



Joint Statement on Read Across American (Dr. Seuss)



February 27, 2019

Dear Seattle Public School Educators and Communities,

As we gear up for the “Read Across America” event that is celebrated across the United States, we want to address an ongoing movement to increase inclusion and diversity in reading for students, family, and community. For years, since the inception of this event, we have focused on Dr. Seuss and the books written by or inspired by him. One thing we have since learned and have been exposed to, is the racist history and influence on Dr. Seuss’ career and inspiration for some of the characters in his beloved books, such as [The Cat and the Hat](#), that influence how we want to acknowledge our collective goals for racial equity and the love of literacy. We recognize that focusing on only one author and genre during a celebration of reading, a celebration that is meant to engage readers across the literature spectrum, won’t successfully engage all readers. We also recognize that the roots of racism directly exclude certain groups of readers from engaging in something so fundamental to the love the learning.

In response to this growing understanding, the National Education Association revised their messaging and promoted “**Read Across America as Celebrating a Nation of Diverse Readers**”. We are providing the following resources from the NEA to support educators as they make moves to create a more inclusive, less racist environment for engaging in and celebrating reading.

1. NEA’s Read Across America’s Calendar: <https://www.readacrossamerica.org/>
2. NEA’s Reading Rocket’s Resources for Promoting Diversity and Inclusion in Reading: <http://www.readingrockets.org/calendar/readacross>

We acknowledge that many schools have created robust celebrations of reading that have intentionally worked with communities, families, and students over the years through Dr. Seuss-focused programs of activities and lessons to support students. However, as we continue to learn about the historical connection and current impacts of that information on institutional and systemic racism, it is our responsibility to adjust and effectively communicate the importance of the recommended changes.

Please see the following links to information about the racist issues with only using Dr. Seuss as the theme of Read Across America:

1. A Critical Race Reading of Dr. Seuss, by “the conscious kid”: <https://www.theconsciouskid.org/blog/2018/2/18/a-critical-race-reading-of-dr-seuss>



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2. Is the Cat in the Hat Racist? Read Across America Shifts Away from Dr. Seuss and Toward Diverse Books, by "School Library Journal": <https://www.slj.com/?detailStory=cat-hat-racist-read-across-america-shifts-away-dr-seuss-toward-diverse-books>
3. A Fox in Socks but the Basis is Racist. Falling Out of Love With Dr. Seuss (an NPR KUOW piece by Ann Dornfeld featuring Seattle schools): <https://www.kuow.org/stories/fox-socks-basis-racist-falling-out-love-dr-seuss>

Teacher Librarians in each building can provide additional assistance in recommending diverse books and activities that would reflect the wide range of our students' lived experiences. Many teacher librarians are leading the national Dia! Celebration on April 30th to promote literacy for all learners in our classrooms: <http://dia.ala.org/content/about-d%C3%ADa>

Respectfully,

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