

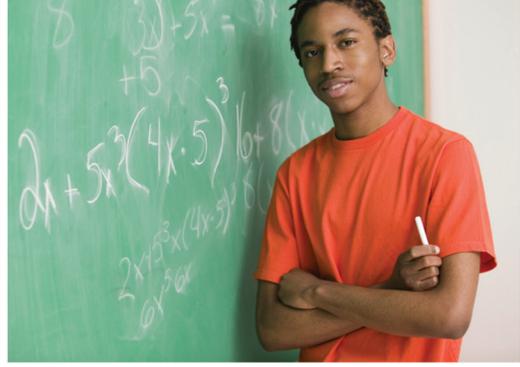
Reflections • Conversations • Clear Intentions • Support • Plan • Communication • Respectful

LAUSD
UNIFIED

SCHOOL MENTAL HEALTH

UPLIFTING BLACK STUDENTS

**A RESOURCE
FOR EDUCATORS**



BACKGROUND

IN ORDER FOR OUR STUDENTS TO THRIVE IN OUR SCHOOLS AND FULLY ENGAGE IN THEIR ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE, WE MUST ALSO COMMIT TO CREATING ENVIRONMENTS WHERE THEY FEEL SAFE, WELCOME, AND EXCITED TO LEARN.
– LAUSD STRATEGIC PLAN, PILLAR 2: JOY AND WELLNESS

This resource represents LA Unified’s commitment to “unapologetically call out” inequities and close opportunity gaps for African American/Black students, families and staff, as expressed in our District’s core beliefs. LA Unified is committed to providing comprehensive safety to all students and disrupting the “generational, systemic manifestations of discrimination, racism and bigotry” affecting students, their families, staff and our communities” (LAUSD Strategic Plan, [Core Beliefs-Equity](#))

As we work toward building a better present and future, LA Unified recognizes the importance of acknowledging the effects of our nation’s history on us all.

Consider a walk through one of our nation’s museums that highlight Black history and culture. These buildings hold the timelines of the very rich, complicated, and often painful history of Black people in the United States. On display are highlights of Black brilliance and talent, such as the invention of the three-position traffic signal by Garret Morgan, images of the beauty industry’s first mogul, Madame CJ Walker, and countless musicians that gave the United States musical art forms that have changed the world. Also on

exhibit are relics that evidence the enslavement of people of African descent - the largest account of human trafficking and chattel slavery in history. The casket of 14-year-old Emmitt Till, images of Black heroes who bore the fruit of resistance, such as Angela Davis and Claudette Colvin, and the hooded sweatshirt and cell phone of Travon Martin. Against the backdrop of current events, such as the killing of George Floyd and Tyre Nichols, each of these displayed artifacts reminds us that understanding and dismantling anti-Black racism, is one of the most urgent and persistent issues of our time.

While we wish that painful critical incidents of this nature were old news, they are not. Our youth are watching. They watch what we do, and they listen to what we say.





In order for our students to thrive in our schools and fully engage in their academic experience,

we must also commit to creating environments where they feel safe, welcome, and excited to learn. – LAUSD Strategic Plan, Pillar 2: Joy and Wellness

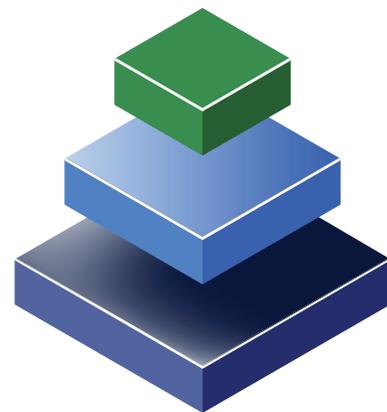
In the 2019- 2020 LA Unified School Experience Survey, only 60% of Black students reported feeling overall connectedness and feeling safe at school. Black students consistently reported lower rates of agreeing that adults treat all students with respect, that teachers treat students fairly, and that students are kind to each other. Black students also report the highest rates of bullying, compared to other subgroups surveyed. All of this stands as evidence that our youth, are watching.

They also watch when we remain silent.

Some say silence is violence and sends a harmful message. A message that does not match the expressed core beliefs of Los Angeles Unified. So, what will our response be?

Building a positive school climate for Black students requires a holistic approach. While LA Unified is home to the historic Black Student Achievement Plan (BSAP), has thriving Black Student Unions, and boasts alumni like Eldridge Cleaver and Patrice Cullors, it is essential that we address bias or hate-motivated incidents as they occur. The data indicate that there is great need to work to create affirming and inclusive campuses as a daily practice. Each student's

story reminds us of how necessary it is to create a justice-oriented, multi-tiered approach, that centers the needs of our most marginalized students. We must confront and stop anti-Black racism, and bigotry toward Black LGBTQ+ students, Black students with disabilities, and Black immigrant students.



