



Olga Hugelmeyer
Superintendent of Schools

September 11, 2021

Dear Elizabeth Public Schools Team Members:

As we arrive at the 20th anniversary of the most devastating act of terrorism perpetrated on United States' soil, we remember the great tragedies of the September 11th attacks while honoring the countless heroes on that fateful day and the many days that would follow for their inspirational, sacrificial, and selfless acts.

For those of a certain age, the events of September 11, 2001—the two planes crashing into the World Trade Center, the plane that crashed into the Pentagon, the plane that crashed in a field near Shanksville, Pennsylvania, and the lives that were lost—are recollected as vividly as the memories of where they were and what they were doing at the moments those tragedies took place.

People throughout the country were in a state of paralysis in the immediate aftermath of those events, fearing what other acts of terror could be on the horizon and how our nation would operate with the shutdown of major financial markets and air transportation.

On the night of September 11th, then President George W. Bush delivered a televised address from the Oval Office, declaring, “Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of our biggest buildings, but they cannot touch the foundation of America. These acts shatter steel, but they cannot dent the steel of American resolve.”

In the days, weeks, and months ahead, we continued to hear more and more stories about the work of first responders in saving the lives of countless people by leading them to safety out of the World Trade Center and the surrounding areas. Every day people were lending their support by donating blood, offering food and beverages to those working at Ground Zero, and being neighborly to those who had experienced personal loss.

Sir Issac Newton’s third law of motion dictates that for every action, there is an equal and opposite reaction. In the case of September 11th, the calamitous events that were responsible for the deaths of 2,996 people were met with a triumphant wave of the human spirit. Communities all over the United States were gathering to collectively mourn while showing their solidarity and resilience. Strangers joined together in ways that perhaps have never been exhibited.

Office of the Superintendent of Schools

Just as we were hurting 20 years ago as people of the United States, we are hurting as a community with recent flooding events that have had devastating effects for so many here in Elizabeth and those who are part of the Elizabeth Public Schools family. One of the most valuable lessons we learned from September 11th is that even the most painful and catastrophic moments and events are not capable of preventing us from enduring and thriving once again.

Perhaps the best way we can remember and honor the heroes and those who perished on September 11th is to continue to demonstrate acts of kindness and selflessness in lifting one another, to show our resolve and perseverance as we work to recover as a community, and to remind everyone of the unique strength and pride that defines Elizabeth and our school community.

May God bless you, your loved ones, those affected by the tragic events of September 11, 2001, and the entire Elizabeth community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Olga Hugelmeyer", with a long, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Olga Hugelmeyer