

Dear Colleagues,

Yesterday, as a nation, we held our breath to see how others would respond to the most divisive presidential election in our lifetimes. We can be proud that the students, teachers and staff of San Diego Unified responded to those results with grace and compassion. We gathered ourselves in classrooms and conference rooms and pledged to support one another and the students we serve. It is up to all of us to continue building on that response in the time ahead.

We work every day to create positive school climates and cultures where everyone is respected and seen as a valued member of the school community. We acknowledge that there may be students feeling vulnerable as a result of the election. We also have community members who are celebrating the results. No matter your perspective, it is important for us to affirm as staff, that no election result will ever change our values and commitment to each and every student. Our values will always be peace, tolerance and respect for multiple perspectives.

Our School Board and staff have set a wonderful example by encouraging us to use the National Election as a chance to teach civility and civil discourse. Now is the time to reaffirm this commitment. We will not hide from conflicts and disagreements; rather we will use this opportunity to teach our students to peacefully work through conflict. Our students are looking to the adults for modeling and guidance during this time.

Some of our students may be worrying that friends, family, or loved ones are at risk of being harmed. Our ability to provide the safe environments to voice these fears will help both the individual students who are worried and will help create safer schools for all students we serve.

San Diego Unified has taken a leadership role in being proactive and providing support options for our students in dealing with times of conflict. If students or staff need additional support encourage them to seek support from staff (administrators, teachers, school counselors, nurses), family or a trusted adult.

The following strategies are designed to help teachers and staff provide students with the necessary support – although each should be adapted to suit the age of the children involved.

- Allow students to talk about their feelings, acknowledge their concerns, and reassure students that they are safe.
- Remind students that schools are safe places. Give them examples of how we maintain safety at all of our schools – the rules and procedures we follow each day.
- Review classroom rules and expectations for responsible citizenship.

- Keep students focused in the present moment and the work for that particular day.
- Watch for students who do not express their concerns verbally. Remain calm and reassuring should they express impatience, anger, or regressive behaviors.
- Take advantage of school resources if students do not seem to be coping well. Connect with your school counselor, psychologist and/or nurse for classroom support, or to work with students who may need individual support.

We should also remind students they are living in a caring community. The people of San Diego and California went out yesterday and took concrete actions to improve children's lives.

- We live in a State where schools are valued and voters yesterday passed Prop 51 and 55 to create new educational opportunities for children.
- We live in a state where cultural diversity is valued, and millions of people came out yesterday to support teaching different languages in our schools through Prop 58.
- We live in a City where children led a campaign to save a high school in danger of being closed, and voters listened to the children by passing Prop I to save San Diego High.
- We live in a school district where leaders who stand up for tolerance are supported, and every member of the school board facing election yesterday was re-elected.

Let's be reminded that everyone has a community of support that is standing ready to guide them through the transitioning world we live in. Challenging times bring about opportunities for growth and positive outcomes. They allow us to enter into dialogue with our children regarding the importance of their role as the future leaders of the country.

Unlike almost any other profession imaginable, teaching is one that calls on us every day to think about our legacy. We know as teachers we are educating not only the children in front of us, but their children and grandchildren to follow. In the same way, we are building a legacy of caring and compassion as a school community through the institutions we create – the restorative justice approaches and our integrated student supports.

Our country is similarly filled with strong and enduring institutions. We have more than enough capacity to survive any one dramatic national event. As we move forward together, let's focus on what makes us strong as a nation and a school community. After all, nothing ever stands still, and it is up to each of us every day to decide whether we keep moving forward or allow ourselves to stand still. San Diego Unified School District is committed to keep moving forward.

As we head into this Veterans Day with our minds on their national service, we hope you and your families enjoy a peaceful extended weekend.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Cindy Marten in cursive script.

Cindy Marten
Superintendent

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Lindsay Burningham in cursive script.

Lindsay Burningham
President, SDEA