A MESSAGE
FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kindred has been a champion of community-led change since our founding in 2016 when we sought to partner with caregivers to advance educational equity and racial justice in their school communities. Our early efforts taught us that we needed to expand our work to include staff members and school leaders. We learned that it takes the entire community to disrupt inequitable mindsets and practices and then imagine and co-create just systems and an environment where students, families, and staff—especially those impacted by oppression—can thrive.

Thus, last year, we made the bold decision to make three foundational shifts that focus our work over the next five years:

- Adopt explicitly antiracist beliefs and practices in all aspects of our work, both internally and externally
- More intentionally engage school leaders and school staff to collaborate with caregivers in co-creating equitable, inclusive, racially just, and liberated school communities
- Solidify and expand our programming to work effectively with PK–12 schools across the country

With the support of a strong team and dedicated board, we have made progress in each of these areas. Dialogue continues to be foundational to our approach and a key ingredient in our “secret sauce.” The brave conversations we facilitate have supported Kindred communities in making substantive, community-led changes to advance equity.

Over the past six years, we have learned from our local Kindred communities about the pathways and actions communities can take to move towards greater equity. During the 2021–2022 school year, we launched work with Alexandria City Public Schools, our first partner outside of the District of Columbia. This district-level collaboration engages members at every level of the ACPS ecosystem and represents a new way for Kindred to bring the work of building just schools to communities across the country.

We deeply appreciate those who have been part of the Kindred journey. To our Kindred communities: thank you for welcoming us into your communities and joining us as we collectively learn and grow. This work is not for the faint of heart, and we are honored to continue collaborating with you to build antiracist and liberated schools.

This impact report—our first ever—represents a milestone in our journey. I am proud to share with you what we have accomplished, what we have learned, and what we envision for the future.

In Kindred spirit,

Cultivating brave spaces. Building just schools.
ABOUT KINDRED

THE PROBLEM
Privilege, power and politics create pervasive and persistent barriers to access and opportunities for students, families, and communities based on their race and socioeconomic status.

OUR VISION
Communities collaborate to create antiracist and liberated schools.

OUR MISSION
We facilitate brave spaces to build the mindsets, skills, and energy needed to disrupt systemic oppression and create antiracist and liberated schools.

OUR VALUES
Our values inform how we show up and serve as a foundation for our work.

Accountability
We hold ourselves and our communities in love and with intention to live out our values and actualize our vision.

Exploration of Tensions
We expect, lean into, and address conflict to deepen relationships and pursue liberation.

Empathy
We believe empathy is a process of understanding, allowing us to connect with others on a deeply human level.

Learning
We uncover oppressive mindsets to create new ways of thinking and being that enable our liberation.

Humility
We are works in progress and we commit to listening, learning, and growing as individuals and as a community.

Relationships
We recognize that trust, patience, care, and effort are required to cultivate authentic relationships, and we believe this investment is worth it.

Community Power and Co-Creation
We support communities in enacting, amplifying, and centering the voices and experiences of excluded groups to construct a liberated way forward.

Process as Product
We believe that process is action. We know that the fruits of our labor will grow tomorrow from the seeds that we germinate today.
A LOOK BACK

As we move forward, we also look back with gratitude for Kindred’s first six years.

2016–17
- Pilot of two caregiver dialogue groups at Marie Reed Elementary School
- First facilitator training to prepare prior dialogue participants to co-lead their own groups

2017–18
- Three new Kindred communities; two dialogue groups at each school
- Dialogue alumni at Marie Reed lead four additional caregiver dialogue groups with training and coaching from Kindred

2018–19
- Five elementary schools join the Kindred community
- Caregivers and Kindred innovate the first equity spaces, originally called equity teams
- Staff dialogue groups launch
- First Latina/o/x affinity dialogue group

2019–20
- Kindred communities grow to 13 schools
- First two Black affinity dialogue groups and first White antiracist dialogue group
- Kindred’s work is highlighted in the Washington Post
- Kindred’s communities support one another as the pandemic sets in
- Dialogue groups and equity spaces transition to virtual format

