

National Black Lives Matter in School Week of Action Starter Kit

What You Will Find Inside:

1. Introduction to the BLM in School Week of Action
2. BLM in School Week of Action National Demands
3. The Thirteen Guiding Principles of BLM
4. How to Talk to Young Children About the BLM Guiding Principles
5. Teaching Materials
6. Sample Union Endorsements
7. Past BLM in School Week of Action Flyers and Pictures
8. Suggestions for how you can join the BLM in School Week of Action Today!
9. FAQ's



Introduction to the BLM in School Week of Action

Black Lives Matter at School (<https://blacklivesmatteratschool.com>) is a national committee of educators organizing for racial justice in education. We encourage all educators, students, parents, unions, and community organizations to join our annual week of action during the first week of February each year.

The Black Lives Matter at School movement first started in Seattle during the fall of 2016, when thousands of educators in Seattle came to school on October 19th wearing shirts that said, “Black Lives Matter: We Stand Together.” Hundreds of families and students did too. Many of the shirts also included the message “#SayHerName,” a campaign to raise awareness about the often unrecognized state violence and assault of women in our country.

This action attracted national news, helping it spread to Philadelphia. That city’s Caucus of Working Educators’ Racial Justice Committee expanded the action to last an entire week that year with teaching points around the principles of Black Lives Matter. Educators in Rochester, New York also held a Black Lives Matter at School day in 2017.

During the 2017-2018 school year, from February 5 to 9, thousands of educators around the U.S. wore Black Lives Matter shirts to school and taught lessons about structural racism, intersectional black identities, black history, and anti-racist movements for a nationally organized week of action: Black Lives Matter at School. Educators in over 20 cities participated in this national uprising to affirm the lives of Black students, teachers, and families including, Seattle, Philadelphia, Los Angeles, Chicago, Detroit, Boston, New York City, Baltimore, Washington, D.C., and beyond.

In this era of mass incarceration, there is a school-to-prison-pipeline system that is more invested in locking up youth than unlocking their minds. That system uses harsh discipline policies that push Black students out of schools at disproportionate rates; denies students the right to learn about their own cultures and whitewashes the curriculum to exclude many of the struggles and contributions of Black people and other people of color; and is pushing out Black teachers from the schools in cities around the country. With this analysis educators in the BLM at School movement developed these demands for the movement:

1. End “zero tolerance” discipline, and implement restorative justice
2. Hire more black teachers
3. Mandate black history and ethnic studies in K-12 curriculum
4. Fund counselors not cops

The lessons that educators taught during that week of action corresponded to the thirteen guiding principles of Black Lives Matter:

- Monday: Restorative Justice, Empathy, and Loving Engagement
- Tuesday: Diversity and Globalism
- Wednesday: Trans-Affirming, Queer Affirming, and Collective Value
- Thursday: Intergenerational, Black Families, and Black Villages
- Friday: Black Women and Unapologetically Black

National Demands for BLM in School Week of Action

End Zero Tolerance. Focus our Schools on Restorative Justice.

The use of zero tolerance in public schools stops now. The over-policing, out of control suspensions, and expulsions must be brought to an immediate end. To rebuild our structures, we will focus our resources on restorative justice-the organic appointment of community leaders; mediation and processing; and equitable perspectives on rehabilitation. Ending zero tolerance and focusing our schools around restorative justice will honor an autonomous voice and vision for students, staff and faculty.

Black Teacher Pushout Ends Now! Hire More Black Teachers in our Schools.

Nine U.S. cities demonstrate a rapid decline in the number of Black Teachers: Boston, Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, Cleveland, New Orleans, Philadelphia, San Francisco and Washington DC. This leaves a mighty burden on the Black Teachers and Service Providers who are left behind and viewed as “disciplinarians.” Racist policies in schools and biased skills exams eliminate Black and Brown teaching candidates. We must increase teacher retention and opportunities for teachers of color.

The elimination of Black teachers is an aggressive push towards homogenizing education in America, creating the School to Prison Pipeline, and honoring the pervasive system of racism from which our country gains its roots. Studies show that students excel academically when they are taught from someone in their own racial group. This message of inequity negatively impacts our student's aptitude for learning and limits the scopes of their dreams. Our Black Teachers need our support and deserve to no longer be abandoned.