In alignment with our Strategic Plan, we endeavor to champion the Joy and Wellness

that our students deserve, by providing tools and strategies to create “Welcoming Learning Environments,” “Whole Child Well-Being” and “Strong Social Emotional Skills” through anti-racist practices. It is our goal to promote strong relationships, provide accessible information, and honor perspectives by sharing universal, intensive and targeted Interventions that facilitate “Engagement and Collaboration” Pillar 3.

When we create an education system that intentionally uplifts Black students, it creates a tide of excellence that lifts us all. The recommendations and resources curated in this document support the implementation of responsive, affirming, welcoming and trauma-informed practices (LAUSD Strategic Plan, Pillar 1 A-D & Pillar 5 C). Uplifting Black Students provides tools and strategies that schools can use to help create welcoming learning environments that offer physical, emotional, and environmental safety to African American/Black students, staff, and families. Thank you for your partnership in this effort.



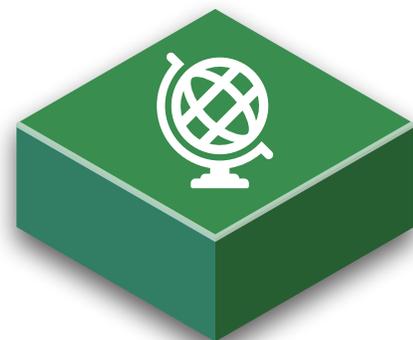
“ IN A RACIST SOCIETY IT IS NOT ENOUGH TO BE NON-RACIST, WE MUST BE ANTI-RACIST. ”

— ANGELA Y. DAVIS



TIERED INTERVENTIONS

Universal



- Provide regular opportunities for students of all ages to talk about identity, including race and ethnicity.
- Facilitate regular community-building circles. Include prompts that explore identity, diversity, culture, and belonging.
- [Read books](#) and [teach curricula](#) that affirm Black culture.
- Invite students to create affirming posters and showcase them around campus (E.g., Black Lives Matter)
- Participate in school-wide campaigns, such as the [Black Lives Matter at School](#) Week of Action and Year of Purpose, the [GSA Day for Racial Justice](#), and GLSEN’s [Solidarity Week](#).
- [Go beyond Black History Month](#) in February and celebrate Black excellence, joy, and resilience [all year long](#).
- [Teach the 13 Principles](#) of Black Lives Matter at each grade level. Pick a different principle to highlight each month and talk about how it contributes value to your school community.
- Complete the “Our Antiracist Journey in LA Unified” and “Racial Sensitivity Training: Cultural Context and Trauma” [MyPLN](#) series together as a staff. Break them up into multiple sessions to go deeper and revisit the material regularly as a group.
- Work with students, staff, and families to create a statement of antiracist values for your school community. Hold an event to celebrate its publication. Post it at the entrance to the school and around campus.
- Build community in classrooms and school-wide. Host a kindness campaign promoting inclusivity, equity, and justice. For guidance, resources, and materials, please visit [Positive Behavior and Supports/Restorative Practices](#).
- [Recognize local, domestic, and international events that impact Black students](#). Create spaces for students to process grief and express solidarity with those in their communities and larger shared identity groups.
- Expose students to diverse perspectives, role models, experiences through field trips, guest speakers, and opportunities for students to contribute in their communities.

PILLAR 1: ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

High-Quality Instruction

Enriching Experiences

Eliminating Opportunity Gaps

College and Career Readiness

PILLAR 2: JOY AND WELLNESS

Welcoming Learning Environments

Whole-Child Well-Being

Strong Social-Emotional Skills

Outstanding Attendance

TIERED INTERVENTIONS

Targeted

- Review your school data as they relate to equity, such as discipline, academics, school climate, etc. Thoroughly investigate any patterns of discrimination, provide individual and systemic remedies as appropriate, and seek consultation from [Educational Equity Compliance](#).
- Dedicate faculty meeting time to help teachers review their curricula. Provide materials that teach inclusive history where needed.
- Explore these [Critical Practices for Anti-Bias Education](#) as a staff. Brainstorm ways that your school can implement each practice in various environments (classroom, before/after school, lunchtime, etc.)
- Support identity-based clubs, such as [Black Student Unions \(BSU\)](#) and [Genders & Sexualities Alliances \(GSA\)](#). Affirm students' intersecting identities and support student-led initiatives to address school climate.
- Create spaces, such as [circles](#), for students to express themselves and receive support after upsetting events on campus. Empower students to identify action steps for the school community to move forward.
- Speak up every time you hear biased language. Silence sends the loudest message of all. Refer to this [Speak Up at School Guide](#) for practical tips.
- Create spaces for Black parents and caregivers to share their experiences, needs, and strengths. Engage families in celebrating holidays and recognizing traditions important to Black communities.





