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Every Day Is a Classroom for Our Children

Dear Parent Leaders,

Current abrasive tensions in politics and further divides across race and class and gender pave the way for new generational challenges. Our children are watching. They watch how we behave and want to know how they should behave-- today, tomorrow and next month. They want to know what to expect and what we will do. They note our every word and heartfelt communications.

As parent leaders, we will always model love, community caring and democratic values. This is a time, regardless of which candidate we voted for and our response to the outcomes, that we should very intentionally model these behaviors. Every day is a classroom for our children and these days the classroom is an open one, with 24 hour lessons.

After 9/11, children and youth were assured protection and care, with a deep bellow of patriotism and democracy. After Katrina, some children and youth wondered if this protection was equally available, based on skin color. In this last decade, shootings have become no surprise in the neighborhood and schoolhouse, with more small tombstones than the earth imagines.

These critical events and expectations have led to unnerving behavior. 1) Children are concerned that adults are not fully in control and are not protecting them; 2) The boundaries between different types of threats are blurring; 3) Mistrust of government has deepened; 4) Students question adult values; 5) Connection is longed for, and often missing.

Yet, students are ahead of adults on the joys of diversity. They live resiliently with opposites and contradictions. To them our world is unsafe, violent, hateful and yet good. This is a healthy sign in a complex time.

PLTI leaders need to model how we can get along, across different cultures, race, education level, and ideas. This is a time when our leadership needs to shine loud and with contagion. Let us:

- Highlight community caring, freedom, core values of respect and dignity.
- Practice democracy and protect it.
- Lead hope.
- Teach tolerance; begin with “We”.
- Honor one another for good work and deeds
- Build community leaders.
- Have high expectations for self, of family and of community.
- Practice and demand safety.
- Put fear aside and model connection.
- Follow our children’s joy of diversity.

Our children need to know we will protect them to our highest abilities. They need to see our community caring and deep regard for civil behavior. Parent leaders are at a critical threshold and will surely model the deepest connection and dignity across natural and unnatural boundaries. The magic of the unexpected is with us like a blanket of sand and sky. Shake it out.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Elaine", with a long, sweeping horizontal line extending to the right.

Elaine Zimmerman, Executive Director

November 17, 2016