Black History/Ethnic Studies Mandated K-12.

A classroom is incomplete if there is only one history taught to its students. The exclusion of Black History and Ethnic studies curriculum ends now. Our students of color deserve to feel empowered in the classroom, by seeing themselves in the curriculum and reading materials. Black History and Ethnic Studies must be included in K-12 classrooms. To effectively do this,

all teachers are mandated to participate in university and certification programs before blindly infusing Black history or Ethnic Studies into their curriculum. This will ensure that these changes occur with informed tools and dedication.

Fund Counselors Not Cops

Our newest demand is simple: children need counselors not cops. Schools today spend an enormous amount of their financial resources hiring school resource officers and local police officers. These same schools often lack enough counselors for students to receive the support they need. We have seen videos of horrifying interactions with police officers and Black students in school and each week we hear of Black people having the police called on them for simply existing while Black. The reality is our schools need counselors for children. The amount of racial trauma and adverse childhood experiences Black students experience continues to increase. We demand that schools provide counselors who have manageable caseloads that allow them to provide quality service to all students.

Black Lives Matter Guiding Principles

Restorative Justice is the commitment to build a beloved and loving community that is sustainable and growing.

Empathy is one's ability to connect with others by building relationships built on mutual trust and understanding.

Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation and peace.

Diversity is the celebration and acknowledgment of differences and commonalities across cultures.

Globalism is our ability to see how we are impacted or privileged within the Black global family that exists across the world in different regions.

Transgender Affirming is the commitment to continue to make space for our trans brothers and sisters by encouraging leadership and recognizing trans-antagonistic violence.

Queer Affirming is working towards a queer-affirming network where heteronormative thinking no longer exists.

Collective Value means that all Black lives, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or

disbeliefs, immigration status or location matter.

Intergenerational is a space free from ageism where we can learn from each other.

Black Families creates a space that is family friendly and free from patriarchal practices.

Black Villages is the disruption of Western nuclear family dynamics and a return to the “collective village” that takes care of each other. **Black Women** is the building of women-centered spaces free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness.

Unapologetically Black is the affirmation that Black Lives Matter and that our love, and desire for justice and freedom are prerequisites for wanting that for others. These principles are the blueprint for healing and do not include nor do they support ignoring or sanitizing the ugliness and discomfort that comes with dealing with race and anti-race issues.

How to talk to young children about the Black Lives Matter Guiding

Principles

By Laleña Garcia

As we think about discussing big ideas with little people, we consider age-appropriate language so that our students or children can grasp the concepts we’re introducing and incorporate these ideas and language into their own thinking and conversation.

While adults can obviously talk about any of the principles (and many of us already do) without mentioning the Black Lives Matter movement, we can also mention the movement as a group of people who want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly, regardless of the color of their skin. We can say something along the lines of, "The Civil Rights Movement, with people we know about, like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Rosa Parks, worked to change laws that were unfair. The Black Lives Matter movement is with people who want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly, because, even though many of those laws were changed many years ago, some people are still not being treated fairly." The idea of police violence is frightening to young children, and the same way we don't discuss the violence which met Civil Rights activists, I would not discuss this kind of violence with our youngest children.

After each principle, I’ve suggested some language you might want to use when talking to young children. Whenever possible, make connections to children’s lived experience, in your classroom, your home, or out in the world.

Restorative Justice is the commitment to build a beloved and loving community that is sustainable and growing.

“We know that if you knock down someone's block building, you have to help them rebuild it, you can't just say, "Sorry," and walk away. Another way to say that is restorative justice, and it's the idea that we have to help people when something happens to them, even if it was by accident.”

Empathy is one's ability to connect with others by building relationships built on mutual trust and understanding.

“It's so important to think about how other people feel, because different people have different feelings. Sometimes it helps to think about how you would feel if the same thing that happened to your friend happened to you. Another way to say that is empathy.”

Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation and peace.

“It's so important to make sure that we are always trying to be fair and peaceful. We have to keep practicing this so that we can get better and better at it. Another way to say that is loving engagement.”

Diversity is the celebration and acknowledgment of differences and commonalities across cultures.

“Different people do different things and have different feelings. It's so important that we have lots of different kinds of people in our community and that everyone feels safe. Another way to say that is diversity.”

Globalism is our ability to see how we are impacted or privileged within the Black global family that exists across the world in different regions.

