



Guidance for Elementary Teachers

Talking about the Recent Violence Against Black Lives

by Erica Pernell

- **Give parents/guardians a heads up that the topics will be covered in an age-appropriate way. Mention that this discussion is consistent with our mission.**
 - [A sample letter home](#)
- **Make sure students understand the gravity of the conversation they are having to avoid any insensitivity.**
 - "We are going to talk about a topic that is serious and hard to talk about. Many many people are sad and hurting. How can we respect and take care of each other and each other's feelings in this conversation? How can we show we are listening?"
- **Share facts and set boundaries and barriers for the conversation beforehand: what we will and will not talk about and why.**
 - "There's been a lot going on in our country. Recently several Black people have been hurt and killed by White people in different parts of our country, including a White police officer hurting a Black man named George Floyd on video. All kinds of different people of all different races are very sad and mad, because the people who are hurting Black people haven't always gotten in trouble for it. Have any of you heard about this?"
 - "We aren't going to go into detail about the actual violence that occurred because we want to honor the memories and lives of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery. We should know that George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery were all Black people who were hurt badly and killed by White people, and in some cases this happened on video. People are very upset and mad and sad because Black people are being hurt and killed."
- **Represent different perspectives with clarity & ask students their own perspectives on how they feel about police.**
 - "When you think of the police, what words do you think of? Some people feel safe and have been protected by police. Some people have not been protected and have been hurt or their friends and family have been hurt by police, so they feel unsafe around police. At times, police have gotten away with hurting Black people and have not gotten in trouble."
- **Use race-conscious language:**
 - "As a White/Black/Latinx/Asian/First Nations/Native/Multiracial person, I...."
- **Build racial identity:**
 - "There are people in the world who judge and hurt and in some cases kill other people because of the color of their skin. There are also many many more people of all different races working to try to stop them. Black people are important and good people and they deserve to live freely without fear. We can think about what we can do to support our Black friends and family and what we can do to help stop the hurting of Black people."
- **Teach about protest:**
 - A slideshow on protest from Woke Kindergarten: [Woke Word of the Day: Protest](#)

Activities from Wee the People

SIDEWALK CHALK ART: Talk with kids and neighbors and create some bold, artful messaging for everyone who walks by. What do you want them to know and do right now? What kind of change do you want to see in the world?

SIGN-MAKING: Invite children and neighbors to make signs and post them for the community to see.

TOY PROTEST: Make mini-protest signs with tape and small pieces of paper. Grab your stuffies, action figures, and dolls and give them their own voice about what needs to change.

8-WORD PROTEST POEM: As multi-generational as it gets: Invite young and old to create poems as long or short as feels right, incorporating the following EIGHT WORDS that resonate with this moment: POWER * JUSTICE * UNITY * CIRCLE * LISTEN * STAND * HEAL * RESPECT

CANDLES: Light a candle (or several) for the Black and Brown lives impacted and lost to the pandemic, to racism, and to White supremacist ideology.

PLAYLIST PROTEST: Make/share a playlist of protest songs in honor of Black and Brown lives. Send us a youtube video of the protest song that most speaks to this moment and Wee will post it! Wee will also be posting/sharing our own faves throughout the day.

SAY THEIR NAMES: Ahmaud Arbery, Breonna Taylor, and George Floyd -- each one of them belonged to their own loved ones, their own families, their own communities. Design their names in chalk, in a notebook, on a T-shirt, with a paintbrush.

More resources:

100 race-conscious things you can say:

<http://www.raceconscious.org/2016/06/100-race-conscious-things-to-say-to-your-child-to-advance-racial-justice>

4 things we should teach kids about racism:

<http://www.blackgirldangerous.com/2015/07/teach-kids-about-racism/>

For adult learning, a history of the Minneapolis Police Department:

<https://www.mpd150.com/report/overview/>