



# Inspired Teaching Demonstration School

## **Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Schools**

### **Frequently Asked Questions**

#### **What is the history of BLM at Schools?**

- Following the racial justice protests in 2016, a group of Seattle educators came together to promote racial equity in schools. The following year, Philadelphia's Caucus of Working Educators' Racial Justice Committee expanded the campaign and developed four school-based demands:
  - End Zero Tolerance
  - Mandate Black and Ethnic Studies
  - Hire more Black Teachers
  - Fund Counselors, not Cops
- Since that time, the BLM Week of Action in Schools has expanded to numerous cities and districts across the United States with DC joining in SY17-18.
- ITDS has participated each year as members of our teaching and administration staff collaborated with Teaching for Change to create the D.C. Area Educators for Social Justice.
- For more information see:
  - <https://www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/>
  - <https://www.dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org/about>

#### **What is our approach to Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Schools?**

- We offer balanced experiences for students that explore that all people are valued and important while acknowledging that not everyone is treated the same. We celebrate Black lives, culture, and power instead of focusing entirely on race-based inequities, challenges, and traumas.
- We create developmentally appropriate experiences.
- We nurture diversity and inclusion in all of our students.
- We support honest conversations about social justice.

#### **What if I don't want my student to participate?**

- As part of our school's mission and the rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders, ITDS' participation in the Black Lives Matter at School week ensures everyone is safe, everyone builds the community, and everyone learns. The activities are designed as developmentally and age appropriate lessons in equity. We see these as core values that each student should participate in as part of our educational programming.

- If you have questions about the content or would like to discuss your child's participation, please contact Ms. H, Mr. Johnson, or your division AP.

### **How is this different from or related to Black History Month lessons or celebrations?**

- We believe that Black History should not be reserved just for the month of February, instead it should be all year round as we support students in being able to see themselves and people like them throughout the year, not just on special days or months. Because of this approach, we acknowledge months like Black History, Women's History, and Hispanic Heritage Months, but we do not schedule or create specific whole school special events or activities.
  - As part of culturally relevant and sustaining practices, our curriculum is intentionally designed with representativeness and inclusion in mind. This means that students see stories with protagonists from different backgrounds, cultures, and experiences as part of their daily instruction.
  - Classroom materials and discussions integrate different points of view, particularly highlighting counternarratives and the voices of those from groups that have been historically or socially marginalized.
- We acknowledge the fact that there are injustices and inequities that disproportionately affect certain groups of people. In those instances, it is important as a community to call attention and take action to address them as we work towards a more equitable society. The Black Lives Matter Week of Action in Schools is particularly aligned to supporting this work as it calls for things that affect the daily lives of our students. As a community of students, staff, and families, we can stand together and use our collective voice to act as changemakers.

### **How do I talk to my student(s) about sensitive topics**

- When talking with students, honor where they are and what they already know. In particular, related to race, research suggests that 3-year-olds are aware of racial differences.
  - Build on children's own ideas and experiences. Use observations and discussions of sameness and difference to expand awareness.
  - Listen to your child and use their questions as entry points.
  - Use their terminology when discussing. No need to over-simplify or sugarcoat.
  - Bring your own viewpoints about race and racism into the conversation through ideas, not right answers. For example, "Let's find out more about \_\_\_\_\_."
- With young children, we suggest you share just enough to answer the question honestly. You don't need to give them too much detail, and you follow their lead in terms of curiosity and prior knowledge. Here is an example -
  - *Why are we having Black Lives Matter Week of Action?*
    - Sometimes people say and do hurtful things to people due to the color of their skin; our school community is speaking up to say that's unfair.

**What books will students be reading?**

- Each homeroom or grade level was able to select their own, below is a list of some of the books that will be read across the school throughout the week. Teachers will be sharing in their weekly updates which books will be read with their classes.
  - Hey Black Child by Eсени Perkins
  - M is For Melanin by Tiffany Rose
  - I am Enough by Grace Gyers
  - Black is a Rainbow Color by Angela Joy
  - Sulwe by Lupita Nyong'o
  - The ABC's of Black History by Rio Cortez
  - A Kids Books About Systemic Racism by Jordan Thierry