“Globalism means that we are thinking about all the different people all over the world, and thinking about the ways to keep things fair everywhere.”

Transgender Affirming is the commitment to continue to make space for our trans siblings by encouraging leadership and recognizing trans-antagonistic violence, while doing the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege and uplift Black trans folk.

“Everybody has the right to choose their own gender by listening to their own heart and mind.

Everyone gets to choose if they are a girl or a boy or both or neither or something else, and no one else gets to choose for them.”

Queer Affirming is working towards a queer-affirming network where heteronormative thinking no longer exists.

“Everybody has the right to choose who they love and the kind of family they want by listening to their own heart and mind.”

Collective Value means that all Black lives, regardless of actual or perceived sexual identity, gender identity, gender expression, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status or location, matter.

“Everybody is important, and has the right to be safe and happy. Another way to say that is collective value.”

Intergenerational is a space free from ageism where we can learn from each other.

“It’s important that we have spaces where people of different ages can come together and learn from each other. Another way to say that is intergenerational.”

Black Families creates a space that is family friendly and free from patriarchal practices.

“There are lots of different kinds of families; what makes a family is that it’s people who take care of each other. It’s important to make sure that all families feel welcome.”

Black Villages is the disruption of Western nuclear family dynamics and a return to the “collective village” that takes care of each other.

“There are lots of different kinds of families; what makes a family is that it’s people who take care of each other; those people might be related, or maybe they choose to be family together and to take care of each other. Sometimes, when it’s lots of families together, it can be called a village.”

Black Women is the building of women-centered spaces free from sexism, misogyny, and male-centeredness.

“There are some people who think that women are less important than men. We know that all people are important and have the right to be safe and talk about their own feelings.”

Unapologetically Black is the affirmation that Black Lives Matter and that our love, and desire for justice and freedom are prerequisites for wanting that for others. These principles are the blueprint for healing and do not include nor do they support ignoring or sanitizing the ugliness and discomfort that comes with dealing with race and anti-race issues.

“There are lots of different kinds of people and one way that we’re different is the color of our skin. It’s important to make sure that all people are treated fairly, and that’s why we, and lots of other people all over the country and the world are part of the Black Lives Matter movement.”



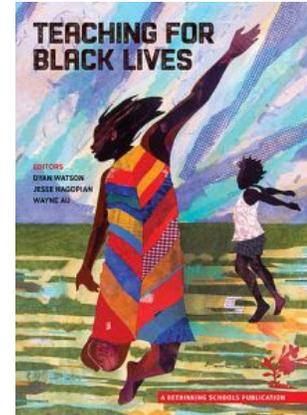
Teaching Materials

In addition to these materials, we have a national curriculum committee and local cities work together to develop age-appropriate standards-based lesson plans.

Teaching for Black Lives

A new book by Rethinking Schools

<http://www.TeachingForBlackLives.org>



Black Lives Matter in #PHLed: Lesson Resources Overview

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1UHtJqY8xdDOZM5QY39aRgQURRu-9jZhXQxUe_T2yYG0/edit

Seattle Center for Race and Equity: Black Lives Matter At School Lesson Plans

<http://www.seattlewea.org/center-for-race-equity/Black%20Lives%20Matter%20Week%20Resources/>



Black Lives Matter in Schools Resources for Educators: Books, Videos, K-12 Lesson Plans, and more.

<https://www.dcareeducators4socialjustice.org/black-lives-matter-resources>

Rochester City School District Resource Toolkit for School Staff

https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ou2lkNO_1ijCJDfmasbAG8mx_7hvv1cHKmobhtcVLak/edit



Black Lives Matter at School – Resources

<https://neaedjustice.org/black-lives-matter-school-resources/>

Union Endorsements

Each year teachers who participate in the Black Lives Matter in School Week of Action work collectively to get their local and national union to endorse the event. Below are some sample endorsements from previous years to help you get started.

National Education Association*

NEW BUSINESS ITEM 4 Adopted

NEA will promote the Black Lives Matter Week of Action in schools during Black History month in 2019, using existing communication resources, specifically calling for clear efforts to demonstrate support for the three demands of the BLM Week of Action in schools:

1. Ending zero-tolerance policies and replacing them with restorative justice practices.
2. Hiring and mentoring Black educators.
3. Mandating that ethnic studies be taught in preK-12 schools in age-appropriate ways.

