

November 19, 2023

Subject: Special Schedule

Dear Upper School community,

At ECFS we take pride in our diversity and our sense of community. As the Israel-Hamas War continues, it is even more critical that we come together as a community to extend our support, lift each other up, and acknowledge the fear and anxiety that many members of our community are experiencing.

The DEI team and Upper School leadership have been working on a plan to foster greater understanding of the Middle East and the diverse cultures and religions that shape the lives of so many in our community. The goal of this plan is for us to engage in productive and meaningful conversations that allow all members of the community to feel heard and seen, without creating harm or trauma.

Tomorrow, **Monday, November 20th**, we will launch the first steps of this plan with a special assembly with Dr. Laura Shaw Frank. Dr. Frank will discuss the complex factors contributing to the war and explain what a ceasefire might conceptually connote to many in the Jewish community.

Dr. Frank serves as the Director of American Jewish Commission's (AJC) William Petschek Contemporary Jewish Life Department. She has been working with the Jewish Affinity parent group and has more than 17 years as an educator. Dr. Frank holds a PhD in Jewish history from University of Maryland, College Park and undergraduate and law degrees from Columbia University.

Following the assembly, we anticipate that students may want to unpack their emotions and ideas about what they have heard and we have invited Morris Ervin to facilitate this. Mr. Ervin is an educator, speaker, coach, restorative justice leader, and youth development professional who has provided mentoring, personal development, mindfulness, and interpersonal communication through leadership seminars, and community workshops for 20 years. Mr. Ervin will ground students in norms that remind them to:

- listen actively;
- respect others when they are talking;
- speak from their own experience rather than generalizing (“I” instead of “they,” “we,” and “you”);

- not be afraid to respectfully challenge one another by asking questions;
- refrain from personal attacks;
- focus on ideas.

On **Tuesday, November 21st**, Jason Craige Harris will work with the Affinity group faculty and student leaders on facilitating effective cross-cultural conversations. As a researcher and educator, Mr. Harris has expertise in the psychology of leadership; the social sciences of identity, group dynamics, and inter-group dialogue; inclusion strategies; conflict transformation; and restorative justice. This session will take place from 2:00 pm - 3:30 pm in the Student Commons.

On **Thursday, December 7th**, We will have speakers join us to explore the intergenerational wounds caused by systems of injustice and violence, their personal and collective impact, and what healing can look like. The speaker's conversation will directly address why these topics matter for schools who seek to create an environment of greater dignity and belonging for all.

Before winter break, other speakers will join us to discuss the rise in incidents of antisemitism and Islamophobia.

We have a unique and special community and ask that everyone keep an open mind and an open heart as we begin these conversations.

[Click here to see the special schedule for Monday, November 20th](#)

Students, click [here](#) to sign up for one of the three sessions with Ervin Morris. Maximum number of students in each session is 25 to permit small-group conversations. This will not be your only opportunity to meet with Mr. Ervin and he will join us again for future conversations.

Affinity group faculty and student leaders, click [here](#) to sign up for the session with Jason Harris on Tuesday, November 21st.

We thank you for your ongoing support.

Warmly,

Dr. Stacey Bobo, Upper School Principal

Keeniun Brumskill, Executive Director of Community and Social Impact