



Burlington School District to fly Black Lives Matter Flag, Nov 2020

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Q: What is Black Lives Matter?

A: Black Lives Matter is a US-based international movement co-founded by three black women: Alicia Garza, Patrisse Cullors, and Opal Tometi. The #BlackLivesMatter movement began as a hashtag for Twitter, after George Zimmerman's acquittal for the murder of Trayvon Martin in 2013. It gained momentum after the 2014 shooting of Michael Brown, the death of Eric Garner, and most recently the 2020 deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor and Elijah McCain, and more.

Q: What are the goals of “Black Lives Matter”?

A: Racial Justice, an end to all forms of discrimination and the full recognition of human rights for Black people. The movement calls on institutions to acknowledge systemic racism, structural violence and institutional discrimination and to address harm and conflict in our communities through community based, restorative solutions.

Q: But don’t “All Lives Matter”?

A: Yes, all lives do matter, and Black Lives Matter too! At this time in history, a spotlight is being projected onto serious issues of systemic injustice towards Black people specifically. It is important to understand that saying “All Lives Matter” in response to this movement is not helpful and does not show support for Black lives. Here are [six metaphors](#) that can help explain this.

Q: Wait, but isn’t the Black Lives Matter movement anti-police?

A: The movement itself is not anti-police, but is anti-police brutality. Protests across the country have pushed for reform in the form of banning chokeholds, mandatory use of body cameras, increased resources towards social workers, mental health supports, housing and healthcare, etc.

Q: Shouldn’t schools stay away from politics and be non-partisan?

A: Yes, schools should be non-partisan but schools also have a duty to raise students that contribute actively to political and civic life. Schools need to help students learn how to discuss difficult topics with different perspectives. Black Lives Matter is not a political party. We as educators value civic engagement and are committed to demonstrating that Black lives matter in our schools.

Q: Where does Burlington School District stand on this movement?

A: We are living in a historic moment of racial reckoning as we watch our country come to terms with its history and present while living within the dual pandemics of racism and Covid-19 and the disproportionate impact on BIPOC communities. As our nation grapples with anti-Black violence and the recent killings of Black people, we recognize that racism has persisted in our nation for centuries and we acknowledge the part that schools play in perpetuating institutional racism. We recognize there is much work to be done in our commitment to dismantling the systems of oppression within our practices, policies and procedures.

We at BSD strongly denounce racism in all its forms. We dedicate ourselves to examining our practices in order to eradicate systemic racism in our school community. We stand in solidarity with Black students, faculty and staff in condemning racial injustice. We believe Black Lives Matter and stand behind local nonviolent youth activism committed to Anti-racism.

Q: Who makes the decision to fly the Black Lives Matter flags?

A: In February, 2018 BHS Social Justice Union activists petitioned the BSD School Board to raise the Black Lives Matter flag at BHS, becoming the second school in Vermont to do so as well as the second school in the entire nation. In January of 2019, Edmunds Middle School (EMS) Youth-led Participatory Action Research students successfully petitioned the EMS student body, administration and the School Board to raise a BLM flag on the Edmunds campus. Student activists have long been asking for racial injustice to be recognized at the BSD.

On Tuesday, September 15, the BSD School Board passed a resolution to hang the Black Lives Matter flag at all school buildings. The decision to fly the flag at every school demonstrates how student activism of the past has led to continued support for Anti-Racist work from school leadership.