

Division of Student Support Services

CONNECTING THE DOTS

DR. TONJA M. WILLIAMS

Associate Superintendent's Message

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I hope that you will enjoy our December Newsletter!!

The month of December brings with it a season of gratitude! At all levels within the Division of Student Support Services, our staff is taking time to express gratitude and to provide our students, parents, and staff with multiple opportunities to engage in self-reflective, social and emotional expressions of gratitude. Such opportunities may be seen during the daily Social Emotional Circle time for which all of our Pre K through grade 12 students are involved. During these times students participate in thoughtful, evidence-based deep and meaningful reflective discussions.



There is a body of research that has studied the benefits of gratitude. While gratitude is an expression of thanks which may seem unidirectional, it is actually equally beneficial to the individual receiving the expression of thanks as it is to the person offering it. Ultimately gratitude leads to a more positive mindset and develops empathy. Both are significant aspects in student well-being.

“Gratitude improves interpersonal relationships at home and work. The connection between gratitude and happiness is multi-dimensional. Expressing gratitude not only to others but also to ourselves, induces positive emotions, primarily happiness. By producing feelings of pleasure and contentment, gratitude impacts on our overall health and well-being as well. (M. Chowdhury, 2020).

I encourage each of us to take some time to reflect and express gratitude. As a learning community we are going through a difficult time. Expressing those things that we are thankful for helps all of our well-being!

Thank you,
Dr. Tonja M. Williams

CONNECTING THE DOTS



Dr. Sharon Brown, Assistant Superintendent of Student Support Services

As we continue to connect the dots, it is our hope that you will find this month's newsletter filled with a plethora of valuable information that can be used as a resource for yourself or families with whom you work.

Each month our Division will feature a Buffalo Public School in the School Spotlight or BPS student in the Student Corner. Should you have an exciting or encouraging story to share, please contact Dr. Sharon Brown at sebrown@buffaloschools.org

Finally, please contact a team leader on the following page for questions or NEW ideas. We look forward to connecting with you!