*NEA endorsed BLM in School Week of action before the fourth demand was added.

Seattle Education Association

Whereas The Seattle Education Association has taken a national leadership role in the Black Lives Matter at School movement, now inspiring a dozen major cities to join us in our movement for change,

Whereas there are far too few Black educators and educators of color in proportion to the number of students of color in the schools,

Whereas zero tolerance discipline and over-policing of our youth has proven to be ineffective in the reduction of discipline, and Restorative Practices has proven to be a powerful tool in the reduction of disproportionate discipline,

Whereas according to the Washington Post this year there have been 898 police-involved killings, including 204 of Black people,

Whereas the creation and implementation of an Ethnic Studies curriculum is of critical importance to supporting the diversity of students, and currently in development in SPS, and The Seattle Education Association RA unanimously voted to support mandatory K-12 Ethnic Studies

curriculum in SPS,

Be it resolved that the Seattle Education Association join the national call for Black Lives Matter at School Week to kick off Black History Month during February 5th to February 11th,

Be it further resolved that SEA encourage its members to wear Black Lives Matter shirts to school that week and teach lessons that week about the school-to-prison-pipeline, Black immigrant youth, Black women empowerment, Black LGBTQ community, and Black history.

Chicago Teachers Union

RESOLUTION FOR BLACK LIVES MATTER AT SCHOOL WEEK OF FEBRUARY 5TH

WHEREAS, the closing of public schools in Chicago, such as the recently announced closing of all four remaining public high schools in the Englewood community, turnarounds, and other school actions have negatively and disproportionately impacted Black and Brown communities, and

WHEREAS, according to the Chicago Reporter (December 2017), “In the past decade, Chicago’s public schools lost more than 52,000 black students” and many of these Black families left Chicago for places with more affordable homes and a perception of more stable schools in the suburbs and Northwest Indiana, and

WHEREAS, as of 2017, Chicago Teachers Union members served Chicago Public School students who are 90% students of color (46.8% of students are Latinx, 37% Black, 10.2% White, and 4.1% Asian), and

WHEREAS, since 2001 (when Black teachers made up 40% of CPS teachers) the number of Black educators in CPS has dropped by 5,500, and as of 2017, there were too few Black educators and educators of color (50.1% of teachers are White, 21.6% Black, 20.8% Latinx, and 3.6% Asian) in proportion to the number of students of color they teach, and

WHEREAS, Illinois House Bill 2859 was signed in 1991 and section 27-20.4 of the Illinois School Code mandated that “every public elementary school and high school shall include in its curriculum a unit of instruction studying the events of Black History,” and

WHEREAS, Chicago Public Schools rolled out a K-10 Interdisciplinary African and African American Studies curriculum in 2013 and a K-10 Interdisciplinary Latino and Latin American Studies curriculum in 2015, and

WHEREAS, in 2015 Chicago City Council passed a reparations resolution requiring that the history and fight for justice of the John Burge police torture survivors be taught to all 8th and 10th-grade students in CPS, and

WHEREAS, the CTU supported the development and implementation of this now named “Reparations Won” curriculum which was a part of the nationally historic and precedent-setting reparations package, and

WHEREAS, the implementation of ethnic studies and culturally responsive curricula is of critical importance to supporting the learning needs of all students, but particularly Black and Brown students, and

WHEREAS, according to the Washington Post (December 2017), in the first six months of 2017, there were 492 people killed by police, which puts the number on pace to match the 1,000 people killed in each of the previous two full years, and of those killed Black men were still disproportionately represented, and

WHEREAS, according to the “Handcuffs in Hallways” report by the Shriver Center (February 2017), “In total, between 2012 and 2016, the police officers assigned to CPS accumulated \$2,030,652 in misconduct settlements for activities on and off school grounds,” and “of that total, nearly \$1.5 million resulted from excessive use of force against a minor and \$215,000 from incidents that occurred on CPS grounds,” and

WHEREAS, according to the University of Chicago CCSR (September 2015), Black and Brown students face suspensions from school at disproportionate rates even when risk factors “such as poverty and low achievement” are controlled for, and

