

# Seattle RISING



Seattle might surprise you, we are a city determined to flip the script – to rise to the occasion of dismantling racist systems...no matter what it takes. There are 154 home languages spoken here, our strategic plan is one of the most aggressive equity initiatives in the country, and 54% of our student body are students of color. A transformation is happening. This starts with a powerful group of educators that reflect the experiences of our students. You might be a critical part of this mission. SPS is looking for the game changers...those ready to “DO” - show us what you’ve got - share your brilliance, your magic, challenge our assumptions, read our strategic plan, bring it and see what we can do together.

**Here, we are a district and a city determined to break legacies of racism, together.** Every student, every teacher, together. What does that mean for new teachers and what kind of support can you expect? Here are just a few examples of the type of support you can expect.

- A New Teachers of Color Cohort that allow for teaming and like experiences
- Weekly meetings of the Black male Teacher Affinity Group
- A unique, one-on-one Consulting Teacher Program where new teachers learn from experienced educators to improve their practice.
- Every Wednesday an early release for training across the district.

## At Seattle Public Schools

# 154

Home Languages  
Spoken

# 54%

Students of Color

“*Since the focus on our district is on Black Excellence and African-American male achievement, our experience as Black educators is important for our system, where we bring value to the district, based on our experience as Black educators. Thus, there are several spaces of career growth and encouragement of career growth and advancement. Leadership development is important in SPS, and particularly the growth and leadership of Black leaders.*”

—Dr. William L. Jackson  
Seattle Public Schools

# Don't ask us, ask our educators.

Maybe you're familiar with Seattle, maybe you've never been. But, what you probably want to know is what's it really like? We asked around to share with potential educators the unvarnished truth. Thank you to our educators for sharing your voices; *Glenn W. Ford – Teacher, Rising Star @African American Academy, Chelsea C. Adams – Teacher, South Shore K-8, Kristie C. Thompson, M.Ed., SC – School Counselor, Nathan Hale High School.*

## How would you describe being an educator in Seattle Public Schools?

“I believe this district understands that they have underserved and miseducated generations of families in this city and the layers of generational mistrust and are putting forth genuine effort to produce change. I can say that I have come into contact with many educators in SPS who understand the urgency of the work that needs to be done to support our students of color specifically our Black students but like any large district we still have a lot of work that needs to be done. We know better so now we must do better.

– Glenn, Teacher

“Many educators here are dedicated and like-minded in our desire to support our students and address historical and present day injustices in our education system. It is refreshing to hear consistent messaging from our district about the importance of supporting our students of color, particularly our Black students, but while we are still beginning to address some of the issues of race in our school system, there is still more work to be done.

– Chelsea, Teacher

“Working in the Seattle Public Schools presents the unique opportunity of working with a diverse population of educators, students and families. Having students who are Native Americans, Asians, and even African migrants allow for a global perspective on how education impacts all student lives...there are unique opportunities as an educator to learn from other cultures as well as educate others and dispel untruths about Black American culture.

– Kristie, School Counselor



## How does it differ from other urban school districts?

“Every day students who represent countries and cultures from all around the world, walk through our doors. This district also has a very focused goal of supporting educators of color, and has initiatives to support African American male students navigate and succeed in our school system.

– Glenn, Teacher

“We are the largest public school district and we also have the strongest educators union in the Northwest! People look to the Seattle School District to be the change to model what inventive, creative and transformative education looks like. So there is still a lot of space for fresh ideas, new energy and collective support for these efforts.

– Chelsea, Teacher

“SPS is willing to have difficult conversations about the inequity of education and how it impacts students of color furthest from educational justice, and to invest in teacher training about ways that we can close the educational divide.

– Kristie, School Counselor

## Any unique challenges?

“I have been told by so many students that I am their first black teacher; the joy they have and relief I see in their faces on the first day of class is unexplainable... Our children do not see enough teachers that look like them in front of them in the classroom. To produce more black educators our children need to see more black educators.

– Glenn, *Teacher*

“While our student population represents an incredible diversity, our teaching population doesn't yet match with that. I am often one of a few, if not the only, certificated black teacher in rooms or conversations where we are centering the experiences and needs of black students. We obviously need more black voices to be a part of these conversations and decisions.

– Chelsea, *Teacher*

“I have been challenged with working with only a few educators of color. Though I believe diversity is embraced by Seattle Public Schools, there still seems to be a lack of representation in teachers of color. The challenge is having students experience the beauty of diversity in a school setting with teachers and administration of color.

– Kristie, *School Counselor*

## What might surprise people about the diversity of Seattle?

“Seattle is segregated; you can move throughout communities that were redlined for years...most of the black communities have been significantly gentrified. **We have one of the most diverse zip codes in the United States - a mixed population of immigrants from across the world that includes speakers of 59 languages just in the Rainier Valley.**

– Glenn, *Teacher*

“...When we look at the diversity that exists in the city, we can see cultures from around the world heavily concentrated in a relatively small section of the city. **Different parts of the world all come together in Seattle.**

– Chelsea, *Teacher*

“People might be surprised about the amount of diversity in the student population. There are students who have migrated...from a myriad of countries of various cultures, traditions, and languages.

– Kristie, *School Counselor*

## What should new Black educators know about Seattle? About the Seattle community?

“Community can seem hard to find for Black people in Seattle because we are so scattered around the city but if you make contact with some of the organizations, (ex: The Academy for Creating Excellence, Bi-Monthly Black Educators Café, or Black in the City events), you can find your way and your group of people you like connecting with.

– Glenn, *Teacher*

“Finding the black community in Seattle can be tough for someone who is new to the city, but make no mistake, we are still here. **The Pacific Northwest has a reputation of being really passive aggressive, but I don't think that's true of the Black community here.**

– Chelsea, *Teacher*

“...Sororities, fraternities, social organizations are very prevalent and visible in the Seattle community. The NAACP, The Links, Jack and Jill, and the Northwest African American Museum are some of the organizations where you will connect... Many corporate organizations, (Amazon, Microsoft) have a Black networking connection where employees volunteer, socialize and build connections.

– Kristie, *School Counselor*

## Our Recommendations

Jerk Shack, Soulfliend Seafood Kitchen, Drae's Lake Route, The Comfort Zone, Lil Red Takeout & Catering, Island Soul, Pam's Kitchen, Africa Town Land Trust, The Umoja Festival in the summer.

