

Dear Staff,

We apologize that this document is late in coming to you.

We believe it is important and critical to hold conversations with students about the Attack on the Capitol. We want our schools to be safe places for everyone to process what is happening -- even the events we struggle to understand ourselves.

We trust in you to hold these conversations in a professional manner to help students listen to one another, to be open and curious about the facts, and to hold safe and important discourse with one another. We stand with you and support you in doing this.

We also believe that you know your students and you know their needs. If you believe that the time isn't right or some students aren't ready, then we are okay with your decision.

To those of you who held these conversations today without a clear directive or stand of support from us, bravo! You did the right and honorable thing. Please forgive us for not being timely in getting out this message. To those of you waiting for direction and wanting to know that you have administrators who will stand with you, please know you have it now.

Below are some resources that have been shared around the state. Feel free to use them and share what you have with one another.

Thank You,

Deb and Leanne

### **Resources for Staff --**

Here is an [article](#) from Education Week specifically about January 6th's traumatic event and how to discuss this during a pandemic.

[Beyond the Spotlight](#)

Shared from RSU #34 (Old Town)

- [Please remember Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs.](#) Right after the physiological needs (food, water, rest) are the needs of security and safety. Our students' sense of security and safety are already stressed due to the pandemic. It is critical that we remember to focus on these needs Thursday in age-appropriate ways. For some, this may mean putting aside some of the day's instructional plans to provide a space to discuss and process this very teachable moment. For others, particularly for younger

students, we can best address their needs for security and safety by giving them the familiarity of routine.

- We've seen time and again through tragedies national and local that our students take their cues from us. Our behaviors and reactions can be the mirror our students use to see themselves. Be calm, be steady, and reassure our students that they can talk through any and all problems to feel safe and healthy.
- Our Maine Dept. of Education Social Studies specialist, Joe Schmidt, has put together a great page of resources and presentations to support educators in engaging students in "courageous conversations about contentious topics." The page includes webinars, web-based resources, research, toolkits, example ground rules, and more! <https://www.maine.gov/doe/learning/content/socialstudies/resources/convo>

### **Some Grade-Level Recommendations:**

#### **Elementary Grade Span**

As a staff member, you may want to use these talking points for general discussion or facilitation of feelings or worries. If you feel it inappropriate to engage in conversations about what happened yesterday due to the age of your students, please feel free to carry on in your classroom as you see fit. If you need more direction for speaking with your students, please use the following talking points to guide your conversation:

For younger learners, language such as:

- The rules of our country were not followed yesterday...this is not the way a peaceful transfer of power happens in our country after an election of a president. The job of the Congress is to make sure all the rules are followed so everyone in the country is safe and cared for.
- When we have problems at school or at home, we are supposed to talk through these problems instead of using violence. Fighting and arguing does not make the problems go away, it just makes problems bigger.
- Sometimes we disagree with each other. It's okay to have our own thoughts and ideas. We do not have to all believe the same things. What we all need to do is be respectful of each other and if sometimes agree to disagree.
- We all live in America and even when we do not agree with each other, we are Americans and it's important to stick together, help each other when we can, be good neighbors, and respect our rules and laws that help all people in our country.

I'm sure there are other talking points you can use to guide your conversations with kids, but let's also use these with each other. We can be better, we can be an example for our kids. They are watching us and our actions. We probably didn't need this on top of everything else we have been dealt this year, but it may have had to happen to wake us up and put us all back on the track of protecting our democracy.

### **Middle School Grade Span**

For typical middle school students,

- How can we have civil conversations about topics when we don't agree?
- Protesting peacefully is every American's right, but the actions that took place yesterday were not peaceful and escalated beyond protesting to illegal activity.
- No matter what your political opinions are, we all are Americans and have many common values and beliefs.

\*Three ways to teach the insurrection at the U.S. Capitol [PBS.org lesson](#) plans (for any educator, not just social studies)

\*[Google Presentation](#) (created by Jennifer Derene, Special Education Teacher at OHS incorporating the PBS video and discussion questions)