



Binghamton City School District

164 Hawley Street
PO Box 2126
Binghamton, NY 13902-2126
Phone: (607) 762-8100
Fax: (607) 762-8110

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Dear Binghamton Families,

With the beginning of a new school year comes the challenge of readjusting to school and routine. This year has presented even more significant challenges for students, as they are interacting with new students and reengaging with students who they may not have seen over the past 18 months. In some cases, these social issues have resulted in confrontations and disruptions to the school day.

We are proactive in creating safe and welcoming spaces in and outside our classrooms, through implementing respect agreements, using restorative classroom circles to build and repair relationships, and frequently touching base with students who need support. We also have measures in place to respond to safety issues. Each of the secondary buildings has an assigned School Resource Officer and BHS has six additional school safety officers. However, we have experienced an increase in student altercations at the middle school and high school levels over the past seven days, including public incidents of aggression during Friday night's football game, and two incidents during lunch in the vicinity of BHS. This has resulted in the movement of Friday night games to Saturday afternoons. Football games will be open to all faculty, staff, and any other spectators as invited by players on the team. Additionally, physical altercations have occurred at the middle school level and are occurring predominantly during unstructured times (lunch and after school).

We are taking the following steps to promote safety throughout the district, and in particular at our secondary school buildings:

- **Code of Conduct with Fidelity:** Building leaders are implementing a new Code of Conduct with fidelity. All physical altercations that result in physical injury will result in consequences, including out-of-school suspension and/or placement in an alternative education setting. *Physical violence will not be tolerated.*
- **Increased Supervision:** Secondary buildings will have an increased adult presence during passing times in the hallways, lunch hours, and after school.
- **Closed Campus for Lunch:** All ninth and tenth graders will not be allowed to leave campus for lunch. The majority of altercations at BHS have involved these cohorts.
- **Bag Checks:** Bag checks will be taking place at the secondary schools. Students have a reasonable expectation of privacy when it comes to their backpacks and other bags they may carry. However, this is a practice put into place by schools when there is reasonable suspicion that students may engage in altercations involving a device or substance not allowed on school grounds. Due to the unpredictable nature of these recent altercations and out of an assurance for the safety of all students, we will be putting this practice into place for two weeks, after which we will reevaluate

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the need to continue. Additionally, the buildings are equipped with wands, or “handheld scanners” which can detect metal objects if reasonable suspicion warrants their use.

- **Building Re-sets:** In response to the misbehavior observed, and in support of recognizing the positive behavior displayed by many students, both middle schools have conducted meetings with all students, to review expectations, consequences and interventions that may be used to address student behavior. Binghamton High School will be instituting a progressive reentry plan, allowing for smaller cohorts of students to re-engage appropriately with staff and peers. More information on this will be communicated tomorrow to high school families.

The district has many resources in place to support your child before a concern results in an outburst. The middle and high schools have several social workers in place, along with guidance counselors and administration, all of whom are present to support our students. We also have incredible community partners, such as Liberty Partnership, Hillside Work Academy and Youth Development, who facilitate programs that benefit our students socially, emotionally, and beyond. As students are identified as needing support, they are assigned to one of these partners. We ask that you continue to be active partners in their education by reaching out to the school if you feel, at any time, that your child may benefit from these resources. There are also several community resources available that are listed on the district’s Parent Resource page found [here](#), along with a [listing](#) of resources throughout the county.

Finally, some students have shared that they are being encouraged by family members to resolve their conflicts through verbal and physical fighting. Engaging in fighting only results in harm and does not resolve conflict. Please talk about the importance of reaching out to an adult or peer for help and not resorting to addressing issues through social media, or public displays of aggression.

Every child deserves to feel safe, loved, and comfortable at school. We appreciate your support in this effort.

Sincerely,



Tonia Thompson, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

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