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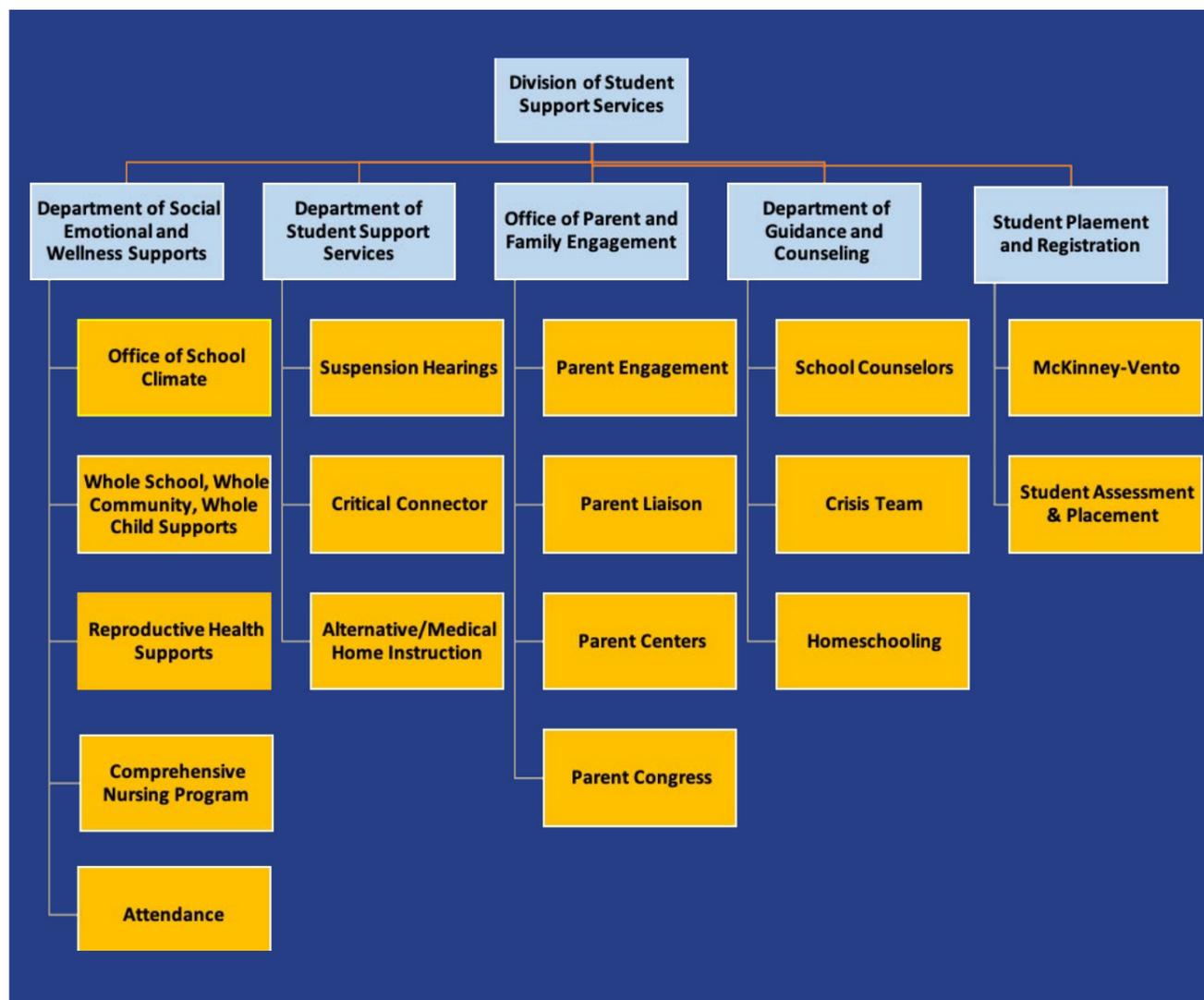
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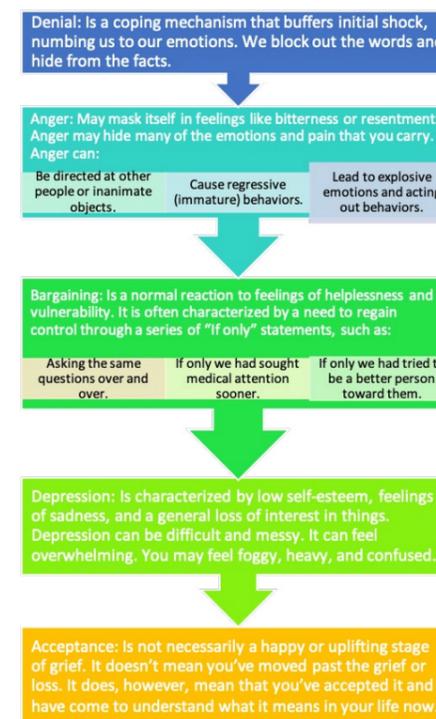
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Department of Student Support Guidance and Counseling

Stages of Grief and Loss

From the Buffalo Public Schools Crisis Prevention & Response Team



During this global pandemic, many people are experiencing different types of losses. Whether it be the death of a loved one, loss of connection due to social isolation, or economic hardship, there has been an uprooting from the normalcy of the day to day routine. You may even identify with experiencing the stages of grief and loss. These stages may not be experienced at the same level of intensity or in the sequence depicted, but are all very important landmarks on the road to resiliency.

Here are some helpful tips to keep in mind when coping in this unusual time:

Give yourself permission to grieve. Some days you can handle the feelings that surface, and some days you may "fall apart". These "ups and downs" are a natural reaction to loss.

Tell people what you need. People may avoid you because they are afraid that they will say the wrong thing. When you let others know what you need, they are usually grateful and relieved.

Be good to yourself. Get the rest you need, balanced with regular exercise and a good diet. You may not feel motivated to do these things now, but they are crucial to your physical and mental well-being.