TIERED INTERVENTIONS

Intensive

- Thoroughly assess all reports of biased, harmful, or hateful speech or behavior. Refer to relevant LAUSD policy and consult with [Educational Equity Compliance](#), [Human Relations, Diversity & Equity](#), or [School Mental Health](#).
- Utilize the simple yet powerful tools of [Psychological First Aid for Black Students](#) with those who were impacted.
- Engage parents and caregivers. Meet with them to communicate what occurred, review relevant school and District policies, and create a plan for follow-up.
- Utilize [restorative practices](#), where appropriate, to provide space for students to express their emotions, name the impact, take accountability, and repair harm.
- Link involved/impacted students to additional supports, such as [mental health services](#).
- Implement restorative consequences or community service related to repairing the harm.
- Develop a plan to monitor and check-ins with the students involved. Document your check-ins and ensure that the behavior has stopped.
- [Provide resources](#) and training to staff based on their individual level of need. Review related LAUSD policies.





FACILITATING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

Our students are always watching and listening... and silence can send the loudest message of all. Part of teaching includes helping students process their thoughts and feelings about the world and creating space for them to bring their full selves to school. Integrate [courageous conversations](#) about race and identity into your regular instruction. Build stamina for discussing difference before a conflict occurs.

Trauma-Sensitive Practices

- Honor various ways of participation. Assure students that they can pass if they don't want to share verbally.
- Each of us is impacted by these topics differently depending on our identities, experiences, and beliefs. Be mindful of how Black students may feel put on the spot or singled out if they are in the minority. Students that are directly impacted by racism and other oppressions may be experiencing traumatic stress.
- Protect students from graphic content (videos or photos of violence) and highlight images of community resilience (social action and protests).
- Review community guidelines and interrupt biased or harmful language. Reiterate that certain topics are not up for debate, such as the humanity of any individual.
- Teach students grounding tools and monitor students' responses during the conversation. Tell students how to access additional support, such as talking to a Psychiatric Social Worker and/or trusted adult(s) at home.
- Have resources available, such as mental health referrals, your BSAP Psychiatric Social Worker, or community hotlines. Follow up with students to ensure that they are connected to support.



This section was adapted from [Let's Talk! Facilitating Critical Conversations with Students](#), by Learning for Justice and Fostering Civil Discourse: How do we Talk About Issues that Matter?, by [Facing History and Ourselves](#).



Before You Start

- **Check in with yourself** Notice the thoughts and feelings that arise as you think about holding this conversation. Consider what you're ready to model for your students and what support you need to do so. Be honest with yourself about any biases or difficult emotions that may hinder your ability to hold this conversation and seek consultation and/or a co-facilitator. Center yourself with a [grounding or relaxation exercise](#) before you start.
- **Reflect on your identities** Before you ask students to reflect and share about topics such as race, power, and oppression, it's important to do your own personal reflection. Use tools such as the [social identity wheel](#) to get started. Be honest with yourself about your opinions and biases related to this topic.
- **Model courageous conversation** While it may feel easier to avoid challenging topics all together, [silence is not an option](#). Challenge yourself to create a brave space considering these [guidelines](#). [Assess your strengths, vulnerabilities, and needs](#) before beginning and come up with a plan to address challenges that may arise.
- **Have a clear intention** Identify your reason for having this conversation. Is it to teach a lesson in history or current events? Is it to build community and create space for students to share their emotions? Prepare an outline to create a supportive container for students.
- **Identify support staff that can follow up** Many of our students, staff, and families are experiencing the toxic effects of [racial trauma](#) and oppression. Utilize the members of your school site crisis team, as well as this list of [community resources](#) (hotlines and mental health referrals).
- **Plan for self and community care** Use the [self-care map](#) to plan to support yourself throughout the day and after.

