



Binghamton High School

31 Main Street
Binghamton, NY 13905
(607) 762-8200

December 17, 2021

Dear Binghamton High School Families,

I want to first acknowledge the Binghamton High School staff for their quick response to helping keep our students safe through a fire and then through the fight that ensued outside. I truly believe that we have the best staff who always rise to the occasion. This building is better because of them.

The events that occurred on Wednesday were not proud moments for our Patriot community. A handful of students, and some community members, put our whole building in danger. We are working with the Binghamton Police Department to hold these individuals accountable to the fullest extent of the law. We will not tolerate what occurred, and it is not a fair representation of the amazing students that attend Binghamton High School.

As previously stated in my last communication to all of you, we have identified the individual who started the fire. Criminal charges are being pursued against that individual, as well as significant school consequences. All of the students who engaged in the altercation outside also face significant school consequences, including a Superintendent's hearing. Their actions caused an unsafe situation for other students who were appropriately and patiently waiting to re-enter the building. Additionally, we continue to investigate any other students who were in the bathroom when the fire occurred and will provide consequences for their actions. I want to be clear that we will not tolerate these behaviors. Consequences for such behaviors result in a change in location of where students are educated so they can receive the support they need.

There are many rumors flying around the community surrounding Wednesday's events. I want to provide clarity and be as transparent as possible about what occurred. Some news outlets have reported that there were guns and bats involved in the altercation; we have no evidence of either being present. We have also heard that the fire was set to intentionally get kids out of the building to fight. Again, we have no evidence of that occurring. Although to our students and staff, the incident outside felt like it lasted forever, our staff broke up the fight very quickly and the police were on the scene to clear all community members engaging in inappropriate behavior. Criminal charges are being filed against the community members involved in the incident.

The voices of our students and families must be heard as we make plans to move forward. We want to hear from you and your child about this incident, as well as general feelings about safety at Binghamton High School. We would ask students to please participate in a [Student ThoughtExchange](#) and parents to please participate in a [Parent ThoughtExchange](#). It is important to us that we hear and address all of your concerns so that we can develop the best

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possible plan to help re-introduce our students back into the building and move onto a productive and successful school year in 2022.

We recognize that many families feel that going remote is punishing the majority of students because of a few. While I recognize and appreciate that feeling, in the interest of safety, having students remain at home while faculty and staff work on updating building safety protocols was a necessary step.

The district has been actively engaged throughout this school year in both responding to incidents of violence, as well as, proactively putting measures in place. Additional cameras are being installed at the high school as well as updating many of our current cameras. There is an open line of communication with the Binghamton Police Department, who will be doing an audit of the interior and exterior of our school to evaluate which areas need to be improved. We also have a company coming to do a demonstration of advanced security screening technology for our main entrance. Finally, we are looking to add even more staff to monitor bathrooms and hallways.

I will announce more details about our plan for re-introducing students on Monday, Dec. 20, during a virtual Zoom webinar for families at 5:30 p.m. During that time, the high school administration team will present plans moving forward as well as answer any questions that arise from the ThoughtExchange. We will have the Q&A function available for families to ask questions. We hope that your questions will be answered through our presentation but if not, we will follow up with another communication home. <https://binghamtonschools-org.zoom.us/j/92246912281>

We have been meeting with staff over the past two days to look at all our procedures and protocols in the building, as well as the actions taken on Wednesday. We continue to reflect and make the necessary changes to ensure the safety of all. We recognize that this hasn't been an easy week for our students, but we are hopeful that after break you will see a dramatic improvement in the educational climate and safety of Binghamton High School.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Kevin J. Richman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Kevin" and last name "Richman" clearly legible.

Kevin J. Richman

Binghamton High School Principal

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