"You are doing the best you can do right now. Stop beating yourself up."
~ Steven Aitchison

Finding Money for College

Maureen England & Kathy Sciolino

Longtime BPS School Counselors serving as College and Career Readiness Coordinators, Maureen England and Kathy Sciolino, in conjunction with the Office of Parent and Family Engagement continued their College Process Presentation Series entitled "How to Find Money for College". The recorded presentation, along with the first in the series, "The College Application Process" can be found at <https://www.facebook.com/BPS-ParentCenters/videos/>

Maureen and Kathy discuss the various components of Financial Aid, including Federal Student Aid (FAFSA), NY State Student Aid (TAP), Say Yes to Education Scholarships, Student Aid direct from colleges, as well as scholarships from other sources. They note the links to Financial Aid on the BPS website www.buffaloschools.org can be found both under the "Find it Fast" section and also on the Department of Guidance web pages.

Department of Student Placement & Registration

From the Office of McKinney Vento

The McKinney-Vento Act is a federal law designed to provide school stability and supports for youth/families living in temporary housing which lacks a "fixed, adequate, and regular" nighttime residence. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, the McKinney-Vento staff at Central Registration have worked tirelessly to ensure students who are temporarily housed continue to strive academically during these uncharted times. To assist families with eliminating the heightened educational and social/emotional challenges they may be facing, the staff have dedicated their time and resources by:

- Connecting and communicating with families daily using Check-In & Check-Out practices.
- Delivering book bags filled with school supplies, health care products, and gently used clothes and other items to homes and shelters.
- Dropping off and picking up registration packets to shelters and families

to ensure students are immediately enrolled in school.

- Linking and referring students/families to BPS and community resources, such as technology support for remote learning, meal distribution sites, tutoring, Department of Social Services (DDS) and Saturday Academy events.

The talented Buffalo Public Schools McKinney-Vento staff consist of: Director Kelli Daniels, Supervisor Hoa Mai, and Community Education Leaders Marva Brown and Vonnice Smith. For questions or family referrals, please call (716) 816-3717, extension 3 or via email at MV@buffaloschools.org.



Department of Social Emotional and Wellness Supports

During October's Bullying Prevention Awareness month, five schools prepared for Town Halls on November 10th and November 13th respectively. These schools sought student voice and input on the topic of bullying. Two elementary schools, Dr. Antonia Pantoja Community School and Lorraine Elementary, in collaboration with the Division of Student Support Services and Western New York United Against Drug and Alcohol Abuse received valuable information from el-

ementary students' perspectives - that most of the bullying is originating from online gaming. During the High School Town Hall, Lewis J. Bennett School of Innovative Technology, Burgard High School and Research Lab for Bioinformatics students shared the definition of bullying saying that cyberbullying is particularly dangerous given the anonymity and how quickly online activities spread. Students encouraged their peers to be upstanders instead of being

passive bystanders to a bullying situation. Tremendous kudos to our students for identifying major sources of bullying and working toward solutions!



Acting Inter-High President, Tameisha Walker, was sworn in as the student representative on the BPS Board of Education. Given her background in student leadership, Inter-High Student Council, and activism in general, she will be an outspoken voice on the BOE to represent her fellow classmates from Inter-High Student Council and beyond.



Successful roll out of Collective Care Café for staff! BPS Staff please join us for our December dates (see flyer) and be on the lookout for additional dates for BPS families and community partners.



"Emotions influence every action we take. So the more we are aware of our feelings, the more we gain conscious control over our lives." ~ Jessica Moore

Office of Parent & Family Engagement



There has never been a time in education when parent engagement has been as critical as it is right now. Parent, school, and community partnerships are paramount to providing essential family resources to support student success.

On Monday, November 30th at 5:30 p.m., leaders of the BPS Parent Congress delivered a united message of **Building and Engaging Together**. Their presentation sought to demonstrate and en-

courage collective community building and engagement. Each group provided a lens into its organization by sharing its mission, priorities, and details for joining. These passionate advocates also offered options and opportunities for individuals to take action to support students and families.

If you'd like to learn more information about each group or are interested in your group being considered for Parent Congress, please click here [BPS Parent Congress](#).

If you missed the **Building and Engaging Together** live broadcast, the presentation may be viewed here [BPS Parent Centers Facebook](#).