WHEREAS, Illinois Senate Bill 100 was signed in 2015 and was intended to reduce exclusionary discipline which disproportionately kept Black and Brown students out of school and contributed to them entering the school-to-prison pipeline, and

WHEREAS, discipline, criminalization, and over-policing of Black and Brown students have proven to be ineffective in the improvement of outcomes, and restorative practices are proven to be a powerful tool in the reduction of disproportionate discipline and improved school climate, and

WHEREAS, CPS often ineffectively implements restorative practices without adequate training, support, and understanding of their role in a developmentally appropriate system of accountability, consequences, and harm reparation, and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the Chicago Teachers Union (CTU) join the national call to participate in Black Lives Matter at School Week to kick off Black History Month the week of February 5, 2018, and

BE IT RESOLVED, that the CTU will host events this week aligned to the national demands for ending the pushout of Black teachers in our schools, proper implementation of restorative practices in schools and ending zero-tolerance discipline, and teaching students Black and other histories and ethnic studies curricula, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the CTU encourage its members to wear Black Lives Matter at School shirts to school that week and teach lessons about related topics such as the school-to-prison-pipeline, Black immigrant youth, Black women empowerment, Black LGBTQ community, and Black history.

New York City

Resolution for Black Lives Matter Week of Action on February 5th through 9th

WHEREAS, the United Federation of teachers stands for racial justice and human dignity for all of our students and colleagues, and

WHEREAS New York City represents nearly 60% of the state's total black students, two-thirds of the total Asian and Latino students, but only 10% of white students, and

WHEREAS, we acknowledge the hardship faced by Black students who are twice as likely to be in an underfunded, high needs, renewal school or school slated for closure, and

WHEREAS, we recognize the toxic impact on our Black students and their families who disproportionately experience higher rates of police brutality and racial profiling, and

WHEREAS, the educators teaching in communities surrounded by mounting social and racial inequities face these struggles with their students, and

WHEREAS, we are not blind to the emboldened alt-right and white supremacist factions actively organizing in our nation,

WHEREAS, we are in a pivotal moment to affirm our values for an equitable and racially just public school system and elevate our voices to support the needs of our students, and

WHEREAS, public school teachers unions in Seattle and Philadelphia have initiated a national

call to action to participate in weeklong Educators for Black Lives Matter Week highlighting the BLM's 13 Guiding Principles, therefore be it

RESOLVED that the UFT will join with participating grassroots organizations and cultural institutions, for a Black Lives Matter week of action beginning February 5, 2018, and

RESOLVED that the UFT will call for members to participate in the planning of community forums, creation and implementation K-12 curricular resources and initiating school community discussions around the actions needed to affirm racial justice, and

RESOLVED that the UFT will commit to making demands on the Department of Education to work towards undoing systemic racism.

Maryland State Education Association

NBI 15 #: MSEA will endorse the 2019 Black Lives Matter (BLM) at School Week of Action, specifically calling for efforts to demonstrate support for the demands of the BLM Week of Action at School:

1. Ending zero-tolerance policies and replacing them with restorative justice practices.
2. Hiring and mentoring Black educators.
3. Mandating that ethnic studies be taught in preK-12 schools in age-appropriate ways.
4. Fund Counselors Not Cops

MSEA will support efforts by individual members or local associations by providing financial support through 10 total grants in the amount of \$500 each. Grant application process and the selection of awardees will be determined by the MSEA BOD. In addition, MSEA will promote events and curriculum/resources using existing communication sources.

Rationale: The 2018 NEA Representative Assembly overwhelming voted to adopt NBI 3 which calls for NEA to promote the 2019 Black Lives Matter Week of Action as a way to further begin to dismantle institutional racism. MSEA should demonstrate its commitment to the implementation of NBI 3 at the state level. Furthermore, acknowledging and promoting this week will demonstrate MSEA's commitment to supporting the Black Lives Matter movement in a tangible, student-centered, action-based way.



Black Lives Matter in School Week of Action Photos and Flyers

See how other cities planned their BLM in School Week of Action!





