



NEWTOWN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Parents and Staff,

The events that unfolded yesterday at the United States Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. is a sad footnote for our nation and the democratic principles upon which this country was founded. There is no argument or justification for violence, and unfortunately the imagery that has and will continue to be displayed on the news will have an emotional impact on both students and adults.

Americans have had a challenging year, battling a horrific pandemic and civil unrest, both of which have added to the anxiety, fear, and divisions in our country. As parents and educators, it is often difficult to respond to children's questions about the images of violence they are witnessing, but it is also an opportunity to address the strength of our system as evidenced by the members of the Senate and Congress who carried on with the electoral process without letting a group of rioters permanently define who we are as citizens.

We need to illustrate and illuminate the critical importance of civility as the only path to positive change and to speak out to condemn violence under any condition, even amidst debate and disagreement. John F. Kennedy once said, "Peace is a daily, a weekly, a monthly process, gradually changing opinions, slowly eroding old barriers, quietly building new structures.

Children will have questions. Even younger children may ask for explanations about what they have seen or heard. Here are a few tips when speaking with your children or students:

- Let children know that there are trusted adults they can speak to at any time.
- Model a sense of calm and let children know, no matter what, they are safe.
- Be honest and review current events or information in age-appropriate ways.
- Clarify what students might have misunderstood about the images or events that have taken place.
- Reiterate home and/or school values and core beliefs (tolerance, respect, civility, diversity) as part of the discussion.

Our strength has always been in our ability for deep reflection and resiliency. Our students rely on us, and now more than ever we need to show them how to embrace peace, tolerance and hope.

Dr. Lorrie Rodrigue, Superintendent