



END RACISM

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What is Reading to End Racism™?

Mission Statement: *To help establish and support RER affiliates that adhere to the goal of helping to eliminate racism through interactive personal and literary programs that educate and empower youth.*

Reading to End Racism (RER) is a community initiative dedicated to promoting understanding and valuing diversity. This program also assists schools in meeting district, state, and federal standards.

RER is designed to provide engaging and age-appropriate forums in which to explain and explore institutional racism with students. Through interactive presentations led by volunteer “Readers,” students have an opportunity to listen to literature, personal stories, and insights regarding racism; participate in discussions about racism; and gain reinforcement about the power of literature during the one-day, school-wide event.

During these class discussions, students are encouraged to brainstorm and come up with their own ideas to end racism. Among the many ideas generated have been: “stick up for other people, learn about other cultures”, “talk to and educate people about racism”, and “use the news media to publicize the problem”. Students regularly thank readers for “helping me learn more about racism”.

Local RER organizing councils offer technical assistance on event organization and coordination to schools hosting RER events and conduct training for participating Readers to insure quality outcomes. Organizers meet with key administrators and the School Site Coordinator to explain what the day will be like and how to conduct an event. They meet with faculty before the event to ensure that students will be “primed” with pre- and post-activities, as well as offer tips for a successful classroom experience. RER becomes one step in a process of catalyzing institutional change within the schools.

Volunteer participants are solicited throughout the community, representing a broad range of lifestyles and occupations, with the common goal of working towards the elimination of racism. A key role they play in the classroom is the modeling of proactive behavior to students who are forming their own approaches to real-life situations. Volunteers can include police officers, artists, elected officials, entrepreneurs, business professionals, educators and parents.

To cover the costs of this ambitious program, schools often pay a modest program fee based upon the size of the school, and provide photocopying of materials.

RER has proven successes. Results of student evaluations indicate an average of 75% of participants selected “4” or “5” out of a possible five in increased understanding of racism. Participants reported that they learned how to be an ally for others and how they could stand up against injustice. An average of 85% responded they would be more pro-active in anti-racist and intervention behavior.