

Dear Simcoe County District School Board Staff & Families,

We are all shocked and saddened by the tragic events that have transpired in Ottawa. Our thoughts are with all those affected, and we acknowledge the bravery of emergency personnel who reacted immediately to protect the community.

Although events like this are extremely rare, we recognize the impact they can have on each of us—our children, staff, families and friends. Individuals react to situations like this in various ways. We may feel sadness, grief, helplessness, anxiety and anger. Whatever you feel is okay.

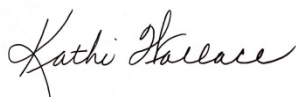
Our mental health team has prepared some tips to help you support children at this time:

- Be honest about information you share with your child, but focus on the basics and avoid sharing unnecessary details. If your child is not focused on the tragedy, do not dwell on it. Be available to answer questions to the best of your ability. Young children may not be able to express themselves verbally. Pay attention to changes in their behaviour or social interactions.
- Try to avoid having detailed adult conversations regarding the tragedy in front of children. Recognize though that your child may hear about this event from friends, the media or through social media and avoiding the topic could cause your child to feel it's too horrible to discuss, which can increase fear levels.
- Limit their exposure to media coverage. Images of a crisis can become overwhelming, especially if watched repetitively. Young children in particular may not be able to distinguish between images on television and their personal reality. Older children may choose to watch the news—be available to discuss what they see and to help put it into perspective.
- Recognize that children may become concerned that something bad will happen to themselves, family or friends. Explain that safety measures are in place and reassure them that you and other adults will take care of them and each other.
- Maintain normal family routines as much as possible. Routine family activities, classes and friends can help children feel more secure.
- Be aware of your own needs. Don't ignore your own feelings of anxiety, grief and anger. Talking to friends, family members, faith leaders and mental health counsellors can help. Let your children know you are sad. You will be better able to support them if you can express your own emotions in a productive manner.

As always, our priority is the safety and well-being of each of our students—your children. This is a responsibility we take very seriously. It's important for you to know help is available through our schools and community agencies. If you are concerned about your child or feel he or she needs additional support, please contact your principal or vice-principal.

Thank you for supporting our students and each other.

Sincerely,



Director of Education