

Dear Tenakill Families,

These are not easy times. During this time of the COVID-19 pandemic we also find ourselves facing head on the heart-breaking ongoing and ugly presence of deep-seated racism in our nation -- first in the bias and racism expressed towards those of Asian descent and in the anti-Semitism that surfaced as the COVID-19 virus spread, and now, as the deaths of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and Ahmaud Arbery expose the grim reality of systemic racism and its impact on Black men, women, children and other people of color in our nation. As we try to grapple with this ourselves, many of us may also be wondering how as parents we can have impactful conversations with our children around issues of race, power, discrimination, and responding to injustice.

In order to help our Tenakill families begin and/or continue these very important conversations, I wanted to share three easy-to-access resources about talking to our children about race, racism, and racial violence as well as share some ideas for helping your children begin to take action and respond to these topics. I will be adding more resources on this topic to the Tenakill Guidance/Counseling Website as I come across relevant ones.

It is important to have open and regular conversations about race and other aspects of diversity with our children. It is never too early to start talking to your school-aged children about these things and it is vital to continue these conversations regularly at developmentally appropriate levels as they age. A great way to open up conversation with your middle school student about what is currently going on in our nation around racism, racial violence, and injustice is to ask them what they have been seeing and hearing (as most have cell phones) and what they feel and think about it.

Please do not hesitate to reach out to share additional resources or ideas for how we can continue to work together as a school and community to start and regularly continue these sometimes difficult conversations and to take steps towards more understanding, respect, and support of each other.

Sincerely,
Alexandra Earle
Tenakill School Counselor
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Resources for Parents:

How to Talk With Kids About Racism and Racial Violence

<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/how-to-talk-with-kids-about-racism-and-racial-violence>

How To Talk to Your Children About Race and Racism

<https://www.parent toolkit.com/social-and-emotional-development/advice/social-awareness/how-to-talk-to-kids-about-race-and-racism>

10 Tips for Teaching and Talking To Your Kids About Race

<https://www.embrace race.org/resources/teaching-and-talking-to-kids>

Next Steps For Your Middle School Child

As you have conversations with your children, many of them may want to know what they can do in the face of all that is going on. Below are some ideas of things middle school children can do to respond:

- Create chalk messages for everyone who walks by
- Create Posters or Banners to post in your neighborhood
- Use Social Media in a Positive Way to Respectfully Stand Up for Others and Against Racial Bias and Injustice
 - Some questions that youth can consider as they design their messages for the above forums are:
 - What do you want others to know and do right now?
 - What do you think we should focus on and stand for right now?
 - What types of messages and quotes might inspire others to helpful action?
 - How can you show your support for Black lives right now?
 - How can we show that we stand with those who are experiencing racism and bias in our communities and neighborhoods?
 - If my family or I have experienced racial bias or discrimination what do I want others to know?
- Educate themselves about issues of race and the perspectives of those different from them:
 - talking to friends and neighbors who may have different backgrounds, skin colors, and experiences about these topics and taking the time to listen to their thoughts, feelings, and stories
 - reading books that expose them to others experiences and social justice
 - See the below resource for a great list of age specific books on these topics
<https://www.common sense media.org/lists/books-about-racism-and-social-justice>
 - watching movies that expose them to issues of racism
 - See the below list of movies and follow-up discussion questions for youth around Black History (there are also links to movies focused on other racial groups from the below page)
<https://www.common sense media.org/blog/black-history-movies-that-tackle-racism>
- Share their experiences with race and racial bias with others as they feel safe and able to