and fight for a world where our schools support our Black families and educators.



Educators' Vision

Published By the Social Equity Educators (SEE)

SEE steering committee: Tracy Gill, Lauren Stark, Donte Felder, Jesse Hagopian, Ian Golash, Justin Vinson, and Darrin Hoop

Educators' Vision is a monthly newsletter of the Social Equity Educators

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Mission

Social Equity Educators (SEE) is a new rank-and-file organization of educators inside the Seattle Education Association that seeks to transform education in terms that empower students, teachers, and the communities that our public schools serve. As members of the SEA we understand that the educator's union has a vital role to play in creating an equitable education system. As educators we understand the importance of using culturally relevant and holistic curriculum to empower our students. We have come together to fight against the corporate reform of our schools and to organize for a socially just education system.

SEE is raising the following demands with the Seattle Public School District: Restorative Justice Now

There is abundant evidence that zero tolerance policies disproportionately impact students of color. Both nationally and in Seattle, Black and Latinx students are suspended and expelled at much higher rates than white students. Furthermore, zero tolerance policies are not effective at making classrooms and schools safer or more conducive to learning, and research shows that out-of-school suspensions both severely disrupts a student's long-term academic progress and is strongly associated with subsequent involvement in the juvenile justice system. The school-to-prison pipeline is these series of harsh protocols, combined with highly policed environments that push Black and Brown youth out of school and into the juvenile justice system.

Restorative Justice is a relationship-based approach to resolving conflict. It is effective in reducing violence, incarceration, disruptive behavior, suspensions/expulsions, as well as building community, trust, equity, and healing. We call on SPS to invest fully in restorative practices in all Seattle Public Schools, and place a moratorium on out-of-school suspensions and expulsions.

Michael Grant, Rainier Beach High School

Mandate Black History and Ethnic Studies

Research shows that ethnic studies classes significantly improve outcomes in grades, academic performance, attendance, graduation, identity safety, and more, for all students, and particularly for traditionally marginalized students of color. Currently, Seattle Public Schools is developing an ethnic studies pilot that is being unveiled as part of the National Black Lives Matter at School Week. We demand that ethnic studies content classes be implemented in all the schools at all levels and content areas.

Ethnic studies is the critical analysis and study of the roles of race and culture on identity and experience. It teaches the histories and cultures of marginalized groups such as African Americans, Latinxs people, immigrants, and others. Curriculum also explores the ways people create power, justice and agency in their own lives, as well as in society and within political and economic systems. This is a broader mandate than simply the teaching of ethnic histories. Ethnic studies is NOT multiculturalism. It's fundamental to both the education of all students and progress toward educational and social justice. Ethnic studies curriculum throughout the schools will begin the process of correcting historical and cultural exclusion and reducing institutional racism.

Doug Edelstein, retired, Nathan Hale High School

Detracking

Every child is gifted. Not every child is born into privilege. Academic tracking in Seattle Public Schools reproduces economic and educational privilege, reinforces academic stereotypes, and creates school cultures of internal racial and class segregation. Our district has publicly committed itself to ending the opportunity gap, but this will never happen until tracking is eliminated.

Why? When students are labeled as "high achievers" or "gifted and talented," and class rosters sort children into these categories, a mindset accepting the "truth" of academic hierarchy is established. As far back as 1988, the National Education Association opposed tracking: "the use of discriminatory academic tracking based on economic status, ethnicity, race, or gender must be eliminated in all public school settings. The Association urges its affiliates to oppose these practices."

SEE demands that SPS begin a conversation among all stakeholders with the goal of eliminating academic tracking in Seattle Public Schools. If all five of these demands were met, only then could we begin to have a real conversation about equity in all our schools.

Elaine Harger, Washington Middle School

Fully Fund Our Schools

Education is a civil right and should be fully funded without limiting other civil rights. In 2012, the Washington Supreme Court ruled that the state was not meeting its "paramount duty" to provide ample education to all students "without distinction or preference on account of race, color, caste, or sex." The legislature has not yet developed a plan that will comply with the court's mandate by supporting school construction, educator compensation, and reasonable class sizes. Within Seattle, there are stark funding disparities between schools that predominantly serve white students and schools that predominantly serve communities of color. Likewise, the Seattle Public Schools (SPS) budget does not adequately support the Department of Racial Equity Advancement (DREA) and Racial Equity teams at every school, and there is not currently a Director of Racial Equity.