During the Conversation

- **Set expectations for respectful communication** Review your classroom's agreements or norms. Prompt students to brainstorm respectful ways to communicate and be explicit about topics like identity, power, and privilege. Examples could include, "Listen with respect to the experiences of others," "Try to understand what someone is saying before rushing to judgment" or "Put-downs of any kind are never OK."
- **Teach students key terms for talking about identity and injustice.** Having a shared vocabulary can make for clearer communication. You might use this [kid-friendly anti-oppressive word bank](#) or for older youth, this [glossary for socially conscious conversation](#). Remember that language is constantly evolving and that even within a group with shared identities, people prefer different terms. Respect peoples' self-determination and use the terms they request.
- **Anticipate strong emotions** It's natural for emotions to arise when discussing issues such as identity, power, and privilege. Help students stay connected even if they're feeling uncomfortable by using coping skills. Consider using this graphic organizer, [Responding to Strong Emotions](#), and nonverbal such as ["fist-to-five" hand signal or stoplight method](#) to gauge how students are doing.

FACILITATING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

During the Conversation

- **Foster a safe discussion.** Learning requires us to step outside of our comfort zone, however we want to help students stay emotionally safe. Never compel students to share anything too personal or painful, such as prompting them to share an experience of discrimination. Remind students that no one can be expected to speak for an entire group of people.
- **Encourage openness** Model bringing curiosity to the conversation with neutral prompts like, “Tell us more about that” or “What experiences have led you to this conclusion?” Focus on understanding by modeling active listening using phrases like, “What I heard you say is...” Give students wait time and allow for pockets of silence.
- **Model respectful ways to disagree** Share sentence stems that can help students express themselves, such as: “What did you mean when you mentioned ... ?” “I agree when you say ... but disagree when you say ... ” “I disagree when you say ... because ...” [Model respectful ways to “call in”](#) someone who has made a harmful comment, such as “There’s some history behind that expression you just used that you might not know about.” Educate students about how to identify and report any harassment to the appropriate administrators.
- **Challenge bias and address harm** Make it clear to students that some statements, arguments, or debates won’t be accepted. Encourage students to be upstanders and [rehearse ways to speak up](#). Make the [distinction between](#)

[intent and impact](#) explicit—and give students the language to explain why a statement or question might be hurtful even if the speaker wasn’t intending harm. Model ways to [take accountability and make a sincere apology](#). Any reports of harassment or discrimination should be reported to administration for investigation and response. Schools can consult with [Educational Equity Compliance](#).

After the conversation

- **Wrap up but don’t stop** Ask students how/if their thinking changed from the conversation. Close with a circle to help them appreciate each other and the effort made to engage in the conversation. Brainstorm ways students can learn more, take action, and keep engaging with the topic.
- **Allow time and space for reflection and debriefing** Provide an opportunity for students to [journal](#), draw, or, for younger students, play, to help them process the conversation. Hold a follow-up community-building circle to assess students’ take aways. Identify any students that may need additional check ins or support from a counselor or Psychiatric Social Worker. Assess and tend to any residual misunderstandings or hurt.



FACILITATING COURAGEOUS CONVERSATIONS

- **Teach stories of action, hope, and change** Educate yourself and [your students](#) about your rights and highlight stories about social movements and change agents. [Teach stories of resistance](#) from both domestic and international freedom struggles. Teach [history that is representative](#) of diverse experiences and perspectives. Don't underestimate [young children](#)!
- **Provide opportunities for action** When engaging in discussions about rights and civics, it's important to help students connect to ways they can affect change. Explore ways that [youth can take action](#) around the issues they care about. Give different opportunities, such as writing articles for a media outlet, contacting an elected official, submitting public comment at a community forum, etc. Try an imagination exercise where they envision the world they want to live in.
- **Solicit feedback** Feedback helps. Anonymous surveys can help us identify areas for follow-up, process our own experiences, and prepare for the next courageous conversation.
- **Practice [self-care](#) and [community care](#)** Educators are not immune from the anxiety, stress, and trauma of our social and political contexts. We also need to care for our own bodies, minds, and spirits. The traumatic effects of racism, white supremacy, and other forms of oppression may compound this stress for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color ([BIPOC](#)) [educators](#).
- **Monitor your students' emotional responses** Utilize [restorative practices](#) and get support from administrators, as needed. Use simple, yet powerful tools such as [Psychological First Aid](#) to support students through challenging times. Students who seem particularly distressed may benefit from a check-in with a counselor.

THE FACT THAT WE ARE HERE AND THAT I SPEAK THESE WORDS IS AN ATTEMPT TO BREAK THAT SILENCE AND BRIDGE SOME OF THOSE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN US, FOR IT IS NOT DIFFERENCE WHICH IMMOBILIZES US, BUT SILENCE AND THERE ARE SO MANY SILENCES TO BE BROKEN.

