



TOMS RIVER REGIONAL SCHOOLS

MICHAEL CITTA

SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS

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To our Toms River Regional Schools staff, parents, and families:

I am deeply saddened and disturbed by the senseless tragedy that took place in Uvalde, Texas yesterday, and on behalf of my team I wish to express our most sincere condolences to the families and friends who lost loved ones, to those who survived but will forever live with the trauma of that day, and for the innocent students and brave teachers who lost their lives.

It remains beyond unnerving that the tragedy in Uvalde and others before it happened on school grounds. My colleagues and I have walked the hallways of schools our entire lives, and cannot fathom or stomach the notion of the school environment as dangerous. Most importantly we are parents; that the act of sending our children to school might cause any trepidation is alarming and unacceptable.

We have said many times before and I reiterate today that the safety of our students and staff is our *absolute, number one* priority each and every single day. I firmly believe that Toms River Regional Schools has the closest working relationship with local law enforcement of any school district around. Our friends and colleagues at Toms River, Beachwood, Pine Beach, and South Toms River Police Departments are part of our school family, and work diligently to protect our communities, and that starts in and near our schools. Our trusted School Resource Officers, who reside at every single school, embody this strong connection. As stated by the Attorney General and Ocean County Prosecutor's Office, there will be a heightened police presence around our school buildings in the coming days and weeks. This does not reflect any threat to our schools, but is an added precaution at this time for us and other area districts, so please be aware.

For several years we have hosted Raptor technology to screen and clear every person who enters our schools, and to immediately alert local law enforcement if needed. No one—*no one*— can simply enter one of our school buildings without clearance. Earlier this morning I issued a communication to our leadership team reminding everyone to remain vigilant, and to adhere to our strict safety protocols, and I also spoke to all of our local police chiefs to coordinate the increased patrol of our school grounds.

I hesitate to call these reminders “reassurances” because there are simply no reassurances at a time like this, particularly for the people of Uvalde who are enduring unspeakable suffering. Still, as your superintendent, it's important for me that you all know that your and your children's safety was, is, and will always remain our top priority. I thank you all for your cooperation, understanding, and adherence to our safety measures.

May the people of Uvalde remain forever in our hearts.

Sincerely,

Michael Citta, Superintendent of Schools