

• Leniency during times of crisis is essential to maintain focus and interest in classes

# EDITORIAL

EL GATO • FRIDAY, JANUARY 22, 2021 • LOS GATOS HIGH SCHOOL • WWW.ELGATONEWS.COM

## Teachers need to address relevant issues during class

by **Alaina Fox, Lexi Kupor, and Maddie Dewhirst**  
*Editor-in-Chief, Public Relations Manager, and National/World Editor*

In times of collective crisis, drastic emotional and psychological effects quickly circulate and amplify throughout communities. Processing tangles of emotions, opinions, and perspectives quickly becomes a daily trial in addition to the expected hurdles of everyday life. Thus, leniency towards students following an unprecedented calamity is essential for a good classroom environment.

Perhaps the most extreme example of this necessity surfaces after we viewed this month's egregious violence in the U.S. Capitol. Witnessing such carnage, distress, and animosity takes a substantial toll on viewers. Remaining focused on school material, often without any discussion of the current circumstances during class time, becomes increasingly difficult and unrealistic to expect of students and faculty alike.

While many teachers may believe that ignoring outside hostility creates a more protected learning refuge, research proves the contrary. The Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching upholds the idea that "anxieties students — and teachers — bring into the classroom in response to a crisis can affect student learning, as documented by psychological, cognitive, and neuroscience research." When these anxieties go unaddressed, negative effects threaten "everyone's well-being — personal and academic" and can reduce working memory capacity essential to learning, processing, and comprehending.

Studies conducted by cognitive psychologists conclude that something is always better than nothing. Simply requesting a moment of

silence at the start of class can assist in relieving tension, while researchers contend that "the least helpful and even most problematic responses are a 'lack of response' and 'acknowledging that [the crisis] had occurred and saying that the class needs to go on with no mention of opportunities for review or extra help.'" While teachers may believe that their decision to avoid addressing contemporary issues assists students in separating emotion from logic, in reality, this only exacerbates emotional disturbance. Drawing attention to the common struggles faced within a community crafts a more empathetic, caring, and accepting learning environment.

LGHS students cope with such intense news using strategies unique to each individual, and allowing them the time and space to process accordingly is essential to mental development and focus. Many students feel this way about current events.

Senior **Kevin Miller** agrees that leniency from teachers in times of distress is paramount when events "[make] people question their stability... they start worrying about the state of their country rather than their school work, and I think we should allow them some time to grieve."

Likewise, senior **Maya Ginsburg** emphasizes the fact that, although much of the recent political turmoil occurred on the other side of the nation, tensions and divisions have clearly manifested in Los Gatos through various protests and public demonstrations. Multiple pro-Trump rallies on Santa Cruz Avenue in the past month resulted in physical violence and, in some occurrences, police intervention.

It becomes increasingly challenging to separate emotional stress from academic obligations when national politics seep into the local sphere; indeed, these occurrences only emphasize the importance of interpreting, analyzing, and discussing these events openly in the classroom. "Students are expected to keep attending school, as well as teachers teach, but it's clear that their minds are elsewhere," Ginsburg described.

Instead of sweeping the news to the side, LGHS faculty can take advantage of the unique opportunity to relate current events to course material. For example, history teacher **Christie Pacheco** dedicated her AP U.S. Government and Politics class the day following the U.S. Capitol riots to discussing

the attack. She reasoned, "You can't just go on with class... I really wanted to hold space for kids that had feelings about [the events] and wanted to talk about it, because I don't think it's good to just pretend like things don't happen."

Although Pacheco acknowledged that the subject matter is sensitive and difficult to talk about, she felt that as a history teacher, she "[had] a responsibility" to address it in class. For classes less directly connected to the topic, she expressed that she sympathized with teachers who were "playing it safe" by eschewing discussion of political news completely. However, she also recognizes the value in at least briefly "acknowledg[ing] it [to] allow kids to process it... when people just... go on with their day without really acknowledging some serious events, it... makes it [seem] not important."

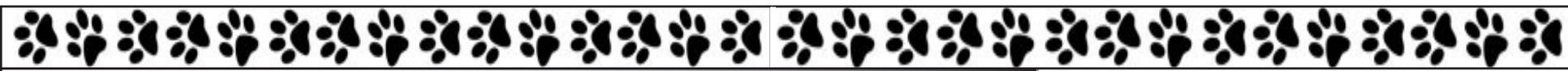
Even for faculty not teaching social studies courses, acknowledging students' stress, confusion, and upset allows adolescents to process their emotions and assists in establishing an inclusive, developmental environment. Employing strategies such as brief moments of reflection, elaborative writing prompts, respectful discussion, or political education can positively impact students bombarded with conflicting information and outlooks.

Additionally, remaining lenient and understanding when it comes to assignments, exams, and the keenness of mental processing is a common courtesy during times of widespread consternation. Simply put, when a community encounters the implications of unprecedented adversity, unprecedented response is warranted.

(Sources: Vanderbilt University Center for Teaching, Pod Network)



B. Gibson



### January/February

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
			Electives Fair			
31	1	2	3	4	5	6
	First day of Black History Month	Groundhog Day				
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
					Lunar New Year End of First Grading Period	
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
Valentine's Day	President's Day February Break	February Break	Ash Wednesday February Break	February Break	February Break	
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
			El Gato/ Yearbook applicaton due			

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