



**BLACK LIVES MATTER AT SCHOOL TOOLKIT**

***WEEK OF ACTION***





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Virginia's Education Union

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## Greetings & Introduction to the Black Lives Matter at School Week of Action Toolkit

Enclosed is Virginia Education Association's **Black Lives Matter at School Toolkit** to be used as a resource guide for advancing racial justice in Virginia's schools. Black Lives Matter at School is a national coalition organizing for racial justice in education. All educators, students, parents,

unions, and community organizations are encouraged to join their annual week of action during the first week of February. To learn more, visit <https://www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/>

The goal of Black Lives Matter at School is to inspire an ongoing movement of critical reflection and honest conversation, and impactful actions in school communities for all stakeholders to engage with issues of racial justice. The Uprising for Black lives prompted the Black Lives Matter at School movement to expand activities to a "Year of Purpose." The centerpiece of the Year of Purpose is asking educators to reflect on their own work in relationship to antiracist pedagogy and abolitionist practice, persistently challenging themselves to center Black lives in their classrooms.

The Black Lives Matter movement is a powerful, non-violent peace movement that systematically examines injustices that exist at the intersections of race, class, and gender, including mass incarceration, poverty, non-affordable housing, income disparity, homophobia, unfair immigration laws, gender inequality, and poor access to healthcare.

Within the Virginia Education Association's Human and Civil Rights Department, our commitment remains steadfast in shedding light on the challenges faced by Black educators and Black students. This encompasses a broad spectrum, addressing crucial aspects such as the representation of teachers of color, the promotion of anti-racist teaching methodologies, and the cultivation of cultural competence. We unapologetically advocate for an education that is both honest and accurate, striving to ensure every student in the Commonwealth receives a learning experience reflective of their diverse backgrounds.

Guided by the priorities of the VEA's Fitz Turner Commission for Human Relations and Civil Rights, we emphasize the urgent need for diversity among staff members. Our commitment extends to providing comprehensive education and resources on social justice within the educational environment. Moreover, we strongly recommend that each local school division appoint a dedicated individual responsible for spearheading initiatives related to diversity, equity, and inclusion. By championing these priorities, we aim to foster an educational landscape that not only acknowledges but celebrates the richness of our diverse community.

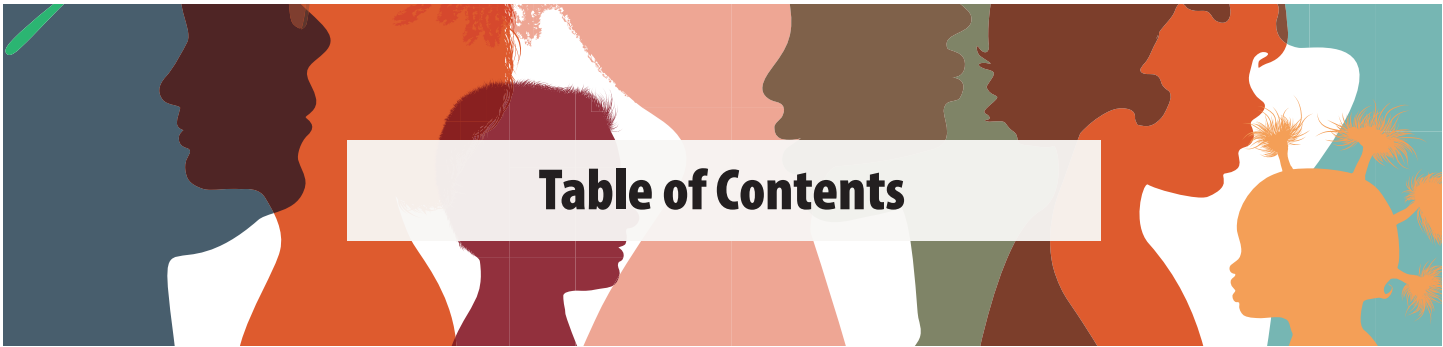
As we look ahead, we are hopeful by recent developments, with Virginia choosing "education" in November 2023 and electing education-friendly politicians. We are hopeful that this will pave the way for restoring honesty in education and a genuine dedication to cultural competence to help every student and educator thrive throughout the Commonwealth. Together, let us leverage this momentum to drive positive change and create an inclusive, equitable, and just learning environment that empowers every student.

