

Talking to youth about the Black Lives Matter Movement & Principles

Young people are aware of racial tensions and injustices in their own lives and in the media. They benefit from guidance from teachers, families, and other adult caregivers in discussing, analyzing, and processing what they see and hear around them. They also have critical, real, “expert” perspectives to offer based on their lived experience. In a given middle or high school classroom, many students will have heard the phrase *Black Lives Matter*, and have some associations with it. Providing them with context for what they are hearing and seeing will increase their cultural literacy and ability to engage in brave conversations and actions with their peers and adults. The 13 guiding principles of the Black Lives Matter movement serve as a helpful framework to structure these conversations. They provide a wonderful, powerful opportunity for us to gain awareness and understanding of the vision behind the movement, as many adults and young folks are not aware of the expansive clarity of the movement’s vision.

All young people can benefit from conversations about the BLM movement and its guiding principles and connections can be drawn with any academic subject. Some youth may already know about the reality and some of the murders that sparked the Black Lives Matter movement and/or may be better equipped to handle topics of violence. We affirm that the movement is about *Black lives*: we celebrate the acts of resistance, creativity, and joy that uplift them while we also confront and mourn the injustices and atrocities that are continually perpetrated against Black communities. Rather than dedicating one week or one month to these conversations, we encourage approaching all your subject matter from a critical perspective. Education is not neutral, and the material we share with students matters.

Infusing These Principles Into Our Lives & Our Work

We invite you to use this book and the principles prompts as conversation starters with the teens and pre-teens in your life. These ideas will likely be new to some and familiar to others. If you are a teacher, you may have young people in the room who have been traumatized by systems of oppression, whether you know about it or not. Be mindful of your students’ identities and realities when deciding how to engage with this material. The Black Lives Matter at Schools Start Kit (see below) has talking points and resources for engaging with this material, including consideration of resistance and pushback on the part of students, colleagues or administrators. Use the insets – quotes, article and interview excerpts, art and poetry – as well as the definitions and extension activities at the back of this book to deepen and extend your exploration. Whenever possible, make connections to lived experiences in your classroom, home, family, and local community, as well as the broader national and global context of the need and movement for racial justice. You can also supplement this book with the curriculum resources provided on the national website. Feel free to use the contacts below to share any activities you develop or facilitate using this book!



www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com
Click on HOW TO PARTICIPATE for Starter Kit
@BLMAtSchool

NYC folks – Contact our local group at
blmeduny@gmail.com and follow us:
[@blm_edu_ny](https://www.facebook.com/BLMedu)
[facebook.com/BLMedu](https://www.facebook.com/BLMedu)
<https://blmedu.wordpress.com/>



BLM GUIDING PRINCIPLES



THE BLACK LIVES MATTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

MIDDLE & HIGH SCHOOL VERSIONS OF THE 13 PRINCIPLES

<i>PRINCIPLE</i>	<i>DESCRIPTION</i>
RESTORATIVE JUSTICE	Restorative Justice is the commitment to building a loving community that is sustainable and growing. If someone in the community hurts someone else, we focus on communicating and solving the problem instead of on punishment.
EMPATHY	We practice empathy. We do our best to listen and learn from people so we can connect with them and their experiences.
LOVING ENGAGEMENT	Loving Engagement is the commitment to practice justice, liberation and peace.
DIVERSITY	We acknowledge, respect, and celebrate all the ways we're different and all the things we have in common. We work hard for freedom and justice for Black people and, by extension, all people.
GLOBALISM	Black people around the world have all different circumstances, and some of them have it easier than others. We are all part of the global Black family.
TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING	We make space for transgender people to participate and lead. We know that cisgender (not trans) people in our society have privilege, and we want to uplift trans people, especially black trans women who often experience violence.
QUEER AFFIRMING	We don't assume anyone's sexuality - everyone has the right to say for themselves how they identify. Our community affirms and celebrates queer people.
COLLECTIVE VALUE	We are guided by the fact that all Black lives matter, no matter a person's sexuality, gender, economic status, ability, disability, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, immigration status, or where they live.
INTERGENERATIONAL	We believe that all people, regardless of age, show up with the ability to lead and learn.
BLACK FAMILIES	We make our spaces family-friendly and enable parents to fully participate with their children. We do that so parents - especially mothers who are sometimes expected to stay home with children - can be part of the movement.
BLACK VILLAGES	We are a community; we support each other and help each other. We are united like family, even if we don't live together or aren't related by blood.
BLACK WOMEN	We build a space that centers and affirms Black women and girls. We work to dismantle sexism and misogyny in society and in our communities.
UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK	We don't apologize for who we are or what we believe! We say Black Lives Matter because we know that if some of us aren't free, then none of us are free.