The Office of Parent and Family Engagement and Say Yes Parent Center team needs your help to meet our goal of reaching 5,000 BPS Parent Centers Facebook followers by 2021! Since the start of virtual programming in March, our followership has increased by well over 300 percent. On the page you'll find daily resources for parents and caregivers, live weekly virtual programs, and previously recorded Teams and Zoom parent trainings. The BPS Parent Centers Facebook page is also the space where parents and caregivers may ask questions and request additional parent programming. If you have not done so already, please FOLLOW our page and request that your entire school community do the same. To do so, access BPS Parent Centers Facebook page, click the "..." button, and then click "FOLLOW". Actively following the page will maintain our posts in your News Feed and enable you to share to your school/department pages. Thank you!



Department of Student Support Services - Pupil Personnel

NYS Mentoring making Virtual Connections!



The New York State Mentoring Program (NYSMP) is a statewide provider of mentoring program services and school-based mentoring models. The NYSMP has provided mentor training, screening,

activities, and planned sessions for students, free of charge.

Marva J. Daniel Futures Preparatory Schools #37 and Hamlin Park Claude & Ouida Clapp Academy School #74 have already kicked off their programs. Mentors are recruited from the Canisius College Public Safety Department, University of Buffalo students and mentors from other educational institutions in the surrounding community.

Melinda Sanderson, Upstate Director has been meeting with principals and central office staff to make

more connections. She can be contacted at (646)565-7676 and melinda.sanderson@ocfc.ny.gov.

You may also contact Buffalo Public Schools Supervisor, Ginna Wilson at ginna.wilson@buffalo-schools.org



"Our chief want in life is somebody who will make us do what we can." – Ralph Waldo Emerson

EAST HIGH SCHOOL SPOTLIGHT One of many Buffalo Public Schools that "connect the dots" for families daily!

BY GINNA E. WILSON
DECEMBER 2020

I had the privilege to interview Principal Adriann Johnson-Cofield about the hard work she and her team are doing at East Community High School, including the comprehensive and beneficial resource link that was created to support families. Wow! I never knew the school had such an abundance of resources. Throughout the interview Principal Johnson-Cofield's exuded passion for her students, families and made evident the need for mental health. Here are a few highlights from our dialogue:



Adriann Johnson-Cofield, Principal of East High School

Interviewer: What motivated you and your team to create a resource link?

Principal Johnson-Cofield: We initially met with Associate Superintendent for School Leadership Toiya Wilson. During the COVID pandemic, we experienced many families who are struggling for necessary resources. Considering that families have had limited access to the building, we have been extremely creative. We created a resource link that families can access from home. The District is looking to expand this link to all

devices to students in need. We have people working on behalf of the families, including my two social workers and school psychologist along with support from SAY YES and community partners like BEST SELF. My administrative team meet weekly to discuss data on how to support students.

Interviewer: Can resources be added to the link? How can it be accessed?

Principal Johnson-Cofield: We are looking to share this information on the District website. My team canvassed the resources that were available in the community. I am also working with my central office colleagues for ways to share and connect all students and families within the District.

schools. The link is broken down by zones. Families may access food bank information, mental health resources and even where to go for immunizations.

Interviewer: Who can access the resources?

Principal Johnson-Cofield: Anyone, many of the resources are live. Applications can be accessed and completed via the provided link. The information is accurate and current. It's a free service.

Interviewer: How involved is your staff with this work?

Principal Johnson-Cofield: We are a team. I have staff that will deliver food and provide

DIVISION OF STUDENT SUPPORT SERVICES UPCOMING EVENTS

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL EMOTIONAL and WELLNESS SUPPORTS

- “Establish Routines at Home” presentation conducted in conjunction with the Office of Parent and Family Engagement’s Virtual Parent Center programming.
- The deadline to submit updated vaccinations has been extended until **December 11, 2020**. After this date, students will be excluded from academic instruction whether in-person or virtual.
- DASA Co-Coordinators will be trained throughout the month of December. Previously the school building Principal served as the DASA coordinator, this year an additional coordinator has been designated by the Principal to fulfil the recommendations made by the Anti-Bullying Task Force to have at least two DASA coordinators per school.
- December Collective Care Café Dates Scheduled (See Flyer in the Social Emotional and Wellness Support Section)