

OFFICE OF CULTURALLY AND LINGUISTICALLY RESPONSIVE INITIATIVES



Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Curriculum Frequently Asked Questions

Why is the Black Lives Matter at Schools Curriculum important right now?

Black Lives Matter is currently in the news and on all social media platforms and thus the First Weeks of Schools lessons seek to address these events. Most students are aware, to some degree, of this movement. Addressing this in the classroom, along with other social justice issues, is acknowledging an important current event topic and facilitating the discussions with trained professionals. 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. Many items included in the curriculum are considered to be controversial. That is one of our jobs as educators: to ensure criticality and to raise our students' awareness of issues that affect the world around them and to consider potential solutions.

What do these lessons have to do with our students' important class content? Aren't they missing classwork to learn these ideas?

In addition to addressing current event issues, the curriculum is designed to address many New York State Standards for Social Studies and English Language Arts (available at www.EngageNY.org). All lessons support the development of important reading, writing, speaking and critical thinking skills. They also address such skills and ideas as:

- Supporting personal opinions with text-based evidence
- Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions with diverse partners
- Express ideas clearly and persuasively and build on those of others.
- Understanding political and governmental structures
- Development of American culture, its diversity and multicultural context, and the ways people are unified by many values, practices, and traditions.
- Important ideas, social and cultural values, beliefs, and traditions from New York State and United States history illustrate the connections and interactions of people and events across time and from a variety of perspectives.
- The skills of historical analysis include the ability to: explain the significance of historical evidence; weigh the importance, reliability, and validity of evidence
- Understand the concept of multiple causations
- Understand the importance of changing and competing interpretations of different historical developments.

Where can I find the BLM in Schools and other resources used to create the Culturally and Linguistically Relevant Lessons used for our opening weeks of school?

All materials can be found on the [Culturally and Linguistically Responsive Initiatives](http://www.CulturallyandLinguisticallyResponsiveInitiatives.org) website. Lessons were built by Buffalo Schools teachers and designed specifically for the needs of our students. These materials include Black Lives

Matter in Schools resources, Amistad Curriculum resources, Anti-racist Teaching resources, Brownies Literature resources, Extended Break resources, Moments in Time: Buffalo Black History Segments, and more.

What are the guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter in Schools curriculum?

There are 13 BLM Guiding Principles, please find the links here: [13 Guiding Principles](#) and [Kid-Friendly 13 Guiding Principles](#)

Buffalo Public Schools focuses its First Weeks lessons on the following Guiding Principles:

Diversity, Restorative Justice, Collective Value, Empathy, and Loving Engagement.

These principles are defined as:

- 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.
- Empathy is one's ability to connect with others by building relationships built on mutual trust and understanding.
- Diversity is the celebration and acknowledgment of differences and commonalities across cultures.
- Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation, and peace.
- Restorative Justice is the commitment to build a beloved and loving community that is sustainable and growing.

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 and parents 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. Ignoring international current events does a disservice to our students as we educate for responsible civics and understanding of historical events in our nation.

Isn't Black Lives Matter just about Black rage at the police?

No, the police are also victims of our society's push towards mass incarceration and under-funded schools and social services. Black Lives Matter at Schools as presented in the Buffalo Schools curriculum, is separate and apart from any rhetoric or propaganda that teaches hate for any group of people in our society, especially our beloved police officers. What we're all dealing with is a systemic breakdown that leads toward increased violence across the system. Policing is just a tiny part of what we're talking about—so let's start the discussion. Our BLM in Schools guiding principles are a starting point.

Isn't Black Lives Matter racist against white people?

No, Black Lives Matter helps us to analyze the quality of life for marginalized groups in our society. Though these conversations can sometimes be provocative, bringing up these conversations strengthens our community. Relationships deepen and hidden truths become sites of understanding. All students are provided with global thinking

and inclusivity skill sets that provide understanding of Black and Brown cultures and voices that have been historically left out of the curriculum. This prepares our students as 21st century global thinkers and anti-racist citizens.

As a white parent/teacher/member of society, I feel like it's not the school's place to have conversations around BLM/racial inequalities/etc. In the classroom.

This is a conversation for everyone. Everyone has a right to understand the historical context that has led to this moment. Choosing not to have these conversations is also a way of taking a political side. These lessons are not designed to force students to take a political stance. However, we are asking people to be willing to engage in this important conversation about racial justice and to read and think critically about races different from your own.

If the BLM in Schools Curriculum has a message that everyone is valued, then why set aside time to teach about justice for one group of people and not others?

Teaching respect and kindness in our classrooms is very important to everyone. These lessons are not just about respect and kindness, but take these ideas to the next level. 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. In a careful examination of the lessons, you will find inclusivity of all kinds of people. The Guiding Principles are designed to create racial harmony and collective community.

What place does Black Lives Matter have in the daily curriculum?

The integration into the daily curriculum of culturally diverse opinions allows students to gain a deeper understanding of pertinent issues affecting our students and their classmates. The BLM in Schools Guiding Principles highlight a concern about the historic exclusion of people of color that recognizes the value of human life regardless of racial and gender identity. In addition, they define a multifaceted approach to justice that can create conditions for improving relations between people of different races.

Why do the First Weeks Lessons highlight Black history and culture?

The First Weeks of Schools lessons highlight Black history and culture as they seek to bring awareness to the critical issues specific to Black people. However, we have included lessons on all peoples in our story selections and conversation and writing prompts. The selected Guiding Principles include all people, please see Restorative Justice, Collective Value, and Diversity.