

Burlington Public Schools

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An Open Letter to Burlington Students,

I spent the weekend of August 11 about 30 miles North of Charlottesville, Virginia. It was heartbreaking to hear that a city I often enjoy was being violated by visiting members of hate groups like the KKK, Neo-Nazis and White Supremacist Organizations. That peace-seeking people were killed impacted my thoughts even further. How do we maintain a community of learners, rich in diversity, while there are groups of adults spewing hate and other adults attempting to normalize this heinous behavior? I wrote to you earlier in the year and I want to go back to some of those words.

"In my opinion, adults simply need to look inside our classrooms and learn from you. I see classrooms where everyone is accepted regardless of faith, culture, ability, economic standing, and other differences."

My office is directly across from the Burlington Early Childhood Center (BECC). Teachers are working hard all summer to extend learning for our preschool students. Wednesdays are important days because Wednesdays are water days. Our preschool students spend the morning splashing and playing with each other. It is a great time to witness the impact of positive and talented adults working with children of all backgrounds in a safe and nurturing manner. It is classroom images such as these that show me how to fight against hate.

My strong belief is that any act of hate or violence against one of us (staff or student) is an act against all of us. We need to remain united in our support of one another because the only way that hate and intolerance wins is if we let it divide us. So please know, that we look forward to your return in a few short weeks and that we continue to put your emotional and physical safety at the very top of our priority list. While we do not have control over what happens in other towns or states, we can commit to ensuring that we will look out for one another and be firm in our resolve that we do not stand for the mistreatment of anyone in our school community.

While I can't promise that every day will be as enjoyable as water day at the BECC, I know that our schools are full of talented and caring people who work tirelessly to create a safe and nurturing environment. Together, we will continue to learn to appreciate our differences and similarities in order to maintain a learning community that values all people at its core.

Welcome Back.

Sincerely,



Eric M. Conti, Ph.D.
Superintendent

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