



THE GLASGOW GROUP LLC

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Independent schools are working quickly to respond to a surge of social media posts from alumni of color and current students of color. To help schools respond thoughtfully, authentically, and strategically, we are providing a list of guidelines that may help your institution ask the right questions about the incidents outlined in these posts, respond to the emotions that these narratives bring up for the students and the community, and move forward to build more inclusive communities that are committed to anti-racism. This is an opportunity to listen and learn, and most importantly, to take action to resolve past grievances and prevent future occurrences of these types of incidents on campus. As with any major grievance against the school, the Head of School should be a central figure in communication and resolution, and the Head of School should be in tight partnership with senior administration, especially the school's diversity practitioner.

If your school is NOT experiencing social media posts or accounts such as BlackAt[YourSchool]:

- Use this as an opportunity to engage people in your community about the experiences of race at your school. Framing your outreach as a response to this national movement from independent school students and alums allows you to be proactive versus reactive.
- Send out a letter to the entire community (including faculty and staff and trustees), acknowledging that other schools have received such posts, that your school is not exempt from the experiences outlined in those posts, and inviting alums as well as current students and families to share their stories proactively by reaching out directly to the Head of School. The letter should:
 - Acknowledge the school's commitment to anti-racism, diversity, inclusion, belonging, and a desire to help individuals heal from the negative experiences they have had
 - Validate the need to be heard, and while affirming social media as one outlet, highlighting that the best resolution can come from being in direct contact to share and process these stories
 - Consider if you'd like to make a form for submission of stories directly to the school for follow up. This form could be anonymous, or, it could ask for contact information optionally.
 - Follow up with some bullet points regarding existing programming and action steps that the school is taking to correct systemic racial inequities, acknowledging that more needs to be done
- Set up times for town hall meetings or listening sessions with alums of color, parents of color, current students of color, and employees of color. The purpose of these sessions is to provide another opportunity to get feedback on the experiences of race at your school. You might also consider a more general town hall to answer questions and handle concerns from the wider community.
 - Listening sessions should have the Head of School and other key administrators including the school's diversity practitioner. It might be helpful to hire an outside facilitator to run the session so that administrators can remain in listening mode, careful about responding too quickly in the moment or seeming defensive. The point of the sessions is to hear what participants want to

share and to process before responding. It will be important that the facilitator sets that as the expectation at the beginning of the meeting.

- Before the listening session draws to a close and having heard and processed the sharing, key administrators should suggest possible action items and a follow up plan

If your school is experiencing social media posts or accounts such as BlackAt[YourSchool], do all that was previously mentioned, and:

- Do not attempt to shut down the account which will feel like silencing and create negative backlash.
- Do respond to the account with an affirmation that you heard and appreciated the stories. Include action steps that the school is taking, and an invitation to be in touch with the school directly (with a designated point person, typically the Head of School).
- Do not try to highlight positive experiences of people of color in your community at this time or defend individuals that are named directly.
- Have the school's Instagram account become a follower of the account.
- Employees can follow but should not "like" or comment on the posts.
- Check in with employees who have been specifically called out on the account. Help them to process and provide them with what they need to move forward. Be careful of minimizing or dismissing the story shared as a way to make the employee feel better. Focus on reflection and personal action steps for the employee without being punitive.
 - This is an important time to review your school's social media policy for current employees and students.
 - Be proactive in discussing with your legal team or HR the possibility that one of these stories could outline something that may be grounds for termination, and discuss how to proceed in those cases. Consider the anonymous nature of this reporting and the means for confirming the details of the incident before taking action against an employee, especially termination.
- Invite the owner of the account to work in partnership with the school. Instead of being an account that is serving to create negative PR for the school, it could be an account that is giving a needed outlet for grievances against the school around incidents of race, allowing the school to increase its awareness and improve its practices.
- Be authentic with any response that is provided. Do not promise long term goals that you may not be able to follow through with. Attend to the emotion first, and then, commit to action.
 - Outline immediate actions that will be taken as the school reflects on what has been shared and commit to an assessment of school culture and climate that will inform a long term strategic plan around anti-racism, inclusivity, and belonging.
- Promises should be actionable, measurable, and have a clearly designated point person who is accountable for implementation.

Important action steps to take in light of these social media posts:

- Complete an audit of your school's practice, policies, programs, and curriculum to uncover any racial inequities, insensitivities, or discriminatory behaviors. Once an audit is complete create an implementation team to ensure that action steps emerge from the findings.
- Convene focus groups of students of color, families of color and employees of color to better understand their experiences.
- Review discipline records, academic records (including GPA's, AP, etc. and enrollment and retention trends, etc) to look for racial inequities.

- Ensure that the school has a diversity professional on the senior management team that is set up for success with adequate budget and visibility in the community.
- Invest in a series of training for employees around implicit bias, anti-racism, whiteness, privilege and power.
- Make a demonstrated commitment to diversity and equity a part of the employee evaluation process, highlighting such actions as professional development undertaken by the employee and support of the school's efforts in this area.
- Have the board of trustees consider making a statement of support for the schools work in anti-racism