2020–21
- Fifth annual co-facilitator training equips 75 staff and caregiver dialogue alumni to co-lead dialogue groups or equity spaces
- First professional learning community launches for school leaders

2021–22
- Kindred welcomes Zakiya Sackor as Kindred’s new executive director to build on the foundation laid by its founder, Laura Wilson Phelan
- First district-level partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools launches

DIALOGUE GROUPS:
Groups of ~12 caregivers, staff, or leaders—or a combination of all three stakeholder groups—that come together in person or virtually for ten 90-minute sessions. Each group is facilitated by two Kindred team members or members of the community trained by Kindred. Groups explore the role of identity, power, and politics within ourselves, our schools, and other systems (i.e., housing, elections, etc.) by engaging in dialogue around topics such as the history of schooling, racism and antiracism, intersecting forms of oppression, White supremacy culture, the purpose of schooling, and liberation movements.

EQUITY SPACES:
Groups where caregivers, staff, and school leaders can continue to nurture authentic relationships, process their identities, and engage in ongoing collective action. Equity spaces may be newly created by dialogue alumni or they may emerge within existing groups.
SNAPSHOT: 6 YEARS OF GROWTH & LEARNING

- **28 Kindred Communities**: Engaged with 28 communities—partner districts, charter school networks, or schools.
- **1200 Hours of Dialogue**: Facilitated ~1200 hours of dialogue.
- **700 Dialogue Participants**: Engaged ~700 caregivers, staff, and school leaders in dialogue groups.
- **31 Alumni-Led Dialogue Groups**: Built community members’ capacity to lead 31 alumni-facilitated dialogue groups.
- **14 Equity Spaces**: Coached and supported 14 community-led equity spaces.
- **150 Trained Alumni**: Trained ~150 dialogue alumni to facilitate dialogue and lead equity spaces.
WHAT WE’VE LEARNED

Advancing equity is adaptive work\(^1\)

It is often said that systems are perfectly designed to produce the results they do. America’s education system produces persistent, predictable patterns of inequity across virtually every major indicator. Overcoming the more than 400 years of oppression that permeates our systems and our very selves requires us to dig deep. Technical changes such as new curricula, discipline approaches, and family engagement strategies are insufficient. We must engage in the adaptive work of confronting and shifting beliefs, mindsets, and behaviors; designing new approaches; and continually learning and adjusting.

Community-led rather than Kindred-led

For change to be transformational it must emerge from and be led by the community. Though it can be appealing to believe that external organizations can do the heavy lifting needed to address inequity, our work is most successful when communities define and actualize their own vision for equity with Kindred’s support and capacity building.

Trust is essential

That trust among staff and school leaders is needed for school improvement is well documented in education research.\(^2\) Our experience shows that it is equally or more crucial when bringing three stakeholder groups together to advance equity. In communities where trust has been undermined—among or between caregivers, staff, and school leaders—repairing past ruptures is essential. In communities where trust is forming or already strong, ongoing work to maintain trust must be continually prioritized.

EXTERNAL EVALUATIONS OF OUR WORK

Kindred is proud to have conducted three external evaluations of our work early in our organization’s development to fuel our learning and hold ourselves accountable to impact.

1 A 2017 evaluation of Kindred’s pilot by the Urban Institute found that “parent perceptions of each other improved [...] with parents attributing increased empathy, diversified relationships, increased access to resources, and greater locus of control to the program.” Fully 100% of survey respondents reported that:

1) Dialogue was a good use of their time,
2) They better understood how their assumptions affect their behavior, and
3) They felt more responsible to do something about inequity in their school.

2 A second evaluation in 2018 by Community Science found that “[...] Kindred’s program resulted in increased empathy, parent efficacy, and resource access for parents as well as deepened relationships between parents from different racial, ethnic, and socioeconomic groups.” The report noted, “Indicators are positive that after Year 2 implementation efforts, Kindred is on the path to influence whole-school change.”

3 An external evaluation of Kindred’s work by Alyssse Henkel in 2019 found that “Overall, parents and school leaders reported being satisfied with Kindred’s programming and perceived the work they were doing with Kindred as valuable to their school.”