I encourage you to explore this updated resource to facilitate conversations about race, leveraging classroom-appropriate lesson plans and guides on navigating challenging discussions with colleagues and students. Moreover, our team is ready to provide training and assistance in organizing a local team. Reach out directly at 800-552-9554 ext. 324 or via email at [tsteele@veanea.org](mailto:tsteele@veanea.org).

In solidarity,

*Taisha C. Steele*

Taisha C. Steele, Ed.S, (she/her)  
Director Human and Civil Rights



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## Virginia Education Association

**WHEREAS**, the members of the Virginia Education Association stand for racial justice and human dignity for all of our students and colleagues and have made them core principles of our organization;

**WHEREAS**, the members of the National Education Association, at their 2019 national convention, took a position in support of the Black Lives Matter Week of Action during Black History Month, calling for “clear efforts to demonstrate support” for the ending of zero-tolerance school discipline policies, the hiring and mentoring of more Black educators, and the teaching of ethnic studies in public schools;

**WHEREAS**, there are too few Black educators and educators of color in proportion to the number of students of color in Virginia’s public schools;

**WHEREAS**, required by Code of Virginia § 22.1-298.7, no later than the beginning of the 2022-2023 school year, each school board employee, including teachers, leaders, and other licensed staff, is required to complete cultural competency training or instruction. In addition, effective July 1, 2023, every person seeking initial licensure or renewal of a license shall complete instruction or training in cultural competency.

**BE IT RESOLVED** that the members of the Virginia Education Association join the national call for the observance of Black Lives Matter at School Week to kick off Black History Month in 2024 during the week of February 5-9;

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that the **(name of Local)** Education Association encourages its members to wear Black Lives Matter shirts to school that week and teach lessons about the school-to-prison-pipeline, restorative justice, and Black history.



1. **Determine the type of meeting:** define the platform in which the meeting will take place, is it a panel discussion, a speakers list, or a Q & A session?
2. **Define the purpose and the outcomes:** the purpose should be well defined with an end in mind for outcomes after the event. The purpose and outcomes should be stated in the advertising of the event.
3. **Identify a host/facilitator:** there should be one person to help thread all the speeches together and continuously tie it to the theme and purpose of the event. This person should also be able to keep the flow of the meeting and ensure it stays to the purpose of the event.
4. **Encourage registration:** set up a registration page for participants. Be intentional about the information that you capture on the registration form so that you know the audience and you build a list of activists or volunteers for future engagement.
5. **Start on time, end on time:** it is more difficult to keep the attention of a virtual audience, thus, it is important to start and end at the time that is advertised. Set an annotated agenda and be sure to share the time allocated to each speaker ahead of time.
6. **Plan, Prepare, Perform:** if possible, schedule time for a “dry run” before the event, check the audio of each speaker, troubleshoot all tech components, and examine the timeframe. Also, assign someone to “technical difficulties” during the event.
7. **Rules of engagement:** share the process in which the audience can engage in the discussion, will they use the chat function only or can they speak and interact in real time? Share that throughout the event and have someone monitor the chat and respond accordingly.
8. **Share the action items:** establish action items at the end of the event. The items should be concise and measurable in order to continue the work beyond the event.

9. **Establish a plan to follow up:** be sure to follow up with the speakers to thank them for their time. The planning committee should also follow up with the attendees to keep them engaged in the work and build capacity to move the work forward and achieve the goal(s).
10. **Next steps:** this is not a one and done event! Build on the purpose and outcomes for the event and elevate the issue(s) every opportunity that you have with administrators, community leaders, parents, and union members.





