



Every child is a work of art.
Create a masterpiece.

Bolgen Vargas, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools
Rochester City School District
131 West Broad Street
Rochester, New York 14614
Phone: 585-262-8378
Fax: 585-262-8381
www.rcsdk12.org

December 16, 2012

Dear Colleagues,

All of us have been shocked and deeply saddened by the terrible events at Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut, and the details that have emerged over the weekend. As we all struggle with these emotions personally, teachers and staff have an extra burden of responsibility to help students cope.

Our goal is to **make Monday as much like any other school day as possible**, without attempting to minimize the impact the tragedy may be having on the students and adults in your school. We want to reassure students that school is the safest place for them to be, and to focus on maintaining school routines while acknowledging the fears and concerns children are likely to have.

Principals will be working with teachers and staff in each school to help you talk to students about the tragedy and answer their questions in an age-appropriate way. School support teams are available to help students and adults who need help, and I am instructing my Central Office staff to provide whatever additional support you and your students need.

Because this tragic incident raises questions of school safety, Lori Baldwin and I met Sunday with Mayor Richards, Chief Sheppard and other members of the Rochester Police Department to review security protocols and procedures. Though the Connecticut events were uniquely horrifying, the sad fact is that there have been many past incidents of violence in schools that have forced us to be ready. Our school security policies were developed collaboratively with the city police and other law enforcement agencies. After reviewing them, our initial conclusion is not that we need new procedures, but in response to the tragedy we must use the protocols in place to make our buildings and our students as safe as they can be.

As our thoughts and prayers go out to the residents of Newtown, I feel deep sympathy for every educator who must cope with the fact that this horrific act took place in a school. Sadly, we have been through similar situations before with Columbine, 9-11 and other terrible events that have frightened our students and put an extra burden on us to explain the unthinkable.

As we have done before, I know the Rochester school community will pull together to support each other and our students. Please do not hesitate to contact me or my staff if we can be of help.

Sincerely,

Bolgen Vargas