



Genesee Community Charter School
at the Rochester Museum & Science Center

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www.GCCSchool.org

January 8, 2021

Dear Parents, Caretakers, and Guardians,

We spent Wednesday afternoon and evening, like many of you, watching in shock of the failed insurrection of the U.S. Capitol in an effort to subvert a core tenet of American democracy—the peaceful transition of power. What we saw in Washington was the opposite of what we, as a school community, believe in.

In his 1963 essay “A Talk to Teachers,” James Baldwin wrote, “American history is longer, larger, more various, more beautiful, and more terrible than anything anyone has ever said about it.” The essential truth of Baldwin’s statement resonates ever more in the reflection of the last year.

This year, the pandemic and our nation’s response exposed the deeply rooted inequities in our education and healthcare systems. The Movement for Black Lives and the calls for justice after the murder of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Daniel Prude, and too many others showed how far we have left to go as a nation in confronting our racist history and policies.

Overcoming the hatred and violence on display in the capital on Wednesday—the same kind that has stained the history of our country and so many countries globally—will take brave, honest conversations and action, which are needed to hold space for genuine understanding.

At GCCS, our actions and our decisions are rooted in our shared values of compassion, collaboration, initiative, responsibility, gratitude, perseverance, and courage. The tumult we have collectively witnessed and uniquely experienced is our call to action to take good care of ourselves and each other. Guided by our values, may we remember who we truly know ourselves to be, and do what we can to help people find and build their capacity to heal, rather than wound.

Our staff is continuing to process these most recent events ourselves and will be keeping in tune to your children's needs - answering their questions and validating their feelings. Some classes have already spent time processing with their teachers and with the Social Emotional Learning team (Kyle and Lauren). This will continue throughout the coming weeks as events continue to unfold.

With our Social Emotional Learning team, we have encouraged students to view the violence in Washington as a storm our nation is moving through. We held space for sharing what students saw, their reflections, and listening to any questions they had. We also encouraged a turning inward to examine their own internal weather, asking them: "Where do you hold emotion in your body?" We used the guided breathing exercise below and the following questions to frame our discussion.

- What is needed to create a rainbow?
- Why do you think a rainbow is used as a symbol of hope?

- What are you hopeful for after experiencing this week?

The video we are showing during SEL time is here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O29e4rRMrV4>

We also encourage your children to consider joining Kyle and Lauren for Mindful Moments each morning at 8:00 a.m.

Thank you for continuing this challenging journey together. We wish you health and healing.

In partnership,

Shannon, Lauren, and Kyle