## Black Lives Matter Guiding Principles

**Restorative Justice** – As we forge our path, we intentionally cultivate and sustain an environment that is rooted in compassion and empathy, where we can make mistakes, grow, and express the fullness of our humanity.

**Empathy** – We cultivate empathy by seeking understanding and engaging comrades with the intent to learn about and connect with their contexts.

**Loving Engagement** – Our interactions are guided by a commitment to embody justice, peace, and liberation.

**Diversity** – We recognize, accept, and celebrate the unique qualities that make us different and the shared perspectives, circumstances, and commonalities that connect us.

**Globalism** – We recognize that we're part of the global Black family in a common struggle toward liberation. We stay attuned to the different ways we are impacted including our privilege as Black folx who exist in different parts of the world alongside our other contexts.

**Queer Affirming** We reclaim the word queer as an act of defiance and in solidarity with those who have paved the way for us to live openly. When we gather, we do so with the intention of freeing ourselves from the tight grip of cis-heteropatriarchal assumptions. We foster a network in which all people can be genuine and express their authentic, embodied selves.

**Trans Affirming** – We are self-reflexive and consistently do the work required to dismantle cisgender privilege. We hold space for our siblings who are agender, intersex, transgender, and gender expansive to participate and lead. We uplift Black trans folk, especially Black trans women who continue to be targeted and subjected to violence. We work outside of the binary to achieve full liberation.

**Collective Value** – We are guided by the fact that all Black lives, regardless of sex assigned at birth, gender identity, gender expression, sexual orientation, economic status, ability, disability, education, location, age, immigration status, religious beliefs or disbeliefs, matter. None of us are free until we are all free.



**Black Families** – We make our spaces family-friendly and enable caregivers to fully participate with their children. We oppose the practice that demands double duty, where one is expected to parent in private but engage in public work. We recognize that family includes our chosen families.

**Black Villages** – We disrupt the narrow Western prescribed nuclear family structure expectation. We support each other as extended families and villages that collectively care for one another, especially “our” children. We believe that radical care belongs in the public sphere.

**Black Women** – We build a space that affirms Black women by centering their experiences. We recognize the many ways patriarchy shows up so consistently work to maintain a space free from sexism and misogyny, actively disrupting patriarchal culture.

**Unapologetically Black** – We are unapologetically Black in our positioning. In affirming that Black Lives Matter, we need not qualify our position. To love and desire freedom and justice for ourselves is a necessary prerequisite for wanting the same for others. We proudly embrace our Blackness.

**Resource:** <https://www.blacklivesmatteratschool.com/13-guiding-principles.html>



# Elementary School Lesson Plans\*

## Looking at Race and Racial Identity in Children's Books

**Grade Level: K–2; 3–5**

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/looking-at-race-and-racial-identity-in-childrens-books>

This lesson, the second in a series, encourages students to think and talk openly about the concept of beauty, particularly as it overlaps with issues of race and racial identity.

## What is Empathy

**Grade Level: K–2**

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/what-is-empathy>

This lesson explicitly teaches students to be more conscious of other people's feelings to create a more accepting and respectful school community.



## Dealing with Dilemmas: Upstanders, Bystanders and Whistle-Blowers

**Grade Level: 3 – 5; 6 – 8**

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/dealing-with-dilemmas-upstanders-bystanders-and-whistleblowers>

The purpose of these lessons is to help students think about how to resolve difficult ethical decisions related to injustice. By role-playing, researching people who have made courageous ethical decisions, and writing about their own role models, students will come to understand the importance of standing up for what they believe in.



## Part of a Community Online

**Grade Level: K-2**

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/part-of-a-community-online>

This lesson focuses on helping young children learn to participate in different kinds of digital communities. Students will solidify and work on what they know about being part of any community.

