



OFFICE OF THE ACTING SUPERINTENDENT  
Dr. Charles McKay

Dear Vernon Community,

In the past few days Glen Meadow Middle School has been the subject of much discussion locally and regionally because of lessons taught in our school. The subject has been very much driven by an inflammatory article in the NJ Herald initiated by a parent who was unhappy with the lesson and wanted something done about it. The issue at hand was the reading at the end of the lesson of a fictional story about a young man who is bullied after 9-11 because he is a Muslim. This resource, originated by the National Council for the Social Studies, advocates for tolerance and tries to teach the students the results of bullying. When considering the issue of the timing - of incorporating this particular story into a classroom lesson - it is essential to understand that this lesson and others taught that day incorporated the events surrounding 9-11 in an historical perspective - most importantly, the focus of the lesson was the tragic events of that day and of the national mourning that followed.

It is inaccurate to say that the reading of this story was the sole learning activity of a classroom lesson on 9-11-18. In fact, there were discussions in class with children who were born after the events with our teachers who put the historical events first with priority towards the terrible sacrifice that Americans made on that awful day. To each and everyone of our Social Studies teachers goes credit and respect as they find themselves in the liminal space in American history between generational groups who either have or have not experienced 9-11. The events of the day cause a personal reaction in our teachers, our parents in the community and all adults, because we experienced the events of 9-11 first hand; we remember where we were on that fateful day. The loss was and is visceral. However, to our children, this is now a history lesson. These are extremely difficult lessons to teach and our teachers and administrators, who care for children every day, have consulted national and state organizations, including the National Council for the Social Studies, the New Jersey Commission for Holocaust Education, and the 9-11 Memorial & Museum. These resources have given us guidance and offered such stories, as the one that has recently caused concern, as ways of teaching lessons about the tragedy.

As a school district we have heard the responses from the community. It is our hope that this letter reassures everyone that our educational community is listening and that we will learn from this experience. We want to assure you that each and every day we will care for your children in a safe, respectful and responsible learning environment and we will continue to do our very best with every lesson.

Sincerely,

Charles McKay