



Barbara Deane-Williams
Superintendent of Schools
Rochester City School District
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November 22, 2016

Dear Colleagues,

Today I was invited to join a group of community leaders in addressing the need for unity in standing up for the rights and dignity of all people.

This event took place in response to hate crimes and acts of prejudice that have occurred recently across the country, including the greater Rochester community. I was honored to stand with Senator Kirsten Gillibrand and Mayor Lovely Warren, along with other elected officials, representatives of different faith communities and advocates from the Gay



Alliance of the Genesee Valley to denounce these acts, demonstrating that Rochester and New York stand in favor of unity and tolerance.

As educators, we must make sure that children *are* safe and *feel* safe at school. While honoring our democratic values, I encourage staff to embrace the teachable moment that this time in history presents to us. Have conversations about how to resolve conflicts and differences, and how to address diverse ideology. Guide discussions and activities in a respectful, inclusive and kind manner.

Many of you are naturally engaged in these discussions through the use of restorative practices in your schools. Others are implementing the culturally sensitive education model of Dr. Joy DeGruy, and I look forward to meeting Wednesday with many staff members who have been deeply trained in her work. This is part of a larger conversation our District and community are having about race and equity.

I know that all of our schools are working hard to teach tolerance, respect differences and celebrate diversity. Together, let us stand in unity to create a welcoming and safe environment for each and every one of our students and staff members.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Barbara Deane-Williams".

Barbara Deane-Williams
Superintendent of Schools