## Comfort Food: Lesson for Child of the Civil Rights Movement by Paula Young Shelton

**Grade Level: K-2**

<https://www.civilrightsteaching.org/comfort-food>

Designed to help students make a personal connection to the civil rights movement and to recognize that people, just like themselves, came together as a community to fight against the injustices of segregation and discrimination. The use of food in the story helps students to identify with the civil rights activists, unified by a common goal and engaging in the common practice of fellowship over a meal.

## Addressing Anti-Black Racism with Young Children: Choosing Picture Books

**Grade Level: Early Childhood**

<https://www.are.na/block/17360130>

There are four types of books to use - Big Idea Books, Issue or Event-Specific Books, Identity-Affirming Books, and Wellness-Focused Books.

## Building a sustainable inclusive, just and peaceful world - Education for Justice

**Grade Level: 1–5**

[https://www.unodc.org/documents/e4j/FunCorner/LESSON\\_PLAN\\_MANUAL\\_ENG\\_12\\_03\\_2020\\_DIGITAL.pdf](https://www.unodc.org/documents/e4j/FunCorner/LESSON_PLAN_MANUAL_ENG_12_03_2020_DIGITAL.pdf)

In contemporary societies, children face many challenges and risks that previous generations did not. Some examples are the dilemmas and dangers presented by the Internet.

To help prepare children for these new challenges and protect them from these new risks, it is essential that they learn about ethical and respectful behavior, what the right thing to do is, and how to apply this knowledge to the choices they make and actions they take every day. This understanding will help them contribute to the creation of a more sustainable, inclusive, just and peaceful world.

To help children gain this knowledge, have a positive impact on society and inspire others, it is important that educators, supported by families, teach them the values and skills that they need.

*\* If the link does not open, please copy and paste the link into your browser or refer to Resources on page 16.*





# Middle School Lesson Plans\*

## Mini-Lesson: Introduction to the Principles of the Black Lives Matter Movement

Grade Level: 6 – 8; 9 – 12

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LbnXynTSqC0t-vtfSzYnpKjK9Zvrr1eEk9IAGrRy8os/edit>

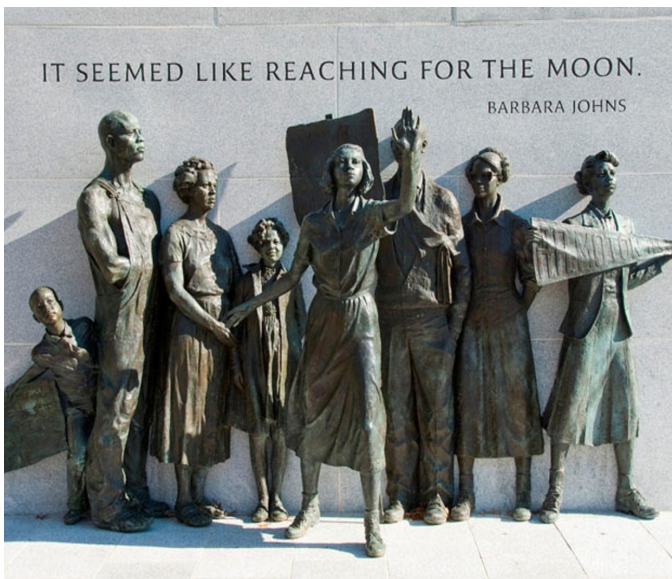
Students will be able to explain the 13 core principles of the Black Lives Matter movement and analyze the importance/significance of the 13 core principles to their local community, the United States, and the world.

## Middle School BLM Week of Action Mini Lessons

Grade Level: 6 – 8

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/186fgoMIR5D-vWLctHIMnev5nWaf5TB59mgEa59jFK9-s/edit>

Lessons that are appropriate for middle school classrooms that provide articles and videos that are appropriate for shorter blocks of instructions.



