



**Educator Resource:**  
**Talking with Students about Racial Injustice  
and the Death of George Floyd**

The death of George Floyd in May 2020 has led to protests across the country. The issues at hand—including systemic racism and police brutality against Black citizens—may raise deeply painful emotions for our students. It is our role as educators to acknowledge these emotions and to ensure that our students feel seen, heard, and valued during this time.

A key part of social and emotional learning (SEL) is ensuring that students learn not only to recognize and manage their own emotions, but also to understand and value the perspectives of others—in other words, to practice empathy. Broadening our perspectives and turning a tragedy into a learning moment requires difficult but crucial work on the part of educators. This guide serves to support educators in having conversations with their students about recent events and their impact on our students' lives.

**First, Reflect**

Before having the conversation, reflect individually on the following questions:

1. What emotions are present for you as you reflect on the death of George Floyd and the events that have followed?
2. How might your identity affect your perspective?
3. How might your identity affect your students' perceptions of your viewpoint in this conversation?

**Plan the Conversation**

To have an effective dialogue, we must start with detailed planning. Ask yourself:

1. Will this be live or virtual?
2. Will this be in real time or on a discussion board?
3. What is the racial makeup of your class, and how might that impact the conversation?
4. How will you ensure that students with a range of perspectives feel supported in your conversation without feeling put on the spot or as if they are representative of a racial group?
5. How might you break students into purposeful small groups, if applicable?
6. Will you set up office hours as an opportunity for further expression?
7. How can you help students emotionally prepare for the conversation?
8. Will you allow students to opt out if they feel the need?
9. Will you refer any students to school/district wellness staff?
10. How can you inform students' families about the conversation ahead of time?
11. What age-appropriate resources might you share?
12. How will you continue to learn alongside your students after the initial conversation ends?

## Begin the Conversation with Student Reflection

Students will need support and space to process their emotions around recent events. This may include:

1. Ensure that you have set class norms so that the conversation remains constructive.
2. Share an age-appropriate resource to ensure that students have accurate information about recent events. Consider a printed article; do not show graphic videos.
3. Allow students to reflect individually through a journal entry. Prompts may include:
  - How are these events affecting you?
  - What would you like others to know about what you are thinking, feeling, and experiencing?
  - What do you need from others to understand, cope, process, and be safe as this story continues to unfold?
  - What can you offer to others to support them?

Invite students to share or, if they wish, to keep their reflections private. Rather than having a whole-class conversation, consider the following ways of sharing:

- One-on-one or small group office hours with teacher (virtual or in person)
- Small group discussions among students
- Excerpts from journal entries (sent directly to the teacher or shared on a message board)

## Invite Ongoing Dialogue

Encourage students to consider what is at stake and what needs to happen now. Possibilities could include writing to a chief of police or mayor or to a national leader. What perspective could they share? What changes would they want to suggest? Help students come up with a safe, impactful plan of action. One option is to use the template on the next page.

After the initial conversation, be sure to reflect on what you learned and how your students seemed to feel as a result of the conversation. Then, make a plan to follow up regarding your students' action plans and to continue the challenging but important dialogue.

*Adapted from Facing History and Ourselves*

 **Frameworks**  
**Anti-Racism Action Planning Template**

**Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**What do you want to change?**

**Why does this matter? What is at stake?**

**Who could help make this change—to whom should you send this message?**

**What will your message say?**

**How will you share your message? If you are writing or emailing, list the specific contact information:**

**When will you send it?**

**How can others help you with this?**

**Your voice matters.**

*“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed, citizens can change the world.  
Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” - Margaret Mead*

## Additional Resources

### Being Sensitive to Trauma

- [Addressing Race and Trauma in the Classroom: A Resources for Educators](#) (The National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- [Affirming Black Lives Without Inducing Trauma](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- [Preparing to Discuss Race and Police Violence in the Classroom](#) (DC Public Schools)

