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**MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** New Mexico Public Schools

**FROM:** The New Mexico Public Education Department

**RE:** Current Events

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As New Mexicans prepared to celebrate the anniversary of our statehood on Wednesday, January 6, we were also watching a direct assault on our democracy unfold at the U.S. Capitol. In a memo to PED staff on Wednesday, Secretary Stewart wrote, "Holding public office and working for public agencies is an honor and a privilege." He noted that, "As an agency, we govern for all New Mexicans regardless of party affiliation and regardless of political ideology," and "please know that despite the caustic rhetoric and the deep partisan divides, we will stay true to our commitment to serve everyone, to practice democracy, to welcome differences of opinion, and to recognize our strength in our diversity."

The Public Education Department does not condone violence, insurrection, or intolerance of any kind. Our core values include being responsive, collaborative, transformative, innovative, and reflective, while maintaining a student-centered orientation in all that we do. We believe our classrooms and communities should offer space for civic discourse, courageous conversations, healing, compassion, and creation. Toward that end, we offer the following guidance and support in navigating the unparalleled events of late.

**Self-Care**

First, please remember to [take care](#) of yourselves. Lean into practices and habits that are nourishing and inspiring. Reach out to friends, colleagues and family, as needed, and remember you are never alone. Consider what [norms](#) or [community agreements](#) already exist in your home or classroom and what may need to be added or amended to protect your own psychological safety as a facilitator of the conversations to come. Then, as you

feel ready to do so, please lean on the resources below in navigating conversations about recent events in your classrooms or homes.

### **Instructional Strategies**

Prioritize basic needs ([Maslow's before Bloom's](#)) and ensure your students feel safe and secure before diving too deeply into discussion. Provide students multiple ways to engage, express themselves, and take breaks, as needed. Break-out rooms can be used during remote learning as a space for students to connect with their peers, take a study break, meet with a counselor, or join a larger classroom discussion. Be sure to offer students [creative outlets](#), as well.

Plan, but don't feel you need to re-invent the wheel; there are [comprehensive resources](#) across a [diversity of platforms](#), already developed and ready to implement. Be prepared for "[hot moments](#)" and consider how your teacher moves may need to shift throughout the discussion. Anticipate potential misunderstandings and plan re-directions that will bring students back to the core concepts (e.g. [Separation of Powers](#), [Civics](#), and [Voting Rights](#)).

Equip students to be [critical consumers](#). As information is increasingly accessible to our youth, we must equip them with the tools needed to filter through misinformation and identify credible sources of news and data. Be sure they have access to [diverse and inclusive sources](#) of news and information.

### **Resources for Home**

Holding space for reflection and discussion at home is important. Remember that while we don't have to have all the answers, it's critical to start the conversation anyway. Feel free to lean on any of the classroom resources above – you know your child best and what will be the "right fit" for guiding discussions in your home.

Encouraging children to be thoughtful, curious, and compassionate is a great place to begin the conversation. A [simple thinking routine](#) designed for early childhood classrooms can be used at home to encourage children to name what they see, share what they think about it and what it makes them wonder.

Be prepared for related conversations that might emerge. For example, as the news and media highlight racial undertones of the incidents at the Capitol, consider how you might [approach this topic](#) with your children. Children might notice a lack of COVID-safe practices and be worried or confused. There are lots of resources for how to [talk about COVID-19 with children](#) – lean on the experts and don't hesitate to say, "I'm not sure – let's look into that together."

For easy reference, we have uploaded the PED's political speech memo to our website. This memo was previously distributed to Superintendents and Charter School Leaders and [can be accessed here](#).

Please keep in mind that the references herein have not gone through a formal instructional materials review but are a quick compilation of resources readily available. We encourage everyone to utilize their personal and professional discretion and – as always – take into consideration local context in relationship to the needs of students and community, and choose resources accordingly.

The Public Education Department also wishes to extend our heartfelt solidarity to the students, teachers, families, and school staff of Washington, D.C., as these horrific events unfolded in their back yard. The District of Columbia Public Schools social studies department has shared this [resource for educators](#); we are grateful for their partnership at this time. We stand alongside all educators and community members who have shown up with courage, conviction, and compassion for themselves, their students, and their families this week and always.