## How Barbara Johns Helped End Segregation

Grade Level: Middle

<https://junior.scholastic.com/pages/content-hubs/the-civil-rights-movement.html>

In 1951, there were 21 American states that required black students and white students to attend separate schools. A young African American girl named Barbara Johns knew this wasn't right—and that she had to do something about it. Her bravery led to a landmark Supreme Court ruling that changed the nation forever.



## Why Local Elections Matter

**Grade Level: Middle**

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/why-local-elections-matter>

In this lesson, students explore the ways that decisions by local government affect their lives. They'll review research and data about a few recent local elections to push back against the myth that a single vote doesn't count. They'll learn how laws in their state encourage or suppress voter engagement. And in an extension activity, eligible students learn how to register to vote.

## Beyond Rosa Parks: Powerful Voices for Civil Rights and Social Justice

**Grade Level: 6 – 8; 9 – 12**

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/beyond-rosa-parks-powerful-voices-for-civil-rights-and-social-justice>

Most history textbooks include a section about Rosa Parks in the chapter on the modern civil rights movement. However, Parks is only one among many African-American women who have worked for equal rights and social justice. This series introduces four of those activists who may be unfamiliar to students.

## The Skin I'm In Is Not A Weapon

**Grade Level: 4 – 5; 6 – 8**

<https://1619education.org/builder/lesson/skin-im-not-weapon>

Students examine the historical context of racism by tracking the evolving relationship between Black Americans and governing structures in the United States.

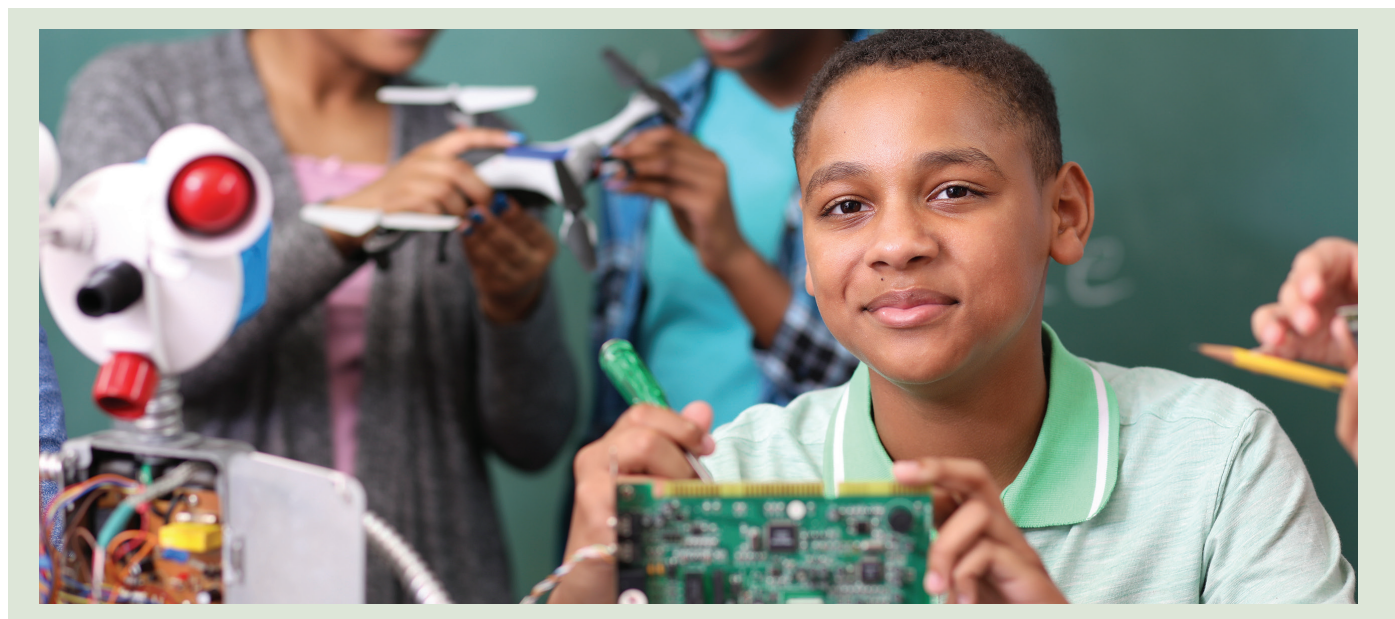
## Barbara Johns (School Interrupted)

