DISCUSSING CURRENT 2020 EVENTS WITH STUDENTS

This guide is intended to help teachers begin conversations with students. It is not intended as a therapeutic intervention.

**INSTRUCTIONS:** Begin by asking your students questions. You can correct any misconceptions they may express or follow up the answers by reading the information below.

Be sure to address issues in an age-appropriate manner. Remember, it is likely your students already have high anxiety about recent events and while adults should be truthful, you should consider in advance the level of detail you want to discuss and positive elements you can always emphasize (e.g., the presence of helpers).

Be particularly sensitive to suggestions of bias or prejudice in any form.

**What is COVID-19, and how dangerous is it?**

COVID-19 is a coronavirus. It probably began as a virus that existed only in animals, but humans became infected and we know it is transmitted from person to person. It is most dangerous for older adults, but we know that it can potentially be dangerous for people of any age. It is more serious than a typical case of the flu, but still, most people who contract the virus do not become seriously ill.

**What is “social distancing” and why does it matter?**

“Social distancing” means staying physically far enough apart to avoid passing the virus from person to person. It is easier for the virus to spread indoors, and people talking, singing, laughing, sneezing or coughing can more easily pass the virus to another person. This is why people wear masks.

**How do you know if someone has this virus?**

Sometimes people who carry the virus show symptoms, but sometimes they do not. A medical test can tell if a person is carrying the virus. This is why medical researchers are working hard to develop tests that everyone can use.
**What is a “pandemic,” and why did it lead to economic problems like lost jobs?**

The word “pandemic” means a situation where many people are contracting a new virus. Because this virus is so infectious, and we did not test enough people to understand who was carrying the virus, the difficult decision was made to tell everyone to stay home, and to close schools, businesses and events. That was why some people lost their jobs.

**What do all the social protests have to do with the pandemic or COVID-19?**

In most ways, the two events have little to do with one another. The people who are engaging in social protests are expressing their view that America needs to do a much better job of meting out racial justice. This is a very important issue, which is why so many people feel passionately about it.

**Are the social protests dangerous?**

It is possible that we will see some people contracting the virus because they are in crowds of people. Within the protests and demonstrations, there has been some violence, but most protests have been peaceful. Over time, they have become more peaceful, at least as of this writing (June, 2020). Protests are not engaged in by bad people who want destruction; overwhelmingly, the people who protest are trying to help others understand their point of view.

**Do ordinary people, and kids, have a role to play in addressing the pandemic?**

Absolutely! In fact, it’s everyday people who can do the most to reduce the spread of COVID-19. We can all help by wearing masks to reduce the chance of any transmission; washing our hands frequently; staying home when you’re feeling sick; and avoiding large crowds or people with symptoms of illness.