

### From the Founding Director

If we could, we would be outstretching our arms and embracing each other over these digital miles. We are sharing in your shock and sadness over the events in Orlando and the ripple of families and friends affected. Too many lives cut short on their journey and many others injured both physically and emotionally. It feels impossible to register.

I tend to believe that no child is born with hate, no one enters the world set to commit atrocities. Events like these remind us that the work we do as educators is not just academic. College and career is not our end goal, instead we are shaping the lives, world view, and inner strength of children. Children who will grow into adults.

We have the opportunity, daily, to shape strength or fear, to respond to or miss a call for help, to talk or to listen. Every classroom we step into is an opportunity to build a better, more empathetic, more aware world. The decision to teach inclusively, to view our work through a social justice lens, to speak out against hate speech, and to take up challenging conversations are no longer an optional add-on to our curriculum.

Instead, the beauty of our global society brings the opportunity and responsibility of learning about one another and finding our common humanity. As Mother Teresa wrote, “If we have no peace, it is because we have forgotten that we belong to each other.”

Teaching Tolerance’s Critical Practices for Anti-bias Education is an incredibly robust tool-kit for strategies and approaches: [http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/PDA%20Critical%20Practices\\_0.pdf](http://www.tolerance.org/sites/default/files/general/PDA%20Critical%20Practices_0.pdf) I highly recommend it and other resources from this organization.

We stand together with the LGBT community, family, allies, and friends, in Orlando and around the world. You have a welcome home with us, just as you are. You are loved.

We stand together with the Muslim community in Orlando and around the world. During this celebratory time of Ramadan, as you reflect on family, faith, and community, know you have a welcome home with us. You are loved.

We stand together with the first responders and the many civilians that braved their lives to save others last night, and every night. You run towards danger, caring for a collective humanity. You have a welcome home with us. You are loved.

For those of you returning to classrooms tomorrow or at home for the summer with your children: I find these suggestions for talking about tragedy with different age groups to be instructive: <http://www.today.com/parents/how-talk-children-about-shootings-age-age-guide-t59626>

Sending our love. Thank you for all you do to shape a brighter future.



Christopher Lehman, Founding Director