**Grade Level: 4 – 5; 6 – 8**

<https://resources.newamericanhistory.org/school-interrupted>

What role did teenagers like Barbara Johns play in desegregating schools in Virginia and the United States?

*\* If the link does not open, please copy and paste the link into your browser or refer to Resources on page 16.*



# High School Lesson Plans\*

## Mini-Lesson: Introduction to the Principles of the Black Lives Matter Movement

**Grade Level: 6 – 8; 9 – 12**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1LbnXynTSqC0tvtfSzYnpKjK9Zvrr1eEk9lAGRrRy8os/edit>

Students will be able to explain the 13 core principles of the Black Lives Matter movement and analyze the importance/significance of the 13 core principles to their local community, the United States, and the world.

## High School BLM Week of Action Mini Lessons

**Grade Level: 9 – 12**

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1nTAF1lvFN9UXzKy1w456zjqE-52RyRMVSQE29EFrJ2M/edit>

Lessons that are appropriate for high school classrooms that provide articles and videos that are appropriate for shorter blocks of instructions.



## The Color Line

**Grade Level: 9 – 12**

<https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/color-line-colonial-laws>

A lesson on the countless colonial laws enacted to create division and inequality based on race. This helps students understand the origins of racism in the United States and who benefits. Diversity and Globalism, Ethnic Studies.



## **Talking About Race and Racism**

**Grade Level: 9 – 12**

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/talking-about-race-and-racism>

What do educators need to participate in an open and honest conversation about the content of The New Jim Crow? Effective instruction about The New Jim Crow requires advanced preparation for how to talk about race and racism.

## **Understanding and Challenging Ageism**

**Grade Level: 6 – 8; 9 – 12**

<https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/understanding-and-challenging-ageism>  
[https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/understanding-and-challenging-ageism\\_1.pdf](https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/understanding-and-challenging-ageism_1.pdf)

This lesson provides an opportunity for students to understand what ageism is and the many ways it manifests, reflect on specific examples and categorize them and consider ways they can be allies and take actions to confront and challenge ageism.

## **History of Juneteenth and why it became a national holiday**

**Grade Level: 6 – 8; 9 – 12**

<https://www.pbs.org/newshour/classroom/lesson-plans/2023/06/lesson-plan-history-of-juneteenth-and-why-its-set-to-become-a-national-holiday>

In this lesson, students will explore and discuss the history and context around the Juneteenth holiday in the United States. Topics explored will include the history of racial injustice in the U.S., the Civil War and the limitations of the Emancipation Proclamation. Additionally, students will be encouraged to explore the modern significance of Juneteenth and its long-term impact.

*\* If the link does not open, please copy and paste the link into your browser or refer to Resources on page 16.*





## Steps to Bring Resolution to Local School Board

Black Lives Matter (BLM) at School Week is February 5-9, 2024. Black Lives Matter at School Week is celebrated by a national coalition organizing for racial justice in education.

Share the importance of Black Lives Matter at School Week to Association Members and your students. Local presidents should meet with the local membership to make a declaration of support for the resolution. Your local president and their selected team should then identify Division Equity Coordinator or appropriate Administrator in your division. Communicate and meet with Coordinator, Administrator and Division Superintendent to share information about Black Lives Matter at School Week. If the Superintendent agrees with making a declaration of support with a Resolution, then the information will go to the School Board Clerk. This will ensure that the BLM at School Week Resolution will be added to the School Board meeting agenda. Solicit your UniServ Director for support as needed.

