

# The Scotch Plains-Fanwood Public Schools

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Dear SPF Community,

Watching the events of January 6, 2021 unfold at the Capitol brought to mind what Psychologist and Holocaust survivor Viktor Frankl once wrote, “Between stimulus and response there is a space. In that space is our power to choose our response. In our response lies our growth and our freedom.”

These unprecedented events were difficult to view and have or will undoubtedly generate strong feelings in the “space” that follows these events. All of us, our students included, may feel destabilized or confused, saddened or scared. These are perfectly normal responses to such an event and these emotions may be particularly challenging for our students to understand and to manage.

Yesterday's events certainly may bring up many emotions for us as a community, and specifically for our students. The expanded mental health supports now in place in our district, including Student Assistance Specialists in all of our elementary schools, continue to provide students and staff resources to draw upon.

As educators, we have the imperative to remain neutral in all things political. As human beings and citizens of the United States, we also have the responsibility to denounce violence of any kind, including violence against our government and against all people, and to support the tenants of our democracy.

These current events provide the opportunity to continue to develop our students’ understanding of our democracy. With little “space” between the events of yesterday and today’s lessons, our educators engaged in collaborative efforts throughout the night to determine how we would respond in our classrooms today and in the days and weeks ahead. The goals we defined for today do not differ greatly from most other days in Scotch Plains-Fanwood. They are to:

- Make sure all students are safe and know they are cared for
- Draw upon Social and Emotional learning strategies to help all students understand that feeling destabilized or confused, saddened or scared (or none of these) are perfectly normal responses to an event that is so unprecedented
- Help students to understand the world around them
- Guide students to act in a way that promotes democracy and human rights

We appreciate your on-going support as we work together to achieve these goals. If you need support in helping your child/ren, please, please reach out to your child’s principal.

Sincerely,

Dr. Joan Mast  
Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Robert McGarry  
Assistant Superintendent for Curriculum and Instruction