### Understanding the Impact of Racism and Violence on Mental Health

- [How school psychologists can support students in the wake of racialized violence](#) (National Association of School Psychologists' Statement)
- [Social Justice Resources for Educators and School Psychologists](#) (National Association of School Psychologists)
- [The Link Between Experiences of Racism and Stress and Anxiety for Black Americans: A Mindfulness and Acceptance-Based Coping Approach](#) (Anxiety.org)
- [Having 'The Talk': Expert Guidance On Preparing Kids For Police Interactions](#) (NPR)
- [School Personnel Can Help Students Heal from Trauma](#) (AFT)

### Tips for Talking about Violence

- [15 Tips for Talking with Children About Violence](#) (Colorín Colorado)
- [Showing Up Strong for Yourself — and Your Students — in the Aftermath of Violence](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- [Supporting Marginalized Students in Stressful Times: Tips for Educators](#) (National Association of School Psychologists)

### Talking about Tough Topics in the News

- [Explaining the News to Our Kids: Tips for All Ages](#) (Common Sense Media)
  - [Helping Children with Tragic Events in the News](#) (Fred Rogers Productions)
  - [When Something Scary Happens](#) (PBS Parents)
  - [Parenting for a Challenging World: Recovery After a Traumatic Event](#) (National Child Traumatic Stress Network)
- Note:** If you are connecting with your students remotely, this resource guide for [virtual circles of concern](#) offers tips for managing conversations about difficult topics in distance learning settings.

### Classroom Resources: Racism and Violence

- [Advice For Teachers Talking With Students About Racism & Police Violence](#) (*Education Week*)
- [Teaching About Race, Racism, and Police Violence](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- [Resources for Talking About Race, Racism, and Racialized Violence with Kids](#) (Center for Racial Justice in Education)
- [Resources for Discussing Police Violence, Race, and Racism With Students](#) (*Education Week*)
- [Facing Ferguson: News Literacy in a Digital Age](#) (Facing History)
- [Police Shootings, Race and Respect](#) (Share My Lesson)
- [Black Lives Matter at School: Lesson Plans](#)
- [Black Lives Matter at School: Toolkit from Rochester City Schools](#) (NY)
- [Black Lives Matter at School: Resources from the NEA](#)
- [Talking About Freddie Gray: My Baltimore eighth-graders' response to the question, 'What now?' left me speechless](#) (*PBS NewsHour*)

## Classroom Resources: More about Race and Racism

- [Teaching as Activism, Teaching as Care](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- [Teaching about Race and Racism: Lesson Plans and Resources](#) (Share My Lesson)
- [Social and Cultural Literacy Resources for Classrooms](#) (Common Sense Media)
- [Talking About Race](#) (National Museum of African American History and Culture) The Smithsonian's National Museum of African American History and Culture has just launched [Talking About Race](#), a new online portal designed to help individuals, families, and communities talk about racism, racial identity and the way these forces shape every aspect of society, from the economy and politics to the broader American culture. The online portal provides digital tools, online exercises, video instructions, scholarly articles and more than 100 multi-media resources tailored for educators, parents and caregivers—and individuals committed to racial equality. The museum moved up the launch date due to the number of racially charged incidents in recent weeks.

## Articles and Multimedia

- [Creating an Anti-Racist Classroom](#) (Edutopia)
- [5-Minute Film Festival: Talking About Race and Stereotypes](#) (Edutopia)
- [Teachable Moments and Academic Rigor: A Mini-Unit](#) (Edutopia)
- [5 practices of highly-effective urban educators](#) (Education Dive)

## Reflecting on Perspective

- [5 Things Educators Can Do to Address Bias in Their School](#) (NEA)
- [Race to Improve Teacher Education](#) (*American Educator*, Fall 2019)
- [What White Colleagues Need to Understand](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- ['For White Folks Who Teach in the Hood...': An Interview With Chris Emdin](#) (*Education Week*)
- [Saying 'I Don't See Color' Denies the Racial Identity of Students](#) (*Education Week*)
- [White Anti-Racism: Living the Legacy](#) (Teaching Tolerance)
- [Reimagining Equity and Access for Diverse Youth: Allies and Antiracism](#) (Project READY)

Source: *Colorín Colorado*