

**EAST ORANGE SCHOOL DISTRICT
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January 7, 2021

Greetings East Orange School District Staff:

On Wednesday, January 6, 2021, we witnessed a grave breach of our country's democratic traditions. For the first time in American history, supporters of the out-going President forcibly disrupted and insurrected the United States Capitol. We watched as hundreds, perhaps thousands of Americans, attempted to frighten the halls of Congress and our democratic system of government.

I am sure that yesterday's news provoked a whirlwind of emotions as it comes off of the heels of the Black Lives Matter peaceful protests that ensued across the country this past year. For many, there has proven to be a stark contrast between the two and only reinforces the racial injustices that have plagued our country for hundreds of years.

In the days following these events, students may need opportunities to feel and express their emotions. Before discussing this topic with your students, it is important that you start with yourself and your own feelings. Self-reflection is important preparation for facilitating conversations about troubling current events. As educators, we have to make time to process our own feelings and become aware of the way our own identities and experiences shape the perspectives we hold.

Please be mindful and vigilant as you interact with your students in the upcoming days. If you choose to use this week's events as a teachable moment, please consider the following strategies that can help facilitate meaningful reflection or discussion as you create spaces for student reflections.

- *Journals* can help students process their thoughts and feelings. While learning remotely, students may benefit from having added opportunities to reflect individually before participating in remote discussions.
- *Graffiti Boards* can help students "hear" each other's ideas, give students space and time to process emotional material, and create a record of students' ideas and questions that can be referred to at a later point.
- *Wraparound* asks students to share aloud a quick response to a prompt. It provides an efficient way for all students in a classroom to share their ideas about a question, topic, or text, revealing common themes and ideas in students' thinking.

"Developing Leaders One Student at a Time"

Although our students are not physically in school and staff members are working remotely, we are still united as a community and are here for one another. *Together we will go far.* As always, thank you for all that you do.

Educationally Yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'AbdulSaleem R. Hasan', with a large circular flourish at the end.

AbdulSaleem R. Hasan, Ed.S.
Superintendent of Schools