—AUDRE LORDE



THE N-WORD: BREAKING THE SILENCE

General Guidelines for Addressing the use of the N-word in Schools

The N-word described by Dr. Tyrone Howard, professor of education at the University of California, Los Angeles, as being “rooted in degradation, enslavement, dehumanization, hate, anti-Black racism, and a belief in the inferiority of Blacks and African-Americans,” has been plaguing our campuses, and impacting our LA Unified community. Arizona State University Professor Neal A. Lester, who has taught courses on the N-word, teaches that “On one hand, it is the ultimate insult—a word that has tormented generations of African Americans. Yet over time, it has become a popular term of endearment by the descendants of the very people who once had to endure it. Among many young people today—Black and white—the N-word can mean friend.”

With such differing opinions about the use of this term, how do we respond **responsibly, fairly, and seriously** to incidents involving the use of the N-word? To do so, will often require us to be willing to have the difficult conversation(s), acknowledge when people have been hurt, and engage in restorative practices to promote healing.

Generational and Racial Divides

Students and staff have varying opinions about the use of the N-word. These differences are likely to fall along racial and generational divides. It is important to be aware of your own feelings about the N-word, while seeking to understand the positions of others. Here are some common perspectives about the N-word that may be prevalent within your campus community:

Opponents of the use of the N-word

- Words have power. It will just go away if everyone stops using it.
- It is rooted in a racist history and is hurtful. It can never be used in a positive way.
- The N-word is a racial epithet that was often used before taking the life, or liberty of a Black person.
- Popularizing the N-word gives those with ill-intent permission to use it.

Proponents of the use of the N-word

- We can take the venom out of the N-word by assuming ownership of it and using it affectionately.
- It is okay for Black people to use it among each other; it is a part of cultural communication.
- It is not a bad word anymore, it’s another word like “bro,” “friend,” or “homie” when used with an “A” instead of an “ER”.
- I am entitled to freedom of speech. Black people use it, I should be able to use it too.

PILLAR 3: ENGAGEMENT AND COLLABORATION

Strong Relationships

Accessible Information

Leading for Impact

Honoring Perspectives

PILLAR 5: INVESTING IN STAFF

Diverse Workforce

Professional Learning

Staff Wellness

High Performance Standards

Student/ Staff Support

You can support student and staff recovery and promote healing on your campus when the N-word is directed toward another party. Whether it occurs online, over virtual platforms, off campus, or in person, it may contribute to the significant pain and distress of the people exposed, and disrupt the educational environment. We can support our school communities, by taking the time to prepare to respond to each situation, meaningfully engaging the impacted parties, acknowledging the pain caused by the occurrence, and taking action.

Prepare

- Preparation begins with our **willingness to have the conversation**. In many circumstances, silence is seen as an endorsement. Students and staff need to know that you care enough to talk about and address acts of ignorance, bias or hate.
- **Address Hesitancy** – It is okay to be uncomfortable. It is common to experience concerns that you don't know enough about a particular topic or that you will say the wrong thing. If you are experiencing hesitancy, ask yourself what you need in order to move forward, and seek guidance as necessary. While members of [School Mental Health](#), [Human Relations, Diversity and Equity](#), or your Operations - Equity Team are available to support you, know that students appreciate and benefit from having these conversations with familiar school staff.
- **Be Self-Aware** – Conversations about the N-word may heighten defensiveness. If this occurs, remain fully present to listen, learn and support from a place of [self-awareness](#).
- **Review Policy** – Use policy as a guide to investigate the matter. Many Black, Indigenous and People of Color have experienced a lack of justice concerning racial issues. This can heighten unrest and leave members of the community feeling dismissed, devalued, and unsupported. When a student or staff member reports that they have been called the N-word, or negatively impacted by its use in their presence, it is important to carefully consider all available information to reach a reasonable and fair conclusion. Please review and consider the following policies:
 - [Bullying and Hazing Policy \(Student-to-Student and Student-to-Adult\), BUL-5212](#)
 - [Title IX Policy/Nondiscrimination Complaint Procedures \(Including for Sex Discrimination and Sexual Harassment\), BUL-2521](#)
 - [Hate-Motivated Incidents and Crimes – Response and Reporting, BUL-2047](#)
 - [Nondiscrimination Required Notices and Ordering of Student Brochures, MEM-5818](#)
 - [Uniform Complaint Procedures \(UCP\), BUL-5159](#)



