

Dear Watershed Community,

I write this evening with a heavy heart. The horrific attacks in Israel this past weekend and the ongoing (perhaps long-term) violence in the region are stark reminders, as if we needed them, of the distance we still need to travel to build a world where we “respect the dignity and worth of all people,” a world that is “more just, more sustainable, and more compassionate.” These quotes come from a couple of our foundational documents: our *Design Principles* and our *Strategic Vision*. In times like these it is good for us to remind ourselves of our values as a school, and reaffirm how we work to live out these values.

We are an unusual school. We do not avoid difficult challenges in the world – indeed our Expedition courses begin with real challenges in the world (rather than a sometimes outdated list of content to cover). We know that students, particularly in this day and age, are well aware of the challenges in the world. And we know that learning about these challenges – in all their complexity – helps young people to better understand the world around them, to think about solutions, and to think about how we might build a better world.

Again, from our strategic vision:

*In a world with complex, systemic problems, we must help young people become creative problem solvers with the passion and vision to solve the challenges of the future. In a world that is increasingly individualistic, we must help young people learn to work toward the common good, making real contributions to the world around them by doing work that matters. In a world too often defined by discord, we must help our students listen, learn, and lead across differences. And in a world with too much cynicism, we must help young people build hope.*

And yet, this is hard. This is hard for all of us to navigate. Some in our community have close connections in the region and may be facing personal loss. Some are tending to friends who have these more direct connections. And even for those without direct connections, the world may feel more unsettled right now.

Please know that we are here to help support all of our students with this. In addition to support from advisors and our counselor Elyse, we will be having age appropriate small group conversations to work through questions, concerns, and feelings our students may have. Below I share links to some resources for thinking about how to support our children, and ourselves, as we process violent and traumatic situations like this. I hope they might be of use.

With the hope that our young people can help build a more compassionate world,  
Tim

ps. I've not included students on this email so that families can decide how, and how much, they want to share – especially for our younger students.

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[How do I talk to my kids about violence in the news?](#) and [Explaining the News to Our Kids](#): These two guides from Common Sense Media, a nonprofit that examines the impact of technology on children, provide age-appropriate tips on how to talk to kids about what’s happening in the news, especially when it involves violence.

[Handle With Care: Supporting Young People During Crises](#): Learning for Justice, a social justice and activism program for schools, provides ideas to support “meaningful” discussions about emotionally charged topics, such as the Hamas attack on Israel, with young people and potential follow-up steps and responses.

[Fostering Civil Discourse: How Do We Talk About Issues That Matter?](#): This guide from nonprofit Facing History and Ourselves gives educators ideas for how to prepare students to engage in reflective conversations on controversial topics.

[Teaching Controversial Issues: A Framework for Reflective Practice](#): This guide from Judy Pace, a teacher educator at the University of San Francisco, provides a research-based framework for teaching controversial issues.

**Talking with students during crises:** [This guide](#), published by the American Psychological Association offers valuable insights into handling such situations with care and understanding.

### **Helping Children Cope with Upsetting News Events**

[Helping Children Cope with Terrorism–Tips for Families and Educators](#) (National Association of School Psychologists)

[Tips for Talking With and Helping Children and Youth Cope After a Disaster or Traumatic Event](#)  
(Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration)

[Talking to Children About Tragedies](#) (American Academy of Pediatrics)

[Promoting Compassion and Acceptance in Crisis](#) (National Association of School Psychologists)

### **Addressing Intolerance and Bias at School**

[Preventing and Responding to Bias and Hate Incidents in K-12 Educational Settings: A Toolkit for School & Community Leaders](#) (Department of Justice)

[Responding to Hate and Bias at School: A Guide for Administrators, Counselors and Teachers](#) (Learning for Justice)

[Managing Difficult Classroom Discussions](#) (Center for Innovative Teaching and Learning, Indiana University)