

May 25, 2022

Dear Wardlaw+Hartridge Parents,

We are all shaken and grieving from the news of the school shooting in Texas that took the lives of 19 students and two teachers, students and teachers just like ours. It comes on the heels of the abhorrent massacre in Buffalo two weeks ago. For many years now, our children have encountered news like this that frightens them and lingers in their minds, even if they do not always show it.

Children look naturally to the adults in their lives to help them make sense of such violence, and they need to be able to share their questions and concerns and be reassured. From a statistical point of view, their school days are very safe, but too often they have seen reasons to question their safety. The division heads will be sending you letters today with resources about how to approach and frame such conversations in ways that can provide reassurance.

Children look also to their teachers, and we work together to address their needs. One of the important roles our administrators fulfill is to ensure that teachers are supported and prepared and have access to any guidance they need in responding to their students' needs. In that same vein, I advise our parents to take the time to sort through their thoughts and emotions so that they can be calm and well-prepared. You may feel scared, angry, helpless, sad, or even numb. It is useful to identify and name your emotions, as this act can move you from alarm to a calmer state. It is also useful to think about what actions in your life bring you a sense of peace, and engage in those actions.

I'd like to share with you a poem that is among my favorites, which is one I also shared with our faculty and staff this morning. The poem came to mind early this morning when I was walking my dog and we encountered two ducks floating peacefully. It is by Wendell Berry.

The Peace of Wild Things

When despair for the world grows in me
and I wake in the night at the least sound
in fear of what my life and my children's lives may be,
I go and lie down where the wood drake
rests in his beauty on the water, and the great heron feeds.
I come into the peace of wild things
who do not tax their lives with forethought
of grief. I come into the presence of still water.
And I feel above me the day-blind stars
waiting with their light. For a time
I rest in the grace of the world, and am free.



A WORLD-CHANGING PREP SCHOOL SINCE 1882

We have been in contact with the Edison Police Department and have assurances of additional police presence on campus. We welcome that, though we also know our true safety resides chiefly in our engagement with one another in a close and caring community. If your child is struggling with this event, or any future event, please share your concerns with us and seek our help in providing support.

With best regards,
Andy Webster
Head of School