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Dear Teachers and Families,

This is an especially complex time to be raising and teaching young children. You partnered these past months to engage children in learning at home and stay connected to our important classroom relationships. As we have been teaching in this time of COVID19 and working to support children's social emotional development, the existence and burden of systemic racism has not disappeared. In fact, it has been festering, as things do when largely unattended to. Historically, when societal inequity arises, people want to do something to right these wrongs. They protest, sometimes loudly and visibly. The images we are currently seeing, and that your children may be seeing, are similar to images seen in recent and past years around the globe and right here at home.

And so, here we are. Children will see images. Children will have questions. We have to be ready, as we always have been, to prepare children for what they might see, to explain why people are protesting, and help children understand the importance of raising up our voices in the name of social justice.

*Even young children may see or hear about highly publicized incidents like the George Floyd case – perhaps overhearing the TV or the radio – and may ask questions. Or, if parents are upset by the news, the child may perceive the parent's distress and ask why mom or dad is upset. In either case, an age-appropriate explanation is better than silence.*

-Beverly Daniel Tatum

The following books and strategies are meant to help you respond to children, and interpret and process what is happening in the world. They are specific to supporting children's understanding of images and stories of protests, and the fight against injustice. Please preview materials first so you can choose what is appropriate for your family or group. Don't feel like you must read a book all the way through with very young children. These books also provide adults with responsive language. Be honest: "Sometimes when people are treated unfairly, it makes them frustrated and even angry. People want to try to make change so that all people can be safe, free, and taken care of."

Teachers and families, reach out to each other and build the bridges that will help us to heal.

Best,

Lisa Kuh, Director of Early Education

*Thanks to the Somerville Early Education Instructional Coaches Valerie Giltinan, Heidi Given, & Paige Mahoney, as well as Cheryl Piccirelli, Principal of the Capuano Early Childhood Center for their collaboration on this message.*

## How to Begin:

1. Listen - If your child has seen images from the media, follow their lead by inviting them to ask questions and share their feelings.
  - Acknowledge and validate feelings
  - Answer questions in a simple and developmentally appropriate way. Remember, children will ask more questions if they want more information.
2. Start with a book - There are some suggested books and prompts listed below.
3. Focus on positive change and action - Even if children ask about violence or death, once those questions are answered, refocus the conversation on the changes folks want to see made in our society. Ask what changes children might want to see.
4. Teach children that many people have worked together throughout history to change things that were unfair. This work continues and will continue.
5. Remind children that there are many people in their lives and communities who continue to work to keep them safe.
6. Find a way to share your child's voice and ideas. Take a child-friendly action together.
  - Write their words onto a sign that they can decorate
  - Write a letter to a community leader
  - Do something to take care of others

## Books to Share with Children:

Come with Me by Holly H. McGee and Pascal Lemaitre

[https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW6Ne1n\\_hWs](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oW6Ne1n_hWs)

The book offers young children a gentle, encouraging, age-appropriate response to disturbing news reports. If you read this book with your child, you might ask:

- What can you do to make the world a better place?
- How can you show kindness in our community?
- How are you brave?

I Am Enough by: Grace Byers and Ketorah Bobo <https://www.youtube.com/bywatch?v=Mp4GZ1I0pfY>

This book is a poem about self-love, acceptance, and bringing our full selves to our communities. It explores feelings of confidence, voice and celebrating who we are. If you read this book with your child, you might ask:

- What qualities do you have that you are proud of?
- How do you show the world your power? Your enough? What are you here to do?
- What can you do or say when you don't agree with someone or something?
- How can you help someone else?

Say Something by: Peter Reynolds <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IxKewUo2J8Y>

This book explores using our voices and actions to make the world a better place. It emphasizes that each person has something meaningful to contribute to the world and encourages readers to take action. This

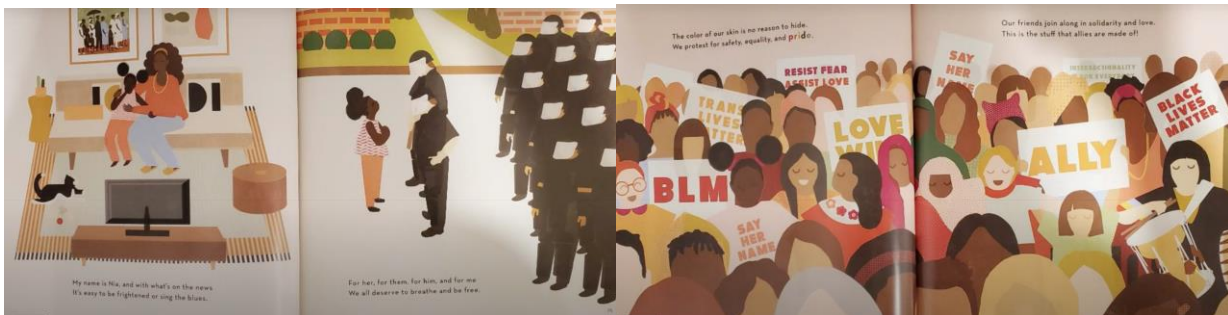
book encourages children to speak up and speak out in both large and small ways - including examples that mirror what children are currently seeing in the news (someone being hurt, protests, etc.) "You can say something in so many ways-with words, with action, with heart." If you read this book with your child, you might ask:

- People are saying a lot right now about how Black people are treated by police. What do you think?
- What is a problem in the world that you see? What might you say or do?
- What is something in your heart that you want to say?

If you are **interested in connecting what is happening today to the Civil Rights era**, you could read Martin's Big Words By: Doreen Rappaport and Bryan Collier\_ <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IWT9H3aV1o> - a powerful, historic example of saying something.

*Note: This book is long and covers a lot of ground, but can be revisited and extended across time. It is important to have multiple conversations across time with your children.*

Use these two images from Intersection Allies we make room for all By: Carolyn Choi and Chelse Johnson



You might ask:

- How are you feeling about the news?
- What do you wish you could say to others? To the police?
- What do you know about protests? What do you wonder about protests?
- What would make things feel kinder? Safer? Fair for everyone?