

Black Lives Matter at School

Each child, no matter their identity, is shaped by the ways that we treat each other in our community and society. The ideals of Black Lives Matter - including love, respect and real justice for all - are clearly important for ALL children. The thinking and learning inherent in BLM at School is vital all year long, not just for one week. Empathy, kindness and acting for justice are skills that grow with practice, just like math and reading. Our kids are caring, thinking and powerful in what they already can learn and do. They are ready to act to make our society a more just one!

This Year, the LHE Parent Equity Group and PTA are partnering with The Tshirt Men Company to offer LHE BLM shirts, hoodies, and masks. The TSM Shop is a small, Black-owned print shop located in Tacoma that does great work for their local community: <http://thetsmshop.com/about>. Please visit the new shop here to show your support for Black Lives Matter at Loyal Heights: <https://the-tsm-shop.printavo.com/merch/loyalblm>. Deadline to order is January 24. Scholarships are available for students who would like a shirt - please email [Kathy Katzen](mailto:Kathy.Katzen@loyalheightspta.org) or equity@loyalheightspta.org.

"To continue with business as usual, to do nothing, to be "neutral" is a passive declaration of racism because the system that we are most intimately connected with—school—will continue to produce unjust outcomes for people of color. To be anti-racist is to be actively involved with the disruption of these systems. Being an advocate for black lives does not mean that I am an advocate against any other lives. When we make the conscious decision to address persisting injustices, this broadens access to justice for everyone." - Cornelius Minor, [Why #BlackLivesMatter in Your Classroom Too](#).

Seattle Public Schools' Strategic Plan is focused on supporting students of color who are furthest away from educational justice, beginning with African American boys and young men. This work is not about changing students. It is about changing broken systems and undoing legacies of racism in public education. By actively addressing racism in our educational system, and ensuring students furthest from educational justice thrive, conditions in Seattle Public Schools will improve for all. One of the ways we can support students of color who are furthest from educational justice is by supporting [Black Lives Matter At School](#), a national coalition organizing for racial justice in education.

Last June, the families of LHE held a rally for black lives and to stand against racial injustice, supported by the PTA. The peaceful protest lasted about an hour in front of the school, and neighbors from Ballard community joined. Hundreds showed up. We observed 8 minutes 46 seconds of silence in recognition of George Floyd and countless others. The recent protests not only here in Seattle but across the country and the world have reminded us in daunting ways of the work to be done to heal our community from the trauma of racism.

LHE is in its third year of having a dedicated [Staff Racial Equity Team](#) that is working on curriculum, community engagement, and professional development. Current efforts include facilitating a Black and Latinx student affinity mentoring program in partnership with mentors from Nathan Hale High School, and staff book discussions. **Leslie Norman, Brittney Rider, and Liz Sanchez** are leading the Staff RET with support from Racial Equity Coach Dr. Conrad Webster from SPS DREA. Other members of the Staff RET include **Krista Edmonds, Juliana Williams, Jazmine Smith, Steve Beaulieu**, Crystal Cissell-Anderson, Cathy Chutich, Tricia Lepse, Piper Schroder, Leah Rue, Kristie Tobin, Michael Dahl, and Ellen Saltsman. Members of the Staff RET often attend Equity Group meetings. The Equity Group parent liaison for the Staff RET is Kyle Cook. It is the Equity Group's goal to support and boost up the Staff RET.

In 2020, the Washington State PTA passed a resolution, "[Dismantling Institutional and Systemic Racism](#)." The Equity Group is making a motion to the LHE PTA Board to take a stand against systemic racism by passing this resolution as well. We want all children and their parents to feel safe, acknowledged and supported. We want our teachers to feel prepared with the right tools to confront racism and bias in their classrooms. We feel it takes an intentional, anti-racist stance to make this happen.

At LHE, we recognize that antiracism takes ongoing work and conversation. Find some books to read with your kids from [this list](#) put together by the Equity Group. They can all be found at the Seattle Public Library as hard copies and in some cases ebooks too.

During this Black Lives Matter at School Year of Purpose, we challenge the LHE community to think deeply and educate ourselves about racism and our responsibility to combat it. We, as the Equity Group and PTA, are grateful for the way our whole school community has not just talked (though talking is important) but is also walking the difficult path toward racial justice. If you would like to join the conversation, and help develop and prioritize anti-racism action items, please join the Equity Group at their next monthly meeting on January 12th at 7:30pm. Email equity@loyalheightspta.org for more info.

Additional resources:

- Looking for a way to explain the difference between "Black Lives Matter" and "All Lives Matter"? Try one of these six metaphors. [6 Reasons 'All Lives Matter' Doesn't Work—in Terms Simple Enough for a Child](#)
- Seattle BLM History: [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.
- In our neighborhood, the lack of greater diversity has been shaped by the history of structural racism practiced in Seattle. For more information, see [this resource](#) from the University of Washington that details how specific property deeds stipulated that properties not be sold to non-white owners. This is another reason that the BLM movement is so important for LHE and our community.