Inspired Teaching
@InspireTeach

The #DCschoolsBLM interschool seminar is off to a great start with Makia from @BLMDMV prompting or intergenerational conversations about #BlackLivesMatterAtSchool at

Howard County Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action

MONDAY, 2.5.18

School to Prison Pipeline &
Restorative Justice Seminar
5:30-7:45 pm

TUESDAY, 2.6.18

DACA, Dream Act, & TPS
Informational & Bystander
Training
5:30-7:45 pm

WEDNESDAY, 2.7.18

Viewing and Discussion of
"Moonlight"
With Twitter Chat
6:30-8:45 pm

THURSDAY, 2.8.18

State of the Black
Community Forum & Family
Resource Fair
5:30-7:30 pm

FRIDAY, 2.9.18

Open Mic Night and Expo
celebrating Black Women
Educators, Students, and
Community Members
5:30-7:30 pm

All events will take place at Owen Brown Interfaith
Center.

For more information follow us on Facebook.



@HoCoBLMSchools

Sponsors:





BLACK LIVES MATTER
WEEK OF ACTION IN SCHOOLS
FEB 5 – 11

CELEBRATE BALTIMORE'S BLM WEEK OF ACTION IN SCHOOLS AT THE FOLLOWING COMMUNITY EVENTS:
 (For more info, please go to: <https://www.bmorecaucus.org/black-lives-matter-week-of-action-2>)

MONDAY 2/5

BLM WEEK OF ACTION KICK-OFF
 ACTION AT BCPSS CURRICULUM AUDIT
 WESTERN HIGH SCHOOL 4:00-5:00 PM

TUESDAY 2/6

CONFRONTING RACISM IN TEACHER EDUCATION
 LOYOLA UNIVERSITY, MCGUIRE HALL 6:45 PM
 CONCERT BY BELL'S ROAR AND ABDU ALI
 THE MOTOR HOUSE, 120 W NORTH AVE 7:00 PM

WEDNESDAY 2/7

WEST WEDNESDAY: PROTEST POLICE BRUTALITY
 NORTHEAST DISTRICT POLICE STATION
 1900 ARGONNE DRIVE 6:30 PM

THURSDAY 2/8

BLACK TEACHERS MATTER VIDEO AND PANEL
 LIBERTY ELEMENTARY LIBRARY
 6:00 - 8:00 PM

FRIDAY 2/9

OPEN MIC NIGHT
 THE LIVING WELL CENTER
 235 HOLLIDAY ST 8:00 PM

SATURDAY 2/10

BMORE SOUP: CLOSING CELEBRATION
 2640 SPACE, 2640 ST. PAUL ST
 6:00 PM - 8:00 PM

BLACK FAMILIES QUEER AFFIRMING BLACK VILLAGES COLLECTIVE VALUE GLOBALISM TRANS AFFIRMING
 INTERGENERATIONAL EMPATHY DIVERSITY BLACK WOMEN RESTORATIVE JUSTICE

Join the BLM in School Week of Action Today!

- ❖ Add your name to our petition for national endorsers here:

https://www.change.org/p/national-black-lives-matter-in-school-week-of-action-endorse-the-2019-national-black-lives-matter-in-school-week-of-action?recruiter=19803020&utm_source=share_petition&utm_medium=copylink&utm_campaign=share_petition

- ❖ Help us organize by joining the national group here:

<https://groups.google.com/forum/#!forum/national-black-lives-matter-week-of-action-2018>

- ❖ Find a local group to join here:

<https://docs.google.com/spreadsheets/d/1MNqKh9t4nHxo8X0X0hEpKaGz-60vLZjbjbKl6tWNzs0/edit?usp=sharing>

- ❖ Show solidarity and buy and wear a t-shirt on Monday, February 4th here:

<https://blacklivesmatteratschool.com/the-t-shirt/>

- ❖ Work with teachers in your school to plan and teach lessons.

- ❖ Host or attend an event!

- ❖ Spread the word!

- ❖ Encourage others to endorse and participate!

BLM in School Week of Action Frequently Asked Questions

Created by teachers in New York City!

Justifications

Why is this even important right now?

Black Lives Matter is currently in the news. Most students are aware, to some degree, of this movement. Addressing this in the classroom is acknowledging an important current events topic. Bringing issues of racial justice into the classroom not only affirms the identities of our students but is crucial to fostering critical engagement with the world - regardless of where you, your students and their families stand on the issues.

I have way too much to do already. Why do I need to add something else to that list?

Informational reading and argumentative and informational writing are a part of the SDP standards. These materials and content will add a topical and inclusive element to the lessons you already need to teach. In addition to teaching students these skills, it is important for us to work with students to understand and analyze the world around them. Also, many of the resources that we are offering can be short activities if that better fits the needs of your classroom.

