

Dear VRE Parents,

In support of our teachers who are participating in Black Lives Matter at School Week 2021 (2/1/21-2/5/21), I wanted to reach out and make sure you have the tools to reinforce this important learning at home. Black Lives Matter at School is an age-appropriate curriculum with lessons aimed at teaching the 13 Guiding Principles of the Black Lives Matter movement. Please see the next page for a kid-friendly explanation of each of the principles, and for an adult's version, please see here: <https://www.dcareeducators4socialjustice.org/black-lives-matter/13-guiding-principles>.

The reasons for celebrating Black Lives Matter at School week are many, and I'd like to highlight a few here. First, it benefits children who don't always see themselves represented or celebrated in our society. Representation matters. Another reason for celebrating Black Lives Matter at School week is to help children become culturally competent and compassionate. No matter where you stand with regards to the Black Lives Matter movement, it's important for children to know about what's happening in their world. Maybe you and your family even joined the estimated 15-26 million people who participated in a march or demonstration this summer. The FAQ on the Black Lives Matter at School webpage also gives an excellent explanation of why our school is participating: "Black Lives Matter is currently in the news. Most students are aware, to some degree, of this movement. Addressing this in the classroom is acknowledging an important current events topic. 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 - regardless of where you, your students and their families stand on the issues." For more information on why this is important and a sample of what your child might see in the classroom, please see here: <https://www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/starter-kit.html>.

I hope you will spend time the first week in February discussing not only Black Lives Matter and the 13 Guiding Principles with your child, but also how they relate to your own family's values. Your children pay attention to what you do – and don't – discuss with them. Don't worry if they don't have a lot to say right now, or if they say something from a place of limited understanding. As with everything else we teach our children, talking about race and values takes time and there will be lots of mistakes. Keep it simple: "Hey, I heard you learned about Diversity in school today. Diversity is important to our family because there are lots of people we care about who look, think, and act differently than we do. What do you think?" More tips for talking with children about race can be found here: <https://www.embracerace.org/resources/teaching-and-talking-to-kids>.

Thank you for your support and participation.

Shannon Otto, Chair, View Ridge PTA Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Committee

In collaboration with PTA Co-Presidents and the DEI Committee

# BLACK LIVES MATTER GUIDING PRINCIPLES

“KID-FRIENDLY” VERSIONS OF THE 13 PRINCIPLES – by Laleña Garcia

PRINCIPLE	DESCRIPTION
<b>RESTORATIVE JUSTICE</b>	We know that if you hurt somebody, you have to help them feel better; you can't just say, "Sorry," and walk away. We also know that it's important for kids to be able to make a better choice another time, and it's grownups' job to help them make better choices and to give them chances to do that.
<b>EMPATHY</b>	It's so important to think about how other people feel, because different people have different feelings. Sometimes it helps to think about how you would feel if the same thing that happened to your friend happened to you.
<b>LOVING ENGAGEMENT</b>	It's so important to make sure that we are always trying to be fair and peaceful, and to engage with other people (treat other people) with love. We have to keep practicing this so that we can get better and better at it.
<b>DIVERSITY</b>	Different people do different things and have different feelings. It's so important that we have lots of different kinds of people in our community and that everyone feels safe.
<b>GLOBALISM</b>	Globalism means that we are thinking about all the different people all over the world, and thinking about the ways to keep things fair everywhere.
<b>TRANSGENDER AFFIRMING</b>	Everybody has the right to choose their own gender by listening to their own heart and mind. Everyone gets to choose if they are a girl or a boy or both or neither or something else, and no one else gets to choose for them.
<b>QUEER AFFIRMING</b>	Everybody has the right to choose who they love and the kind of family they want by listening to their own heart and mind.
<b>COLLECTIVE VALUE</b>	Everybody is important, and has the right to be safe and happy.
<b>INTERGENERATIONAL</b>	It's important that we have spaces where people of different ages can come together and learn from each other. Another way to say that is intergenerational.
<b>BLACK FAMILIES</b>	There are lots of different kinds of families; what makes a family is that it's people who take care of each other. It's important to make sure that all families feel welcome.
<b>BLACK VILLAGES</b>	There are lots of different kinds of families; what makes a family is that it's people who take care of each other; those people might be related, or maybe they choose to be family together and to take care of each other. Sometimes, when it's lots of families together, it can be called a village.
<b>BLACK WOMEN</b>	There are some people who think that women are less important than men. We know that all people are important and have the right to be safe and talk about their feelings.
<b>UNAPOLOGETICALLY BLACK</b>	The affirmation that Black Lives Matter and that our love, and desire for justice and freedom are prerequisites for wanting that for others. These principles are the blueprint for healing and do not include nor do they support ignoring or sanitizing the ugliness and discomfort that comes with dealing with race and anti-race issues. For kids:  "There are lots of different kinds of people and one way that we're different is the color of our skin. It's important to make sure that all people are treated fairly, and that's why we, and lots of other people all over the country and the world are part of the Black Lives Matter movement."