

[En español](#)

Hello SMFCSD parents and families,

To be honest, I had a rough time starting this newsletter. I found myself so overwhelmed with thoughts and big feelings that ultimately kept me from starting. This is just one example of my privilege as a white woman- I am able to choose when I address issues of race and discrimination, as I am not directly faced with the trauma of racism on a daily basis. As a self-proclaimed ally for all whose voices need to be lifted up, and an anti-racist educator, I vow to do better. One step I have taken to make good on this promise (more steps to follow) is compiling a list of resources and tips - for parents, teachers, and everyone contributing to the growth of our youth- to help ensure that our children celebrate differences, equity, and justice not just for themselves, but for those whose voices are ignored or intentionally silenced.

Though these conversations may seem difficult or complex, it is important that we do not remain silent; Our children and students are listening, and this silence is LOUD. If you are concerned that your children are too young for this conversation, please consider the following visual:

0-1 Year At birth, babies look equally at faces of all races. At 3 months, babies look more at faces that match the race of their caregivers. (Kelly et al., 2005)	2 Years Children as young as 2 use race to reason about people's behaviors. (Hirschfeld, 2008)	2.5 Years By 30 months, most children use race to choose playmates. (Katz & Kofkin, 1997)	4-5 Years Expressions of racial prejudice often peak at ages 4 and 5. (Aboud, 2008)
5 Years Black and latinx children in research settings show no preference toward their own groups, as compared to white children at this age, who are more likely to be strongly biased in favor of whiteness. (Dunham et al., 2008)	5 Years By kindergarten, children show many of the same racial attitudes held by adults in our culture. They have already learned to associate some groups with higher status than others. (Kinzler, 2016)	5-7 Years Explicit conversations with 5-7 year olds about interracial friendship can dramatically improve their racial attitudes in as little as a single week. (Bronson & Merryman, 2009)	<i>Adapted by work from the Children's Community School</i>

Additionally, here are some guidelines, provided by [the American Psychological Association](#), to help you navigate these conversations:

- Don't expect to have "the talk" about discrimination. It shouldn't be one conversation. Rather, let the discussion be open and ongoing.
- Parents often avoid talking about hard subjects (including sex, underage drinking and discrimination) because they're personally uncomfortable. Keep talking anyway. The discussions get easier over time.
- Use age-appropriate language children can understand, and don't give kids too much information at once. The conversation will get deeper and more nuanced as they get older.
- Learn to respond to children's questions about differences and bias as they come up naturally. Help children feel that their questions are welcome, or they might come to believe that discussing differences is taboo.
- Help children understand the value of diversity. A diverse set of experiences and viewpoints boosts creativity and helps kids (and adults) better understand the world around them. On the other hand, discrimination hurts everyone – not just the targets of discrimination. When people are discriminated against, we can miss an important opportunity to learn from them.
- Take opportunities to raise discussions based on what you see around you – in real life, books, television shows and even video games. You might ask: "There aren't many female characters in this video game. What do you think of that?" or "Do you think that show accurately portrays LGBT characters, or does it rely on stereotypes?"
- Help kids learn how to deal with being the potential target of discrimination. Plan ahead by developing healthy comebacks or responses to hurtful discriminatory statements. For example: "What an unkind thing to say." "Excuse me? Could you repeat that?" "I disagree with you, and here's why..."
- If you hear children say something discriminatory, don't just hush them. Use the opportunity as a conversation starter to address their fears and correct their misperceptions.
- Challenge your own assumptions and behavior. Do you laugh at racially insensitive jokes? Do you cross the street to avoid passing people of a different ethnic group? Children learn from your actions as well as your words.
- Broaden their horizons. Think about the diversity of your own friendship and parenting networks and the places where you spend time. When kids are exposed to people from diverse backgrounds, they have more opportunities to learn about others and discover what they have in common.

Throughout these conversations, it is okay to say “I don’t know” or “I am still learning about that”. This teaches children that we do not need to have immediate answers, and that we sometimes need time to think and reflect before doing so. When we take more time to be thoughtful in our responses, this also helps prevent our opinions being mistakenly stated as facts.

If you have any feedback, additional resources to add or to inform me how I can be a better ally, I encourage you to please reach out. Here at San Mateo Foster City School District, we aim for more than tolerance, but inclusion and acceptance; Diversity must be celebrated and preserved. Thank you so much for your partnership in these efforts and showing up for our community.

Black Lives Matter.

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[This week’s read aloud](#)
[Social Story for George Floyd](#)

Additional resources, forwarded by our district’s wellness coordinator Wini McMichael, include the following:

- [NEA Racial Justice in Education Resource Guide \(includes Seven Harmful Racial Discourse Practices to Avoid\)](#)
- Teaching Tolerance has lessons and articles, including:
 - [Let’s Talk: Discussing Race, Racism and Other Difficult Topics with Students](#)
 - [Let’s Talk: Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students](#)
 - [The Moment: Black Lives Matter](#)
 - [Don’t Say Nothing: Silence speaks volumes. Our students are listening](#)
- [List of Coretta Scott King Book Award Winners on Common Sense Media](#)
 - Read Alouds
 - ["Something Happened in Our Town \(a story of racial injustice\)" by Marianne Celano, Marietta Collins, and Ann Hazzard](#)
 - [“What’s the Difference?” by Doyin Richards](#)
 - [“Let’s Talk About Race” by Julius Lester](#)
- [CNN and Sesame Street to Host a Town Hall Addressing Racism](#)