

PTA Meeting Notes February 6, 2018

Updates from the PTA presidents:

On Thursday, the Board of Education is meeting with the schools in this cluster at BCC from 7-9. All are welcome to attend.

The Silent Auction is March 10. Stop by the auction table tonight and get your tickets.

There is a Cafecito at RCF this Friday morning at 9:30 a.m.

Update from Heidi Anderson

(as treasurer)-We have a healthy budget. If you're interested in seeing it, please ask.

Heidi Anderson (as head of the nominating committee) is seeking volunteers for next year's PTA Executive Committee. If you're interested, please see her or one of the members of the nominating committee (Heidi Anderson, Dominic Del Pozzo, Juliana Horowitz, Gail Viechnicki; Tim Wolf)

How to Talk to Your Kids about Bias and Hate by Karen Miller (Staff Social Worker) & Kathryn Campana-Scherer, Ph. D. (Staff Psychologist)

Talking about diversity and differences in general:

- It's never too early!
- Kids as young as infants are able to notice and pay attention to racial differences.
- Physical traits are seen as differences, not flaws.
- When children notice and ask about differences, it's a normal and healthy stage of development.
- "Colorblindness" isn't helpful or realistic.
- Take the opportunities that arise to talk about it.
- What if the opportunities don't arise organically?
 - Expose kids to positive imagery of other racial and ethnic groups by
 - Local events and celebrations, books, etc.

Help your kids develop cross cultural friendships and relationships

- Choose schools or activities where kids will be part of a diverse group of children
- Teach kids to differentiate between seeing differences and prejudice
- Find commonalities that reinforce that sense of our common humanity

Cultivate cross-group relationships YOURSELF as a model

- What does your social network look like?
- Search for common interests with people of different backgrounds
- Empathy develops organically within positive and supportive friendships

Talk explicitly about race and diversity, as well as the negative impacts of bias

- A colorblind approach does NOT decrease biased attitudes in kids
- Children show more favorable attitudes toward racial outgroup members only if their parents discuss race directly
- It's ok to recognize differences but not okay to be prejudice

Talking Explicitly: How do you start these conversations?:

- Use your own cultural celebrations/events
- Kid-friendly media (like Zootopia)
 - Books with diversity
 - Look for examples to bring it up and talk about it
 - Are you bringing up news in age-appropriate ways?

Conversation starters when you are watching things together/discussing an incident:

- "What did you notice?"
- "You know what I noticed? I noticed..."
- "Can you think of things like this that happened at school, in media, in the news?"
- "How do you think it might feel to have people look at you and make judgments?"

- Children 9 and over can understand bias.

- Work to combat bias in YOURSELF
 - Listen to, validate, and ally with people who report personal and systemic racism
 - Have hard conversations with yourself about the racism that lives within you
 - Be mindful of the commonalities that humans share and practice empathy.

- Is it too late if you have an older kid? NO!
 - Everyone , of all ages, can work on this and become more aware and better able to address these issues.
 - Start talking about it now!

Talking about incidents of hate and bias around the country and our community:

- Be honest and age-appropriate
- Don't sugar coat-be transparent
- Try to be calm and reassuring
- Talk about what you as a family can do to combat hate

- Talk about the importance of being an ally or standing up for equality-
How would you want your child to respond if they heard racist or anti-Semitic messages?

What if your group is targeted?

- Avoid fear-inducing language
- Use supportive language to provide a model of coping
"Those people don't really know how great you are and how special it is to be X"
"But that doesn't mean we should be mean to others.."
"If that happens to you, you can come to me, and I'll help"
- Help kids to feel pride in their identities
Teaching children to make sense of the differences around them is an act of supporting tolerance
"You know, some Ys do things that way and that's great. We do things differently and that is great too."
- Steps to take if your group is targeted:
 - 1) Check your own reaction first. Take a minute to collect yourself.
 - 2) Listen! Listen! Listen!
 - 3) Don't put your own reactions on to your child.
 - 4) Reassure their safety.
 - 5) Talk through how they should handle situations.

How do you encourage your kids to be allies?

- Talk about it-discuss what an ally is (a helper)
- Stand up for others vs. supporting them-Explain that it can be really hard to speak up to a bully, but we can always find ways to be kind and supportive of each other.

Do:

- Get an adult.
- Stand next to the child being bullied; ask them to eat lunch with you, play or sit with you.
- "I'm sorry that happened to you. I was afraid and didn't know what to do."

Don't:

- Stand by and watch if someone is being bullied
- Respond to or spread mean or bullying videos or messages
- How do we prevent our kids from being a "bully"?
 - Signs a child is bullying others:
 - physical or verbal fights
 - friends bully others
 - Aggressive
 - Frequent punishments at school

- Unexplained extra money or new belongings
 - Blame others for their problems
 - Don't accept responsibility for their actions
 - Competitiveness and worry about reputation or popularity
- Be VERY EXPLICIT about how it not ok to make fun.--Stop and think before you say or do something that hurts others.
 - Listen to the times when your child IS making judgments, gently correct in the right direction
 - Conversation starter: "Those aren't the values we have in our family. Our values are respect, kindness, listening, etc..."

Then the floor was open for questions.