– The 49 participants who completed surveys rated the dialogue experience an average of a 9.4 on a scale of 1–10.

– “I liked having a place to feel safe to express what I felt without being viewed negatively. [...] It gave me more hope that I could be part of the school and my kid would be safe.”

– Black caregiver

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OUR APPROACH

THE KINDRED JOURNEY

Because every community is unique, we customize our approach to each context. Typically, our work involves three phases.

PHASE 1: BUILD THE FOUNDATION

Kindred brings caregivers, staff, and leaders together to engage in brave dialogue about who they are, how they show up, and how they experience their school community. Through dialogue, community members reflect upon their own and learn about each other’s multifaceted identities, develop trusting relationships, examine how racism and other forms of injustice perpetuate inequitable outcomes for students, and prepare to take collective action to advance educational equity and racial justice in their school.

What it looks like in one Kindred community

**Arts & Letters 305 United** is a PK to 8th grade public school in the Bedford-Stuyvesant neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York that recently joined the Kindred network. Phase 1 of the partnership centers on a dialogue group and capacity-building experience for caregivers and staff who will carry forward the work in Phase 2 and beyond. School leaders will also receive tailored support and coaching.
PHASE 2: CREATE A SHARED VISION OF EQUITY

Kindred supports partners in developing and beginning to actualize a shared vision of their community in which everyone experiences a sense of belonging and can thrive. This process of alignment involves identifying, prioritizing, and taking action to address persistent and pervasive barriers to equity. While continuing to process their identities and build relationships, a growing community of equity leaders engages in the ongoing co-design of policies, practices, and ways of being that will advance their shared vision.

What it looks like in one Kindred community

Miner Elementary’s Phase 2 work included a Black affinity and White antiracist dialogue group through which participants processed their experiences in a rapidly gentrifying community with caregivers of similar racial backgrounds. This phase also supported the establishment of the school’s equity space which focused on “building relationships and a stronger community”, “ensuring diversity of leadership”, and “tackling the hard issues of school inequity and structural racism” by “advising school leaders (administration, PTO, LSA T) about issues relating to equity and inclusiveness, as well as by taking direct action”.

In their own words

Advancing racial equity at Miner Elementary

Hear the story of two caregivers working together to advance racial and educational equity in their school.

WATCH VIDEO
PHASE 3: REINFORCE THE STRONGER FOUNDATION

Kindred coaches and collaborates with equity leaders to codify structures and practices that will sustain and maximize the impact of their work over time. Equity leaders take on increasing levels of coordination, preparing to own this work independently beyond their formal partnership with Kindred. This includes identifying additional equity priorities, developing aligned actions to address them, and continuing to cultivate a culture that supports liberation.

What it looks like in one Kindred community

During Phase 3, Kindred helped build sustainability with E.L. Haynes Public Charter Elementary School’s caregiver organization, which was founded by dialogue participants from Phases 1 and 2. Kindred supported ROAR (Resources, Opportunities, and Relationships), in growing its community, launching equity-focused initiatives—including developing a highly-celebrated school-sponsored soccer league to bring families together—and expanding collaboration with school leaders. What began with a group of fifteen caregivers has grown into an established community at the Haynes elementary school—complete with a website, listserv, and set of equity-driven by-laws—and is now in its fifth year.

In the seat that I’m in as principal, working with ROAR [...] has been invaluable. It has helped me feel a deeper sense of connection with families and has given me unparalleled appreciation for the diverse perspectives of families. This, in turn, has enabled me to lead more equitably and more effectively since it has empowered the school team with much richer information on our families’ views, needs, and interests.

—E.L. Haynes Principal Brittany Wagner-Friel

Additional resources

ROAR’s website
Learn more about what ROAR is doing to support the E.L Haynes community on their website.

VISIT WEBSITE
OUR 2021–22 OUTCOMES: DIALOGUE

Kindred dialogue groups demonstrated evidence of impact.

Valuing the dialogue experience

9/10 on average, respondents to Kindred’s dialogue survey rated the dialogue experience a 9 out of 10.

90% of respondents said that they were glad they made time to participate in the dialogue group.