We call on SEA and SPS to advocate for strategies to amply fund public schools without cutting any of the vital social services that support our students. We reject regressive budgets that fund education by cutting other social services or increasing taxes on low-income residents. We demand progressive revenue measures for funding schools, such as taxes on corporations and incomes over \$200,000 a year. We also call on SEA and SPS to develop a plan to share PTSA resources across the district, fully fund Racial Equity teams and DREA, and create a funded Director of Racial Equity position.

Lauren Ware Stark, Cleveland High School

Hire More Black Teachers

Students of color are now the majority in most urban schools while their teachers remain mostly white and female. Recently, several studies have been published that show increases in academic performance and graduation rates as well as decreases in disciplinary actions and truancy for kids of color when they are in schools with educators that match their own racial, ethnic, linguistic, sexuality, and gender identities.

Seattle Public Schools does a great job of educating kids, this is true. Recently, SPS was ranked in the top ten of Washington State school districts for student achievement while it was simultaneously ranked #1 for disparities in achievement between White and Black students. Spend any amount of time in Seattle racial justice circles and you'll hear this a lot: "SPS does a great job of teaching students! White students, that is."

In Seattle Public Schools, approximately 16% of students identify as Black only. Black students receive about 40% of all out-of-school suspensions and expulsions and account for only 2% of all students identified as "advanced learners." According to research, these numbers are directly linked to the fact that only 5% of the Seattle Public Schools' teaching force identifies as Black. These statistics are strikingly similar to those of Native American and Latinx students, many of whom also identify as Black/biracial.

Representation matters. Diversity of staff is a critical part in ending the opportunity gap. We are demanding a 200% increase in the hiring of educators of color. We are demanding a strategic plan that recruits, retains, and supports those educators. We are demanding the restoration of Ida B. Wells Middle College staff who were displaced for openly displaying this level of diversity.

Tracy Castro-Gill, Denny International Middle School

Bruce Jackson, Aki Kurose Middle School

Charter Schools, Coming to a Neighborhood Near You: Oppose Green Dot!

by Mark Epstein, Rainier Beach High School

The Green Dot corporation, a Los Angeles-based charter school conglomerate, is coming to the Rainier Valley. They are currently operating their first class of sixth grade students near the Othello Light Rail Station. While Rainier Beach High School has waited more than ten years since all other high schools had major reconstruction or renovation, Green Dot is building a new, multi-story high school just one mile north of Rainier Beach on Rainier Avenue S. It is incumbent on Seattle Public Schools to remedy the inequities have historically been perpetuated at South End Schools.

They are promoting their school as "AP for All", echoes of Rainier Beach's effort to offer the International Baccalaureate program to all students (all of whom currently receive IB in Language Arts and History). This school will seriously cut into student populations of Rainier Beach, Cleveland, and Franklin. It is just two blocks from Aki Kurose Middle School.

The City of Seattle has not yet granted Green Dot a variance for the size of their construction. The Seattle School Board last week voted unanimously to urge the city to reject this variance.

Please, join SEE members as we protest the construction of this school which will cause serious impacts on our South End Public Schools.



Everyone should wear Black Lives Matter t-shirts on at least Monday February 5 and Friday February 9. SEE is selling a new t-shirt for \$15 regular price, \$20 solidarity price. You can buy it here: <https://goo.gl/forms/6GEDEPVIGITD2Tb23>

To learn more about what's happening around the country, check out the National Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Our Schools Facebook page:

<https://www.facebook.com/The-National-Black-Lives-Matter-Week-of-Action-in-Our-Schools-192373061312325/>

Protest Green Dot Public Schools!

When: Thursday February 15 at 4:00-5:30pm

Where: The construction site of the future Rainier Valley Leadership Academy Middle/High School (3900 S Holly Park Dr, Seattle, WA 98118)

Details here: <https://m.facebook.com/events/1437840863011253/?ti=icl>

Check out the full article here:

socialequityeducators.org/2018/01/14/charter-schools-coming-to-a-neighborhood-near-you-oppose-green-dot/