



# BUFFALO PUBLIC SCHOOLS

## Office of the Superintendent

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### **Dr. Tonja M. Williams Interim Superintendent of Schools**

Sunday May 15, 2022

Dear BPS Staff and Families,

We are all saddened by the senseless mass shooting that took place yesterday at Tops Supermarket. Our entire community will be forever impacted by this tragedy, which resulted in the loss of ten lives and three additional persons who were injured. We have learned that several of the victims are related to students and staff in our BPS community. There were also countless witnesses who are traumatized and who are directly connected to our students and staff. In addition, the magnitude of news and social media outlets that continue covering this tragedy, make it likely that most all, including our youngest learners have heard conversations and may have even seen some very explicit, disturbing photos of yesterday's events.

We are all beyond devastated and are deeply grieving for the families and for our community. However, as our Mayor stated yesterday, the City of Buffalo is known as the City of Good Neighbors. It is necessary for us to begin our healing process, and WE WILL!! We are grateful for the bravery of the countless heroes and first responders who took immediate action to protect and save lives.

This is a time for healing for our entire school community. We must come together to support one another. We will lean on each other and we will be BPS Strong! Healing will be an on-going process. We must work together and demonstrate sensitivity, openness, and genuine care as we try to make sense of this horrific act of hate and evil.

Flags at all BPS schools will be flown at half-mast, for ten school days, in a show of respect and solidarity for the loss of each life. I am requesting that principals begin the day tomorrow with Circles' meetings in all classrooms. Principals will provide safe spaces, in each school, for students and staff to speak with our trained counselors, psychologists, and social workers, if needed. Our Crisis Team will be reaching out to families who were directly impacted to provide supports. We will partner with Restorative Justice and mental health agencies to be present at schools where principals request such support.

Families are encouraged to avail themselves to community counseling today and Monday at Johnnie B. Wiley Center located at 1100 Jefferson Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14208 from 9:00 am - 9:00 pm.

Let us pray for each of the victims, their families, and be a support for one another as never before!

Sincerely,

*Dr. Tonja M. Williams*

Dr. Tonja M. Williams, Interim Superintendent

*"Putting Children and Families First to Ensure High Academic Achievement for All"*