“I loved the brave dialogue and room to be imperfect and learn.”
- White staff member

Greater empathy

75% of all respondents (and 92% of White respondents) reported spending more time or much more time thinking about what it is like to be a caregiver of a different race or class at their school due to their participation in a Kindred dialogue group.

“I now ask myself things like, ‘Why do[es someone] have the power’ or ‘Why do we do that?’”
- Latina/o/x staff member

Deepened racial consciousness

77% of respondents reported understanding better or much better what equity is and how it plays out in their school due to their participation in a Kindred dialogue group.

“I have unlearned a lot...and am continuing to grow from the new learning.”
- Black staff member

New and stronger connections in their community

88% of respondents reported developing trust with their fellow dialogue participants and the same percentage feels confident that their peer participants will play a role in addressing systemic racism in their community.

“The best part was watching a diverse group come together and develop trust and caring for each other.”
- Black caregiver and staff member

A stronger, shared commitment to advancing educational equity and racial justice in their community

85% of respondents reported being more or much more committed to partnering with other community members to address inequity in their school due to their participation in a Kindred dialogue group.

“I am now more outspoken in the face of injustice.”
- Latina/o/x caregiver
OUR 2021–22 OUTCOMES: EQUITY SPACES

Kindred communities take collective action to enact their shared vision of equity, while continuing to nurture new mindsets and deepen connections within and across lines of difference.

Some examples of actions taken by Kindred communities during the 2021–22 school year include:

- **Schools allocating staff work time** to the vital action of taking part in a dialogue group to reflect on one’s identity as well as examine racism and injustice.
- **Community members mobilizing to form a response team** after an incident that negatively impacted students, families, and staff of color.
- **Caregivers and staff bringing an equity lens to the highly-influential PTA, including by redesigning fundraising to be more equitable.**
- **Caregivers and school leaders co-creating a structure for ongoing coordination between an equity-oriented caregiver body and the leadership team.**
- **Caregivers and staff helping to lead a community-wide equity audit series.**
- **School leaders and staff members developing more inclusive hiring practices.**
- **Members of an equity space developing surveys to understand how caregivers, students, and staff experience the school community to cultivate a greater sense of belonging.**
- **School leaders incorporating student voice in the form of empathy interviews to inform the design of a more inclusive school community.**

and many more!
Here are three stories from communities at different phases of the Kindred journey that illuminate what is possible when communities collaborate to create antiracist and liberated schools.

PHASE 1: BUILD THE FOUNDATION

School Within a School @ Goding

School Within School (SWS) is a teacher-directed DC Public School elementary school. Phase 1 of its partnership with Kindred began in the 2021–22 school year with one caregiver and one staff dialogue group. There, caregivers and staff engaged in conversations about their own experiences in school, their hopes and fears for their students, and the history of schooling in the United States. Caregivers shared hopes that their children would embrace their identities, feel seen and heard, and never question their value as human beings. They also shared fears that their students would “be forgotten or prioritized less” and “that experiences of racism would cause their love of school, and of themselves, to dim.” As they began looking to the future they “freedom dreamed”, or envisioned what an antiracist and liberated school would look, sound, and feel like at SWS.

Dialogue groups ended with participants identifying as priorities diversifying the school’s staff and curriculum, creating an accessible and welcoming environment for all, and increasing the representation of families of color and families from low-income backgrounds.

The dialogue groups decided to combine their efforts with those of the existing IDEA (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Antiracism) Committee on campus. Phase 2 will also include more dialogue groups as almost half of the dialogue alumni volunteered to facilitate new groups.

Survey respondents shared

“This is just the beginning of my journey and engagement in creating real change.”
–SWS participant reflecting on Phase 1

SWS participants who completed the dialogue survey rated the experience a 9.1 out of 10, on average.

“I am more committed than before to helping make SWS a more inclusive and antiracist school, and in particular being more thoughtful about how I can do that on an interpersonal level, not just an institutional one.”
–White caregiver

100% of SWS survey respondents reported that they are “more committed to partnering with other community members (school staff, leaders, and caregivers) to address inequity in the school.”

