

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF PHILADELPHIA
OFFICE OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
440 NORTH BROAD STREET, SUITE 301
PHILADELPHIA, PENNSYLVANIA 19130

WILLIAM R. HITE, JR., Ed.D.
SUPERINTENDENT

March 6, 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians:

In light of the most recent school shooting tragedy in Florida, students across the nation are trying to find constructive ways to deal with the aftermath of this horrific event. As a result, on March 14 students from all across the country are planning to walk out of school for 17 minutes in solidarity with the Florida students, to call for improved gun control laws, and to bring awareness to the issue of gun violence in communities and schools.

In concert with the national movement, students who choose to walk out will be provided an opportunity to gather in a designated area, so that any walkouts will take place in an organized and safe manner. However, schools will neither encourage nor discourage student walkouts, nor will we prevent students from participating or discipline them if they do. Regular activities will continue during the walkout, and students participating are expected to re-enter the building following the walkout.

We recognize that there are widely held and differing opinions about how the nation should react to this tragedy, and know that some students may not want to participate in a walkout and would prefer to stay in class. We want to assure our students and families that we will make certain all students feel safe and respected, no matter what they choose to do. As always, the safety of our students is our top priority.

As a school district, we encourage our students to be actively engaged citizens who are knowledgeable about current events. This can be a learning opportunity that helps our students apply lessons that they are learning in school. Above all, we want them to know we value their voices and their right to self-expression. To that end, we have provided resources for school leaders to organize in-school events and/or activities that allow students to express their opinions and ideas that will complement the walk-out event or as an alternative while ensuring their safety.

This incident underlines the need for all of us, as a school community, to work together to ensure the safety of our school and our neighborhood. Please take the time to speak to your children about the serious consequences of bringing any type of weapon to school. It is important that children know that if they need help or have a concern regarding their own personal safety to please contact a school staff member or a police officer immediately. Supporting our children with positive and open conversations is crucial in helping them deal with uncertainty.

Please remember that if your child sees something, say something! There are two ways to report:
Call: 215-400-SAFE or Email: ask@philasd.org

We will continue to create the safest and most positive learning environments possible for your children.

Sincerely,



William R. Hite, Jr., Ed.D.