



Widening the Lens

The Far Brook School Diversity Conference

PARENT CONSTITUENT GROUP CONVERSATION STARTERS

QUOTES FOR DISCUSSION

"Since the wider sense of community for all students and adults is compromised when racism is left unexamined, conversations on race and racism should be held across and among the various constituencies in the school community. Talking about race and racism is not something only black people and other people of color should do. While interracial dialogue that directly addresses race, racism, and privilege may be difficult to engage in, it is necessary that these conversations take place."

- Edith G. Arrington, Diane M. Hall, and Howard C. Stevenson
"The Success of African American Students in Independent Schools"

"Children start receiving explicit and implicit messages about the meaning of race from birth and begin to show pro-white/anti-Black bias by age three. To counter anti-Black bias and racism, experts recommend naming and taking action against racism with kids as early and as often as possible.

Anti-Black structural racism and socialization need to be countered with intentional action from birth. This includes surrounding children with positive narratives and images of Blackness. All kids should know Black history and Black contributions, but equally as important are stories of Black kids just being: experiencing joy, being loved, and existing in their full humanity.

Children's books can be one starting point for doing this, and should be combined with ongoing education, strategies, and experiences supporting Blackness and Black people. "

-*The Conscious Kid*

"Recent events have shaken me to my core, and the nationwide protests over the killing of George Floyd suggest that people across the country are similarly shaken. These are dark times, but if there's anything that seems like a glimmer of light to me at the moment, it's the fact that so many teachers are reflecting on how to fight racism:

- "I'm a White educator, where do I start?"
- "How can I help?"
- "What if I get it wrong?"

For me, a Black educator and mother to a Black 16-year-old who has reached the appearance, if not the legal age of manhood, these questions stir hope. Folks who don't look like me are embracing the idea that the fight for equity has to be everyone's fight."

- Hedreich Nichols, *Edutopia*
"A Guide to Equity and Anti-Racism for Educators"

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#Blackat INSTAGRAM POSTS

"In lower school, my mom didn't allow me to eat the watermelon the cafeteria served for dessert because she was afraid people would view me as a "pickaninny." I had no idea what the word meant all I knew was that the watermelon looked delicious but I was never allowed to eat it. At home, I could have as much as I wanted. There were different rules for how I could act in school and at home. I didn't realize the degree to which fear of white gaze affects parents in the community until many years later."

#WhiteGaze

#CodeSwitching

"They don't think about what would be best for black families. I'm afraid that what they really mean is that they want a couple of black students in each class so their own children can benefit from "diversity". I'm positive that the school has the best intentions, but it's painfully clear that our whole community has lots of work to do."

#PerformativeDiversity

#WhoseNeedsArePrioritized

"We do not want our kids to be the only children who look like them in their classrooms or homerooms EVER. This should NEVER, EVER happen. It doesn't happen to white kids, it shouldn't happen to black kids. If you don't have enough children to have visible diversity in every classroom and simultaneously not have children be the "only" in that setting, you haven't admitted enough diverse students. Period. Fix it."

#Representation

"As a black alum and a parent of a child about to attend a prestigious school I'm very apprehensive. Is my child going to have some of the same experiences I did? Is this the right decision for them and does the opportunity mitigate the incoming incidents? Will my child be emotionally prepared to handle them? Are any other families sitting at home trying to game plan their responses? How are we going to handle the inevitable and subsequent discourse with faculty so we don't look like the angry black people or jeopardize our child's future by having them labeled?"

#InevitableIncidents

"My daughter currently attends [the school] Lower School. She recounted a story where her teacher called out every little BIPOC girl's name in the classroom, and essentially said, "If it weren't for Ruby Bridges, none of you would be here!" While I don't think there were malicious intentions, my heart aches for my daughter, who was subjected to feeling like an outsider by her educators."

#Othering

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QUESTIONS

Question 1: For those with younger children, has your school taken steps to counter structural racism and socialization by adding books that include characters of color, in particular characters that show children of color in their full humanity - experiencing joy, being loved?

Question 2: For those with older children, has your school taken steps to counter structural racism and socialization by including authors, narratives and perspectives of people with diverse backgrounds?

Question 3: Has your school taken steps to update the history/social studies curriculum so as to challenge myths and tell the story of America more fully?

Question 4: How does your school respond when racial incidents occur such as use of derogatory words by students or faculty, or exclusion based on race as in, “you can’t play because you are brown”?

Question 5: Is there a forum through which parents can provide the school with input such as affinity group, or concerned parents group? Are these effective?

Question 6: Are you aware of policies or practices that were initially instituted that no longer serve a diverse community.

Question 7: Are there traditions or founders who are celebrated that may no longer be appropriate (and possibly offensive or harmful) in 2020?