How does this relate to Common Core?

Close Reading of Informational Texts and critical writing of Argumentative and Informational texts are important parts of the Common Core standards. The texts provided will lend themselves to analytical reading and critical writing.

I'm not sure if my grade group/teachers in my department would be on board with this.

How do I explain to them why I am participating/wearing this shirt?

Start by sharing this FAQ and curriculum ideas. Explain to them, from your heart and mind, why making room for learning about Black Lives Matter this week is important to you and your students. Create a space where you can listen and talk, as a group or in pairs.

What if my principal tells me to take off the shirt or button and not teach this to my students?

The goal of BLM week is awareness and discussion, not political agitation. You are the best judge of your school environment and what, if anything, needs to be put in front of your administration ahead of time. As you plan your week with fellow educators, use your collective knowledge of the climate in your building to figure out what actions will encourage engagement without pushing people away. You will have the support of educators around the city.

Purpose

What place does Black lives matter have in my daily curriculum?

The integration into your daily curriculum of culturally diverse opinions allows students to gain a deeper understanding of pertinent issues affecting our students and their classmates. The principles associated with Black Lives Matter highlight concern about the historical exclusion of people of color that recognizes the value of human life regardless of racial and gender identity. Also, the 13 guiding principles of Black Lives Matter define a multifaceted approach to justice that can create the conditions for improving relations between people of different races.

The lessons and activities that we are offering for teachers to use fit directly into the CCSS and other state standards. CCSS encourages the use of rigorous and complex texts, with the practice of certain standards to use with such texts. We encourage teachers to look through our folders of recommended resources and see which ones would fit this criteria as well as the focus standards that they are currently on based upon the “Standards Map” for the second quarter.

Is this age-appropriate for my students?

Issues of equity and fairness are important in all aspects of all our lives, and in each of our classrooms. Having students of all ages discuss and process these deep issues at their own level, using grade-appropriate materials, strengthens their critical thinking abilities and provides them with the opportunity to be fully-engaged learners.

Implementation

I’m an elementary teacher and I’m not used to openly raising issues of race in my classroom. What are some actions I can take and what kinds of materials can be helpful?

Does your classroom have students of more than one race? Do your instructional materials include people of different races? Are you a different race than some (or all) of your students? If any of these are true -- and likely all are -- then issues of race are already present in your classroom. You can raise awareness about this omnipresent aspect of our society without triggering conflict or anxiety in your students -- take a look at some of our elementary-specific resources to find a lesson that suits your environment.

I don’t know how to do this in a big way. What is one small thing I can do?

There are many small, manageable ways to get involved - from wearing a button or t-shirt to Warm-Up journal prompts and discussions to class period-length lessons to planning a school-wide event that invites in students, educators, and families.

How can I integrate this into my teaching beyond the week?

Absolutely! One of the goals is to provide deeper connections between educators, parents,

students, and community organizations. We encourage you to use these materials, resources, and ideas throughout the school year.

How can I get my colleagues on board with this at my school? How can I reach out to parents and get them on board?

The best way to get anyone on board is through conversation - encourage all parties to ask and answer questions. When talking with colleagues, encourage them to consider that these are issues that affect the majority of our students on a daily basis. Teachers and parents share the common goal of helping our children navigate the difficult conversations that they will inevitably confront in this world. Reach out to parent networks in your school and let them know what your building is planning. Consider an informational picket on a morning before school to speak to parents directly if many drop off their children.

What are my rights when teaching materials parents might find inappropriate?

Many items that teachers include in their curriculum are considered to be controversial. That is one of our jobs as educators: to raise our students' awareness to issues that affect the world around them, and to consider potential solutions. If you are not sure about whether or not parents will object to a topic you will be teaching, then write a letter home and explain your goals in teaching the material. Use responses from this FAQ to help jump start your letter.

How can I prepare young students and their families for discussion of sensitive topics?

Think of writing a letter that you will send home to parents. Inform them of the topics you will be discussing and the reasons why they will be included in the curriculum.

I teach math and science. How can I integrate this into my teaching?

