

FAQs ABOUT THE RACIAL JUSTICE & ADVOCACY CURRICULUM

1) Is this curriculum a form of segregation?

Segregation derives from government laws and societal systems of oppression based on the privilege of one group over another. The School for Children has not developed a system of privilege for the children of color, but a program that addresses the sociological and psychological needs of children of color in a predominately white setting. This is accomplished by grounding the work in affinity groups and creating an opportunity for the children of color to meet in a majority setting.

2) Children are color-blind, and a KOC affinity group highlights differences of which many children are not aware.

Research shows that children, beginning in infancy, do notice all kinds of differences, including those in skin color, facial features, and hair. Research also indicates that by age seven, children enter into a developmental stage where negative racial concepts can be reinforced. In the recent past, children of color in our Lower School have been told by well-intentioned peers that their skin looks like the color of poop. The KOC affinity group is a place where children of color can process being on the receiving end of such comments, which although innocent or sometimes factual, can ultimately be hurtful.

3) How is the concept of the KOC affinity group introduced to the classes?

We have successfully used a

number of children's books and activities to facilitate the

understanding for all children of what an affinity group is and why they are important. This process takes place prior to the formation of the KOC affinity group. These books and interactive exercises help to illustrate issues of difference in an age-appropriate fashion. The stories also help children begin to understand how characteristics of people can be used to marginalize individuals, and they help children begin to understand why people of all ages sometimes come together to form affinity groups.

4) How do you address the children who are not part of the KOC group? What role do they play in this program?

The whole class has been together during the introductory part of the curriculum when the concept of affinity groups is introduced. After that, children who are not part of the KOC group

are still an integral part of the program since the curriculum is the same for both groups. Furthermore, the follow up lessons bring the two groups back together, where they talk about the lesson in which they were just involved and continue to develop the concepts of affinity and social justice.

5) How do you explain the separation to students?

Children are used to seeing groups of children leaving the classroom for other subjects or activities (i.e. art, music, or movement) where the whole class does not participate at the same time. The groundwork for the separation has been laid through the discussion and explanation of affinity groups (aided by the books and activities), as well as the need for groups to meet separately at

times. Many students are also part of the parent affinity groups in our community, and they are accustomed to gatherings that focus on individuals with common traits.

6) My child is white and thinks that the KOC group is unfair.

Work with your child's teacher to explain

in developmentally appropriate language that Bank Street wants to give kids of color a space to talk about shared experiences because even in society today, people of color are treated unfairly. One of the goals of this curriculum is that the advocacy component helps white kids learn about and challenge injustice, and just as there is a long history of oppression, there is also a long history of people from all groups working to challenge it.

7) How will the school keep families involved and informed?

We will convey to families conversations that arise in the classrooms, as well as provide information about the curriculum. We want you to understand why we have this curriculum and to continue the home-school partnership in discussions with your child about diversity.

8) How is this curriculum connected to the larger School for Children curriculum?

This curriculum has been shaped by Bank Street College's mission statement and credo. It is connected to the belief that a better understanding of one's self can lead to one becoming a better advocate for one's self and others.

This can lead to self-reflection and action that not only aids in the understanding of the

importance of diversity, but also leads to active and engaged citizens in a democratic society.

9)

Who can I talk to for more information?

Anshu, Dawn and Alexis are available to answer any questions that you may have.

10) What do older children say about their experience with this curriculum?

Older children of color in the Upper School have spoken about their positive experiences with this curriculum. They enjoyed the opportunity to be in a majority setting and speak about the unique experience of being a student of color in an independent school, and in a majority white community.

11) Why do you have this group for children of color, but not other areas of special interest? (adoption, religion, sexual orientation, etc.)

The decision was made to address race and ethnicity, as those can sometimes be obvious features of children, more so than religion, sexual orientation, or whether one was adopted. The obvious features of children (skin color, hair texture, shapes of facial features) have led to teasing and

hurtful comments, and we believe that increasing children's awareness to these areas will result in

children with a greater sensitivity to these differences, as well as an increased capacity for one to be an advocate when teasing or insensitive behavior does occur. Ultimately, there certainly could be a number of affinity groups for children in our community, but the School decided to initiate this one for children of color first. We are also mindful of the need to address all other areas of diversity and continue to incorporate this work into our core curriculum. This work is on-going.