“I have unlearned a lot... and continue to grow from the new learning.”
–Black staff member
PHASE 2: CREATE A SHARED VISION OF EQUITY

Peabody Elementary School and Watkins Elementary School (Capitol Hill Cluster)

In the 2020–21 school year, Peabody and Watkins Elementary Schools began Phase 1 of their Kindred partnership with two dialogue groups—one for caregivers and one for staff. The two groups united at the end of the school year to form one caregiver-staff equity team.

Being a part of the equity team continued my growth as a part of the dialogue group—I just see everything differently now.

–White caregiver

In Phase 2, the equity team continued to grow as a space for ongoing dialogue and equity-focused action as five dialogue alumni volunteered to lead two new dialogue groups with training and coaching from Kindred. Simultaneously, the equity team worked to address instances of racism, antisemitism, and inequity at the school in partnership with caregivers, staff, and leaders. They formed working groups around three priority equity areas and took action. Specifically, the equity team co-planned and facilitated a series of school-wide equity conversations to increase the sense of belonging for all community members; supported community members with a strong equity-orientation in taking on PTA leadership roles; and examined antiracist early childhood curricula to inform a school-wide curricular extension that launched at the beginning of the 2022–23 school year at Peabody. Members of the equity team secured grant funding so every classroom could implement the new curricula, and they co-led a widely-attended caregiver meeting to introduce this work to families.

In Phase 3, the equity team will leverage the momentum it built over the first two years of partnership to continue working toward a loving Peabody and Watkins community where everyone can thrive.

In their own words

The Power of Community

“What Kindred’s been able to do... is connect the efforts inside the school and in the community toward—and we are not there yet—an articulated shared vision of equity.”

–MScott Berkowitz, Principal of Peabody and Watkins Elementary Schools

“We couldn’t do it without you, [Kindred].”

–Black caregiver
PHASES 1–3: ELSIE WHITLOW STOKES COMMUNITY FREEDOM PUBLIC CHARTER SCHOOL BROOKLAND CAMPUS

One School's Journey Across All 3 Phases

Stokes School is a dual-language immersion DC public charter school. In 2018, Stokes School’s Brookland campus launched Phase 1 of its Kindred partnership with two caregiver dialogue groups. During Phase 2 in October of 2019, these groups launched the Stokes School Equity Team with a mission “to collaborate with school leaders, staff, and the school community on: school policies, curriculum, events, engagement, and social justice initiatives.” Dialogue alumni also launched new dialogue groups, with coaching and support from Kindred. To date, more than 50 caregivers and staff members have participated in a dialogue group, 13 of whom went on to become trained facilitators to lead dialogue themselves. “[These] groups,” said Ana Maria Donado, family engagement coordinator, “provide the trust and authentic space to connect and spread that connection.”

Over the course of the partnership, the Equity Team has led a number of efforts including these highlights (see more on the Equity Team’s Facebook and Instagram pages):

- Following the murder of George Floyd, the Equity Team organized a Black Lives Matter caravan protest that was 100 vehicles strong. Afterward, 57 families joined a video call focusing on antiracism and identity-processing. The team also hosted Advocacy 101 and 202 sessions which supported adults and scholars in writing letters to legislators supporting the George Floyd Justice in Policing Act, DC Statehood, and more.
- In January 2021, members of the Equity Team took part in the MLK Day of Service and donated proceeds to the House of Ruth. NBC4 Washington profiled this effort on its nightly newscast.
- The Equity Team hosted a session entitled “Understanding the Role of Whiteness in Education” where Dr. Shea Winsett spoke about the intersection of gentrification, public education and Black identity in DC.

While the Brookland campus’s Equity Team continues its work, Stokes School’s second campus, East End, launched its partnership with Kindred at the start of the 2022–23 school year with a school leader dialogue group and a professional learning community (PLC).

“
All the things that the Equity Team organized includes everyone. They advocate not just for the school policies and environment but even in the city and nationally.
—Brookland Campus Leader
”

PHASE 1 PHASE 2 PHASE 3
EXPANDING KINDRED’S IMPACT

Kindred’s partnerships to date have been largely focused on school communities in our backyard. However, there is ever-growing demand from communities outside of DC for Kindred’s support in cultivating just schools. Where there is energy to co-create antiracist and liberated schools, Kindred is ready to partner with the caregivers and staff ready to effect that change.

