

Dear Parents/Caregivers,

As part of our learning about literacy and mental health, we have been using a series titled *Well Aware* that combines engaging texts written by award-winning Canadian authors with lessons that connect to strategies students can use on a daily basis to manage stressful situations.

One of these texts, titled *Not Guilty*, tells the story of a boy who immigrates to Canada with his family to escape the Iraq War. The boy copes with the challenge of adjusting to a new school by finally making two friends in his class. When the media covers attacks by Muslim terrorists, the boy experiences prejudice from people who assume that he and his family support the attacks because they are Muslim. He fears that he will lose his new friends, thinking that they, too, will react to him with prejudice after the terrorist attacks. When he returns to school, he is relieved to find that his friends still see him as an individual and do not show any prejudice towards him.

As students work with the text, they explore the issues of stereotypes and prejudice. They learn about the importance of seeing people as individuals and the harm that can be done by applying negative stereotypes to people and making judgments about them that are not based on their individual characters.

Recognizing and valuing cultural heritage contributes to a person's sense of identity and sense of well-being. To help your child understand and value his or her cultural heritage, you could

- talk about your family's cultural background
- point out ways in which your family life reflects your cultural heritage (for example, foods, traditions, celebrations, and customs)
- explain what your cultural heritage means to you
- talk about how everyone has the right to be treated fairly

As part of our team, thank you for connecting with us concerning this important topic, and please feel free to contact me if you would like to discuss this work further.

Sincerely,