

## AUSD Educators Initiate Anti-Racism Book Clubs

This spring and summer, teachers, educators, and parents across Alameda Unified School District are forming groups to read about racism and anti-racist pedagogy.

For instance:

- Teachers from Bay Farm School, Maya Lin School, and Love Elementary School are reading *We Want to Do More than Just Survive*, by Bettina Love.
- Otis Elementary School Principal Tanya Harris is in a reading group with principals in Contra Costa County that is reading *Stamped: Racism, AntiRacism, and You* by Jason Reynolds.
- The Otis Equity and Inclusion Committee is reading *The Person You Mean to Be* by Dolly Chugh.
- Teachers in the English Department at Alameda High School read and discussed *White Fragility* by Robin DiAnegelo.

In late May, AHS teacher Chris Holmes, EHS teacher Jenna Phillips, former ELD Coordinator Lydia Martinez, and Sheila SathWarner (now the principal of Lincoln Middle School) also met to discuss organizing anti-racism work within two groups: one for white educators and one for BIPOC (black, indigenous, and people of color) educators. The small team sent out a districtwide email. Dozens of AUSD educators responded to the invitation. The group of BIPOC educators focused on building community this summer; the white educators read *How to be Antiracist* by Ibram X Kendi. "It was very successful and the group is very passionate about continuing this work and supporting the BIPOC educator's group in any way we can," Phillips says.

"It was a very enthusiastic group," adds John Nolan, an AHS English teacher who participated in the white reading group. "We focused a lot on how to find the racist policies that are linked with disparate outcomes for different racial groups. So we were able to start talking about our actual worksites, about how possibly racist policies could be impacting our behaviors in the classroom and in interventions." The group plans on reading Bettina Love's *We Want to do More Than Survive* next.

And to help some of our youngest students learn more about black people and culture, Principal Drew Sarratore, at Paden Elementary School, has focused on black writers, illustrators, and characters during his book reading sessions online.

Some of these groups came together in the wake of a six-day Learning Conference that AUSD held for educators in June. That conference focused both on helping teachers learn more advanced distance teaching skills and exploring both trauma-informed and culturally responsive teaching practices.

“I am so excited that these groups have sprung up organically across our district,” says Superintendent Pasquale Scuderi. “The fact that our educators are turning to these readings shows a genuine curiosity and willingness to be honest with themselves and their colleagues. It also shows our educators’ tremendous commitment to learning and implementing new strategies in the name of better supporting our students.”