In the 2021–22 school year, we extended our reach across the Potomac River through our partnership with Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS). Beginning in Fall 2022, we further expanded by partnering with communities in Brooklyn, NY and with the national Diverse Charter Schools Coalition to support ongoing efforts to co-design school policies and practices that will advance educational equity and racial justice.
ACPS PARTNERSHIP

In the 2021–22 school year, Kindred partnered with Alexandria City Public Schools (ACPS) to create our first dialogue group with a cross-section of district community members including family engagement leaders, district and school-based parent liaisons, and caregivers who are racially, culturally, and linguistically representative of the ACPS community’s rich racial, cultural, and linguistic diversity.

During the 2022–23 school year, Kindred will expand its support by working with an individual ACPS school, Jefferson-Houston PreK–8 International Baccalaureate. We are also excited to support the district in building a space for equity-driven action in addition to continuing to support dialogue and community building.

“There have been powerful moments and shifts within the staff members and parents that are valuable in and of [themselves]—actionable things to think about at a district level.

–Taneka Tukan, ACPS Central Office Leader

100% SATISFACTION

100% of survey respondents were satisfied with the overall Kindred dialogue group experience.

90% MORE COMMITTED

90% of survey respondents reported being more committed to partnering with other community members to address inequity due to participating in the group.

91% TAKE MORE ACTION

91% of survey respondents reported taking more action to support equity in their district due to participating in the group.
We are thrilled to celebrate some of the ways the Kindred team is living into our core value of learning—both supporting others’ growth and nurturing our own.

Meredith Morelle and Ashley Reid are partnering with the Diverse Charter School Coalition to facilitate a Community of Practice (COP) entitled “Dialogue as Disruption: Advancing Justice Through Conversation and Collective Action.”

Zakiya Sackor spoke about Kindred’s work, including at the district level with Alexandria City Public Schools, in a feature in the Washington Business Journal.

Ashley Reid is supported by a Beckner Advancement Fund grant to develop a culture of care for those who lead social justice work.

Kenya Hall, LMSW, volunteers as a field instructor with the University of Maryland School of Social Work (MSW program) and the University of Maryland at Shady Grove (BSW program) to welcome social work students as interns at Kindred.

Zakiya Sackor and Melissa Martin were selected as Seeding Disruption Fellows where leaders across racial differences in youth-facing professional fields build knowledge, skills, and community to catalyze greater racial equity.

Kindred was selected as a Catalogue for Philanthropy 2022–23 class member of trusted nonprofits.

Savannah Keith Gress collaborated with Victor Udoewa, a Kindred dialogue alumnus and equity designer, on a project proposal that won Aquent and Vitamin T’s Designing for Good grant competition.

Kindred staff Ryan Jones and Zakiya Sackor along with caregivers L. Nelson Burton and Sarah Cissna facilitated a “Power Sharing and Co-Design with Caregivers” session at Education Evolving’s 2022 convening.

Bélgica Marisol Cucalón, Grace Fisher, and Savannah Keith Gress were accepted to Measure4Change’s Technical Assistance cohort where they will improve the use of data to advance Kindred’s work with support from the Urban Institute.

Bélgica Marisol Cucalón and Kenya Hall supported Cardozo Education Campus during the 2021–22 school year as a part of CityBridge’s Design Fellowship.
WITH GRATITUDE TO OUR FUNDING PARTNERS

We are grateful to the following funders—in addition to 370+ individual donors—whose generosity helps us reach more communities who are working to create just schools. Thank you for your investment in our vision.
PARTNER WITH KINDRED

Kindred welcomes the opportunity to partner with new communities who are working to advance educational equity and racial justice in their schools, including by:

- Shifting toward more equitable mindsets
- Developing solutions with caregivers and school staff to disrupt inequitable systems
- Creating a more liberating school experience for students
- Supporting academic and social-emotional gains and closing opportunity gaps

Visit us at kindredcommunities.org

For more information contact us at info@kindredcommunities.org
Join the MOVEMENT

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