There are a lot of ways to integrate justice driven curriculum into science and math lessons. Science and math are based on problem-solving, research, and use of numbers to understand the world. Ways to incorporate this content into math pedagogy can be found in the text *Rethinking Mathematics*. You can use numbers and maps to look at the impacts of housing discrimination, low minimum wage, and the school to prison pipeline. You can ask your students to think about ways to solve deep social problems. How can we reduce the number of losses of life to police violence? What are ways to end deep poverty? In science class, we learn about the world by asking questions that can be solved with research questions and materials. What questions do students have about healthcare? What are the innovations and inventions that we can design?

It's also possible to take time out of math and science class to talk about how students are doing and feeling about the world around them. If we view students as humans first, and learners second, it's possible to see value in carving out necessary time to engage with our kids around the work of social change, organizing, and building power in the world that we live in.

In my classroom, students are from different communities and racial backgrounds. How should I approach this?

Every time we plan a lesson, we make choices about which perspectives, cultures, histories, and experiences we want to present. No lesson we teach will ever fully encompass the personal experiences of all of our students. Instead, our goal as educators should be to choose content that is relevant, meaningful, important, and thought-provoking for our students. The Black Lives Matter movement meets these criteria. It is a major current events issue with roots throughout American history, a topic many students have been exposed to, often without context, and a defining social movement of our time. It is also an opportunity to introduce vital conversations around topics such as empathy, discrimination, activism, privilege, and public policy.

Isn't it my job is to expose students to different viewpoints, not take sides in the classroom?

Indeed! This is a great opportunity to design lessons that encourage thoughtful discussion and formation of informed opinions. We also want to point out that not addressing these issues in the classroom is a political statement, one that students can pick up on.

I do not feel like my principal would be okay with me participating, but I'm totally down with this cause. What are other ways I can get involved?

If you do not feel safe to participate fully in this campaign, there is an incredible amount of important work to do. Finding time to have conversations about racial justice, the Black Lives Matter movement, and other issues with your coworkers is invaluable. Building strong relationships and organizing in your building can be very helpful in dealing with a tough principal.

I'm afraid of retribution from parents and students. How can I explain what we're doing in a way that they won't feel threatened and will be supportive?

Let your students and parents know that you are doing this to encourage critical thinking and awareness of current event issues that are directly impacting us as Philadelphians. Also, allow them to voice their concerns and ask them plenty of questions. Read through this page, many of the FAQs can be helpful.

Pushback

Isn't this too emotionally stressful for students? Can we really open up a sensitive conversation even though we can't devote legitimate time to this issue?

Students are confronting these issues on a daily basis in the world at large. It's our obligation and role as teachers to create safe environments for our students to process tough issues. Helping students begin the conversation by framing their feelings and questions is the first step toward them identifying their own values and worldview regarding these tough issues.

As a teacher who is married to a police officer, I am not down with Black Lives Matter. Isn't this just about black rage at the police?

The police are also victims of our society's push towards mass incarceration and under-funded schools and social services. What we're all dealing with is a systemic breakdown that leads to increased violence across the system. Policing is just a tiny part of what we're talking about--so let's start the discussion. Check out all 13 guiding principles of Black Lives Matter, as a starting point.

Isn't Black Lives Matter racist against white people?

Black Lives Matter helps us to analyze the quality of life for marginalized groups in our society--who happen to make up the majority of our New York City students. Though these conversations can sometimes be provocative, bringing up these conversations strengthens our community. Relationships deepen and hidden truths become sites of understanding.

As a white teacher, I feel like it's not my place to have conversations around BLM/police shootings/etc. in my classroom with students of color.

This is a conversation for everyone. Everyone has a right to understand the historical context that has led to this moment. If this is something you want your own child to know, then your students, too, will understand that this comes from an authentic place. And remember - choosing not to have these conversations is also making a stance. If you're not ready to wear a shirt or teach a lesson at this point, that's OK. However, we are asking you to be willing to engage in this important conversation about racial justice. (Review suggestions about low-level actions)

The Black Lives Matter message is embedded in the way I teach already--everyone is valued. So why set aside time for one group of people and not others?

That's so important! But this is not about respect and kindness. This is about unpacking your backpack of privilege with your students, which will help them understand their own identities and how that shapes our society. Relying on colorblind rhetoric around kindness and tolerance only perpetuates the issues at hand and does nothing to challenge structural racism and white supremacy.