



March 9, 2018

Dear Manitou Springs Schools parents and guardians:

In the wake of the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, students across the country are organizing demonstrations and walkouts in protest of school violence. The MSSD 14 school district is aware that some of our students may be planning to participate in walkouts locally, including the National School Walkout Day planned for March 14 and again on April 20th.

In our schools, we respect the right of our students to exercise their First Amendment rights and express their opinions. Engaging in peaceful protest and advocating for a cause can be a powerful learning experience for students. We also recognize that our students hold a diverse range of views and some may not want to participate in a walkout. It is our responsibility to ensure all students feel safe and respected, no matter their viewpoint.

We want you to know that our school district does not endorse or host walkouts, nor does the district endorse any particular viewpoint or advocacy group. Our main concern with any potential student walkout is safety. To that end, principals are working with student leaders and parents via the School Accountability Committees to create "safe zones" for students if they choose to participate. Our understanding is that the walkout planned for March 14 is expected to last 17 minutes, in honor of the 17 victims of the Parkland shooting. For those students who choose to remain in class, teachers will instruct as normal.

Should a walkout occur, we will deploy school staff as necessary to maintain student safety. We also want to note that middle school and elementary school students will NOT be allowed to leave the building unless signed out by a parent.

We encourage you to talk with your student about these events and about important issues including school safety. We must work together – students, parents, guardians, teachers, staff, families and community members – to ensure that schools are safe places for students to learn, grow and develop into the leaders of tomorrow.

If you have any questions or concerns about potential walkouts, please contact your child's principal.

Sincerely,

Edward D. Longfield
Superintendent, Manitou Springs School District 14