If the division Superintendent does not agree to move forward with a declaration of support through a Resolution, local associations are encouraged to do the following activities:

- Share their support for BLM at School Week by making public remarks asking for a Resolution to be adopted by the school board.
- Help educators and the community understand the importance of BLM at School Week by using social media and other forms of public communication.
- Encourage educators to share the BLM at School Week toolkit with their school administrators, fellow educators, and school counselors.

As the National Education Association has proclaimed, “The goal of Black Lives Matter at School is to spark an ongoing movement of critical reflection and honest conversation and impactful actions in school communities for people of all ages to engage with issues of racial justice”<sup>1</sup>.

The Fitz Turner Commission for Human Relations and Civil Rights at the Virginia Education Association hopes your local association chooses to celebrate this week in any capacity possible.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://neaedjustice.org/black-lives-matter-at-school/>





## Sample Local Resolution

### **(Name of Local) Education Association**

**WHEREAS**, the members of the **(name of Local)** Education Association stand for racial justice and human dignity for all of our students and colleagues and have made them core principles of our organization;

**WHEREAS**, the members of the National Education Association, at their 2019 national convention, took a position in support of the Black Lives Matter Week of Action during Black History Month, calling for “clear efforts to demonstrate support” for the ending of zero-tolerance school discipline policies, the hiring and mentoring of more Black educators, and the teaching of ethnic studies in public schools;

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## Resources

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Building a sustainable inclusive, just and peaceful world - Education for Justice

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Addressing Anti-Black Racism with Young Children: Choosing Picture Books

<https://www.are.na/block/17360130>

### Page 10-11 Middle School Lesson Plans

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High School BLM Week of Action Mini Lessons

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The Color Line

<https://www.zinnedproject.org/materials/color-line-colonial-laws>

Talking About Race and Racism

<https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources/lessons/talking-about-race-and-racism>

Understanding and Challenging Ageism

<https://www.adl.org/resources/lesson-plan/understanding-and-challenging-ageism>

[https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/understanding-and-challenging-ageism\\_1.pdf](https://www.adl.org/sites/default/files/understanding-and-challenging-ageism_1.pdf)

History of Juneteenth and why it became a national holiday

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## Additional Resources

- <https://neaedjustice.org>
- <https://www.dcareaeducators4socialjustice.org/black-lives-matter/resources/>
- <https://www.learningforjustice.org/classroom-resources>
- <https://www.civilrightsteaching.org/>
- <https://blacklivesmatter.com/resources/>
- <https://www.teachingforblacklives.org/>
- <https://diversebooks.org/>
- <https://colorfulpages.org/category/activities-lesson-plans/>
- [https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ou2lkNO\\_1ijCJDfmasbAG8mx\\_7hvv1cHKmobhtcVLak/edit](https://docs.google.com/document/d/1ou2lkNO_1ijCJDfmasbAG8mx_7hvv1cHKmobhtcVLak/edit)
- <https://www.zinnedproject.org/>
- <https://www.whatdowedoallday.com/childrens-books-with-deaf-characters/>





<b>VEA Commissioner</b>	<b>District</b>
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Brad Hutchinson	A
Elizabeth Larson	B
Anthony Swann	C
Charisse Woodward	D
Nicola Ross	E
Monann Davis	F
Christina Schmitt	G
Brandon Fincham	H
Tammy Potts	H
Shaniqua Williams	H
Christopher Badgett	I
Andrea Trotter	J
Vanessa Scott	K
ChèRee Wiley	L
Milondra Coleman	M
Andrea Bolden	N
Treketta "Keeter" Harris	O
Kim Hasty	P
Christie Jones	Q



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**Taisha C. Steele, Ed.S,** Director, Human and Civil Rights  
Virginia Education Association | 8001 Franklin Farms Dr, Suite 200, Richmond, VA 23229  
Phone: (800) 552-9554