THE N-WORD: BREAKING THE SILENCE

General Guidelines for Addressing the Use of the N-word in Schools

Engage

- **Assess** the impact by meaningfully engaging the students and staff who may have been directly targeted or impacted by the use of the N-word.
- **Share the District's Policy** – Communicate the District's position on the use of racial epithets/slurs to all involved parties. For your awareness, "Los Angeles Unified is committed to providing a safe learning and working environment that is free from discrimination, harassment, intimidation, bullying, or a hate motivated-incident." For elementary school students, a sample statement might be, "The N-word is a word that has caused hurt and pain for many people and may make them feel unsafe and unwelcomed. Our District and school have rules in place to make sure that all people are treated kindly and fairly."
- **Establish a Brave Space** – Identify a confidential location to engage involved parties individually. Ask each party what they need to feel safe, physically, psychologically and emotionally during this dialogue.
- **Listen to Understand** – it is important to listen compassionately and actively, while taking an empathetic stand. Taking a [Psychological First Aid](#) approach has been proven to be effective in promoting recovery and healing after a critical incident.



Acknowledge

- Failing to acknowledge that the N-word was used toward a student or staff member, **can heighten concerns that no one cares about the pain that was caused.** It may also constitute a violation of the District's nondiscrimination policy and related law. If many students and staff members witnessed, experienced, or heard about the incident, work with Operations to prepare a statement.



Take Action

There are those who will use the N-word to engage one another on friendly terms. There are those who hurl the N-word as an epithet to cause harm. Then, there are those who will misrepresent the true nature of their intent or minimize the impact that using the N-word has. Not all incidents are the same. However restorative practices such as those that are included in this guide, and consideration of appropriate disciplinary follow-up, are necessary to support a safe school culture and climate for all represented parties. To guide your response, consider the following questions:

- What is needed to reduce the likelihood of this occurrence in the future?
- What steps need to be taken to ensure that impacted parties feel safe?
- Which Tier does this unique situation fall into, and how do we respond accordingly?

The following guide may be helpful in assisting you with determining a course of action. With each incident, remember the acronym “FAIR”: Frequency (How often did this behavior occur?); Age (What is the age group of the parties involved?); Impact (How many people were directly, indirectly impacted?); Relationship (What is the relationship between the person(s) using the N-word and the person(s) targeted). The following guide may be helpful in assisting you with determining a course of action.

Category	Examples of Incidents	Action
1. Inappropriate Behavior	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A student repeatedly recites the lyrics of a song that uses the N-word.• A staff member overhears student(s) using the N-word in their affinity group.	Remind students about using school appropriate language. Share with them that students are to model safe, responsible, and respectful behaviors. Review the District’s nondiscrimination policy and poster. Inform them of their rights and responsibilities.
2. Bias Motivated Incident	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The N-word has been graffitied in a high traffic area at the school by an unidentified person.	Category + Restorative Practices, Community Building, Bullying and Hazing Policy BUL-5212.3. Review the District’s nondiscrimination policy and poster. Inform students of their rights and responsibilities. Connect students to social emotional supports as needed.
3. Hate Motivated Incident or Harassment	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A non-Black student calls a Black student the N-word during a racially motivated confrontation.	Category 1 and 2 + School Wide Discipline Policy Actions, BUL-2047.2. Review the District’s nondiscrimination policy and poster. Inform students of their rights and responsibilities. Connect students to social emotional supports as needed.
4. Hate Crime	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A group of non-Black students physically attacks a Black student and calls them the N-word.	Hate Crime Category 1 and 2 + Hate-Motivated Incidents and Crimes – Response and Reporting, BUL-2047.

For additional consultation regarding harassment, discrimination, intimidation, and/or bullying issues involving protected characteristics, please contact [Education Equity Compliance](#).

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RESTORATIVE PRACTICES: CIRCLES



Circles are an important tool for building community and addressing early signs of conflict. Community-building circles provide opportunities to flex the collective muscle of talking about identity, especially race.

Examples of Community-Building Circle Prompts:

- What is your favorite tradition or something that your family does year after year?
- What languages do your family members speak? Do you know what languages your ancestors spoke?
- Who is someone from your culture (racial, ethnic, national, etc.) that you admire and why?
- What is something that you wish people knew or understood about your race or culture?
- What are some words or phrases your family uses that are different than mainstream “standard” English? (It may be helpful to provide an example from your own culture, such as Spanglish, African American Vernacular English, slang, and Yiddish)

Examples of Circle Prompts for Holding Emotional Space:

