



January 7, 2021

Dear Town Parents and Guardians,

On a regular basis, your sons give me hope for our future. Today and in the coming days, boys are participating in class lessons about yesterday's violent takeover of the U.S. Capitol. Across the grades, they are exploring developmentally appropriate and factual information about what occurred, asking questions and sharing feelings. Your sons have expressed sadness, confusion, and worry. These are complex and unprecedented events, challenging as well for us as adults. In every classroom we tied the lesson back to our Town values because we know these conversations are not "one off" moments but rather are a part of our and our students' ongoing learning.

As the NAIS (National Association of Independent Schools) President, Donna Orem, says: *Educators have a direct role in both teaching the fundamentals of democracy and exemplifying it in words and actions. We can value diverse perspectives and also condemn violence and the divisive rhetoric and false information fueling it. We all have a responsibility to pass on to the next generation the core values and practices of free and fair elections and peaceful disagreement.*

We are fortunate to have our Town team of dedicated teaching professionals, and I am deeply grateful for their capacity to engage in these conversations so swiftly, even as they are still processing it themselves. There are a range of emotional and personal responses to yesterday, possibly varying by person in part because of our identities and pathways to living in the United States. As a White woman, I am aghast at seeing the Confederate flag gleefully carried through our nation's capital because it is a symbol of White supremacy, and I can only imagine its impact on our students, families and employees of color. Our students and our country deserve better.

As a community, we need to be actively engaged in conversations about what it means to be a positive and contributing member of a democracy, reflecting on the responsibilities and privileges inherent therein as well as the ugly aspects of both our history and current cultural climate. I am horrified by the disregard for the election process and our nation's history of peaceful Presidential transitions. At the same time, when considering the misinformation and

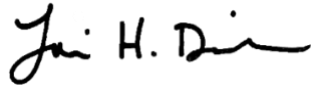
conspiracy theories that have gained traction on online platforms, I know that I should not be surprised. Like many, I was outraged by the racism so clearly present in some of the encouragement for the insurrectionists' efforts, and the double standard apparent in the preparation and response from law enforcement. Thankfully, there were many elected officials acting with the type of integrity we wish to cultivate in our boys. We identified these upstander behaviors to your sons as those we want to cultivate in ourselves and our community.

I am relieved that elected officials upheld the election outcomes, reminding us all that we must always stand up for what is right and good. It is for these reasons that we have these important conversations with our students. We teach your boys how to think, not what to think, and we ground our conversations in our Town values and [Statement on Civil Discourse](#). We partner with you in raising boys of character and impact, which includes becoming upstanders who disrupt and challenge inequity and falsehood.

I am including below some resources that might be of help as you navigate conversations with your sons. As always, please reach out with any questions or concerns.

With love and hope,

Warmly,



Lorri Hamilton Durbin, Head of School



Resources:

[Common Sense Media: Talking to Kids About the Violence at the U.S. Capitol](#)

[Common Sense Media: Explaining the News to Our Kids](#)

[The National Association of School Psychologists - Talking to Children About Violence](#)

[The American Psychological Association - How to Talk to Children about Difficult News](#)