



Joint Communication

Office of the Superintendent and Human Resources

Purpose: Affirm our commitment to equity and provide guidance for staff participation in the Black Lives Matter at School National Week of Action, February 3-7.

Information only

To: FWEA and FWEA-ESP Staff, Principals, Assistant Principals, and Leadership team

From: Dr. Pfeiffer, Deputy Superintendent
David Brower, Chief Human Resource Officer

Regarding: Leading for Equity

Thank you for the work you do every day in service of our scholars. This communication is intended to affirm our commitment to equity and provide guidance for principals regarding school and staff participation in the Black Lives Matter at School National Week of Action, which takes place during the first week of Black History Month..

Federal Way Public Schools embraces diversity and racial equity. A core belief in our strategic plan states, “We believe race, socioeconomics, language, cultural background, and other exceptionalities should not be predictors of student achievement.” Also, as stated in our collective bargaining agreements: “We value the unique and diverse perspectives, experiences, and cultural identities of our staff, students, and community” and “we must dismantle institutional racism in a collaborative and intentional manner, and commit to address intentional and unintentional bias.”

February is designated as Black History Month, also known as African American History Month. This time is set aside to recognize the important contributions African Americans have made and continue to make to our history and culture. As a district, we believe that the study of contributions of African-Americans and other groups historically absent or marginalized in school curricula should be included in the core curriculum throughout the year and not just relegated to a month on the calendar. As declared in our CBA, “The district and association agree that curriculum will be designed in a manner that reflects the strengths and diversity of our student populations” (7.2.A.1.h.5). As a district, we continue to adopt resources that explore the story of all of us. A stakeholder team made up of teachers and administrators are currently creating an “Ethnic Studies” course that teaches “the knowledge and skills that all public school students need to be global citizens in a global society with an appreciation for the contributions of diverse cultures” as part of our

commitment to ensuring that all students see themselves in the curriculum and experience diverse viewpoints.

In addition to what is taught in the core curriculum, many schools in our district hold assemblies related to Black History Month, and history classes may study related issues and events. We, as a district, affirm and support our schools using instructional time to hold such assemblies and teach about our history in alignment with district approved curriculum and resources.

We know that the FWEA Association representatives have previously voted unanimously to participate in *Black Lives Matter at School National Week of Action* the first full week of February. We also understand staff may choose to wear *Black Lives Matter at School* T-shirts during this time. Although this is not a district-sponsored action, we affirm and support teachers' right to do so, given that it does not disrupt the educational environment.

Some staff may have reviewed the Seattle Education Association curriculum related to *Black Lives Matter at School National Week of Action*. As that curriculum has not been adopted by the district and, therefore, should not be taught. However, we encourage teachers to reflect on the guiding principles. We value and affirm the teaching of racial, linguistic, cultural, religious, and gender identities and differences, the importance of having and honoring multiple perspectives, and the teaching of acceptance of differences. We also affirm the teaching of empathy, acceptance, and restorative practices. We recognize the need to strengthen and integrate these important principles of social justice throughout the curriculum and we are committed to continuing the development of this work as we move forward.

We recognize staff who are wearing Black Lives Matter T-shirts may be asked about them by staff or scholars. As with all personal speech, the district defers to the staff member to share their personal reasons for expressing their beliefs. We recognize that staff may choose to use resources shared by the National Week Of Action Committee or other related sources to inform their personal answers to staff, scholar, and community inquiries.

If you have any questions, please reach out to your supervisor.

In partnership,

Dani and David

Dani Pfeiffer, Ed.D.
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