- What racial injustice have you heard about in our community, nation, and world?
- How are you feeling about what’s been happening?
- Who can you talk to here at school or out of school if you need help or are worried?
- What can be done to make you or those that you care about feel supported on campus?
- What is one thing that we can do to make sure that all students and staff are respected here at our school?
- What does your family do to get through difficult times? What healing practices does your culture have, other than a medical doctor or mental health therapist? (E.g., acupuncture, curandero/a/e)

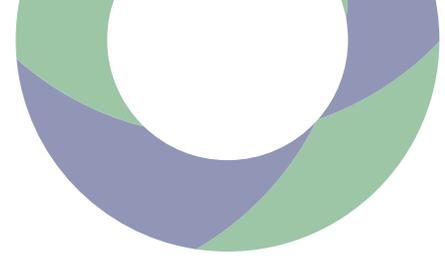
For more support incorporating community-building circles, please contact [Positive Behavior Intervention & Support/Restorative Practices \(PBIS/RP\)](#) at pbis-rp@lausd.net. Resources can be found on the PBIS/RP Schoology Group. The access code is: [ZV2B-2PCZ-BMJVX](#).



WE ARE FIGHTING FOR A DIFFERENT WORLD, AND WE ARE BUILDING
NEW MUSCLES TO DO SO. —ALICIA GARZA



SAMPLE CIRCLE FORMAT



The following is an example of a circle that educators can use following a bias- or hate-motivated incident on campus. [Educational Equity Compliance](#) is available to guide schools in prevention and response efforts. You may reach out to LAUSD's [Positive Behavior, Interventions & Support/Restorative Practices \(PBIS/RP\)](#), [Human Relations, Diversity & Equity](#), or your Systems of Support Advisor or Equity Director for additional support. This circle format was adapted from an original created by Dr. Alana Burton and Human Relations, Diversity & Equity.

Welcome:

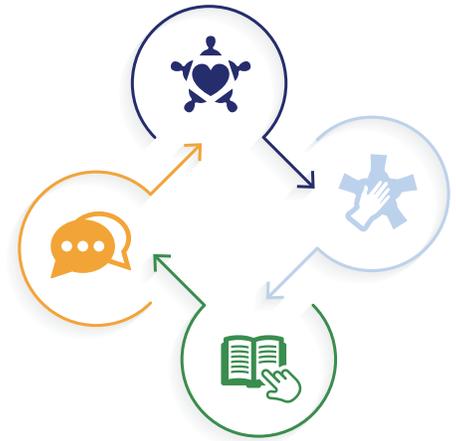
- Example: “Over the next few minutes, we are going to take some time to discuss some events that have occurred on campus, specifically related to anti-Black racism.” (Provide additional context, as appropriate.)

Centering activity:

- Example framing: “These topics can bring up big feelings, so it’s helpful to practice a centering activity beforehand. You can use this exercise at any time during our circle.” (Examples below)
- Arm brushing: Take one hand and brush it down the length of your opposite arm, starting at your shoulder and ending at your fingertips. Repeat with the opposite hand to the opposite arm. Repeat as many times as desired at the pace and pressure that feels best for you.
- Deep/Belly breathing: Breathe into the very bottom of your belly. In for the count of 4, hold for the count of 4, then exhale for the count of 8. Repeat 2-3 times.

Review norms:

- Use your classroom community agreements or these [Core Circle Guidelines](#).



Check-in:

- On a scale of 1-10 (1 being very unpleasant and 10 very pleasant), how are you feeling right now?

Optional opening activity:

- Share a poem, song or other work as a grounding. A couple of suggestions are below:
 - **Elementary:** [All Because You Matter](#) by Tami Charles
 - **Secondary:** “[Glory](#)” by Philadelphia Team, Brave New Voices, 2015



SAMPLE CIRCLE FORMAT



Possible prompts (Elementary and Secondary):

Feelings and Thoughts:

- How are you feeling about what's been happening?
- What thoughts and feelings have you had about the use of racial slurs, like the N-word?
- How have these been impacting you and/or your friends?
- If personally impacted/for Black students:
 - What do you need right now from your school community?
 - What do you need right now that you can do for yourself?
 - What practices and/or resources have been helpful?
 - What is one wish you have for students impacted by anti-Black racism?

Informational:

- What racial injustice have you heard about in our community, nation, and world?
- Who can you talk to here at school or out of school if you need help or are worried?

Action Steps:

- How can you be a friend or stand in solidarity with others in this classroom or school?
- How can you be a friend or stand in solidarity with others in this classroom or school?
- What is one thing that you can do to contribute to a safe and respectful school environment?
- What is one thing we can do to show support for Black students right now?

