



January 18, 2020

MEMORANDUM

To: Principals and Assistant Principals

From: Kevin F. Gilbert, Ed.D.

Subject: Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action

The purpose of this memorandum is to provide guidance to school leadership for Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action, February 3-7, 2020. All information in this memorandum is pending approval of the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action Resolution by the Howard County Board of Education, which is on the January 23, 2020, Board of Education meeting agenda. After the Board approves the resolution, we will send another message confirming that it has been approved.

Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action (BLMWA) emphasizes that schools should be places for the practice of equity, for the building of understanding, and for the active engagement of all in creating pathways to freedom and justice for all people. It intends to highlight, uplift and affirm the rich history and contributions of the Black community and to cultivate in Black students a sense of pride, self-worth, and self-love. BLMWA further encourages ongoing critical reflection and courageous conversations concerning systemic racism, social injustice, racial and ethnic bias; and to affirm the right of Black students to be treated with respect and dignity within schools and communities. In recognition of the week, staff and students may conduct various events that highlight BLMWA, or participate in instruction that coincides with this week of action. Staff participation in BLMWA is voluntary, and not mandated.

For teachers who choose to conduct lessons for BLMWA, the Office of Curriculum, Instruction, and Assessment (CIA) has vetted and/or created lessons that teachers can use. These lessons will be sent to principals and assistant principals directly from CIA on January 21.

Since these lessons have been vetted through CIA, it is highly encouraged that these are the only lessons used by teachers. Administrators should coordinate with those teachers who plan to teach lessons to ensure that students are not receiving the same lesson multiple times.

In the event a teacher chooses to teach lessons, other than the lessons vetted and/or created by CIA, the following guidance should be followed:

1. Strictly apply and adhere to the guidelines in Policy 8050, Teaching of Controversial Issues. Other policies that should also guide instruction include: Curriculum (8000), Selection of Instructional Materials (8040), Resource Speakers (8060), Responsible Use of Technology and Social Media (8080), Civility (1000), Anti-Discrimination (1010), and Sexual Discrimination (1020)
2. In discussions centered on information seen on television broadcasts and/or read in newspapers and magazines, make sure that students discern the differences between truth and rumor, and reliable and unreliable information.
3. Focus on positive efforts that students can make to demonstrate support of the rich diversity within Howard County and the United States.

If you have any questions, please contact Dr. Kevin F. Gilbert, Director, Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, 410-313-1542.