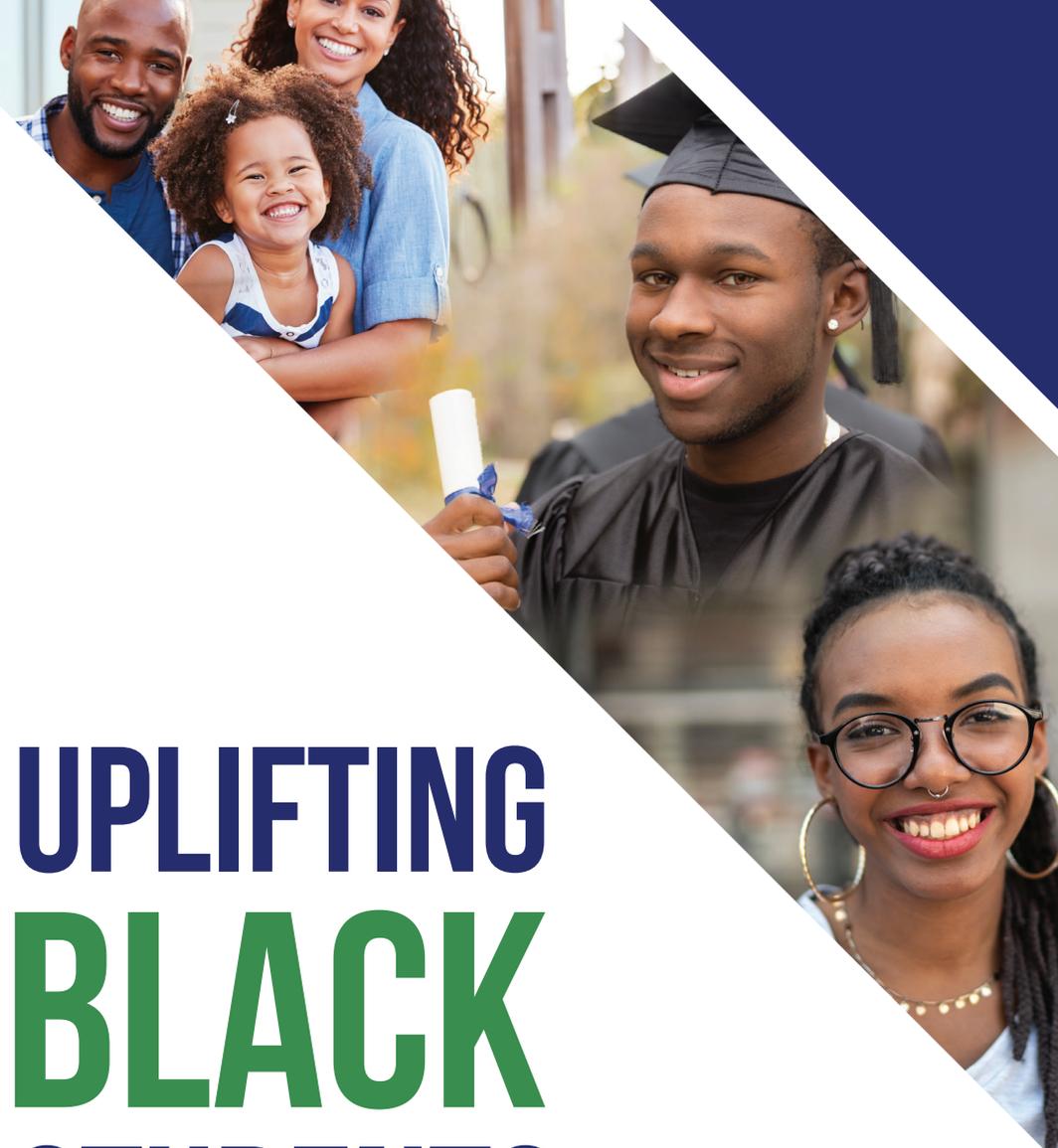


Closing:

- What is one word that best describes how you are feeling right now?
- If you still feel like you want to speak to someone, let me know right after we close the circle.

“ WITHOUT JUSTICE THERE CAN BE NO LOVE. ”
—BELL HOOKS





UPLIFTING BLACK STUDENTS

A RESOURCE

FOR EDUCATORS



School Mental Health
achieve.lausd.net/smh

Human Relations Diversity and Equity
achieve.lausd.net/human-relations



For questions or inquiries, email
lakisha.bridgewater@lausd.net

IN COLLABORATION WITH

Student Health & Human Services
School Mental Health
Human Relations, Diversity and Equity
Positive Behavior Interventions and Support/Restorative Practices
Educational Equity Compliance Office

