

## **March 14 National School Walkout**

As an update to my message regarding the National School Walkout scheduled for Wednesday, March 14, 2018, please read the following information:

It is important to reiterate that the West Windsor-Plainsboro Regional School District respects the rights of our students to peacefully assemble. As such, our middle school and high school principals have worked with student leaders to discuss their desire to participate in the National School Walkout to honor those killed in the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida. The walkout takes place on the one-month anniversary of the shooting and calls for a 17-minute protest; 1 minute for every life lost.

### **Elementary Schools: Grades Pre-Kindergarten to Grade 5**

At the elementary school level, it is critically important that all activities are developmentally appropriate. We fully recognize that the National School Walkout raises conversations about gun control and gun violence that is not developmentally appropriate for Pre- Kindergarten through Grade 5 students. Many families have selected not to engage children of these ages in such conversations and WW-P agrees that we must be sensitive to this decision.

However, we also believe it important to honor the memory of those lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Therefore, each elementary school will hold an age-appropriate event beginning at 10:00 a.m. All six schools will focus on the themes of kindness and peace; activities may differ from building to building and from classroom to classroom.

### **Dutch Neck Elementary School**

- Staff and students will be encouraged to wear their 'Be Kind' shirts, Dutch Neck Elementary School attire, or school colors.
- At 10 a.m., all classes will host a read aloud and will have follow-up discussions about the book. All book selections will focus on kindness.
- Dutch Neck Elementary School will create a 'Kindness Tree.' Each grade level will add leaves with ideas for an act of kindness written on the leaf. It will be displayed in the main hallway for all to see.

### **Maurice Hawk Elementary School**

- Two songs, "Love Grows" and "Peace in My Fingers," will be played over the public address system; Maurice Hawk Elementary School students and staff will sing along.
- Each class will create and hang a 'Class Kindness Chain.'
- After the songs and the hanging of the chain, teachers will read books that revolve around kindness and peace.
- Staff and students are encouraged to wear Maurice Hawk Elementary School spirit wear.

### **Wicoff Elementary School**

- Teachers will work with students on a schoolwide activity entitled, “Kindness Is a Chain Reaction.” The goal of this activity is to spread kindness and help students recognize kindness when they see it.
- Students and staff will dress in Wicoff Elementary School colors.

### **Town Center Elementary School**

- Teachers will read a book of their choice with the theme of kindness and/or peace.
- Students and staff members will trace handprints on colorful paper, cut the print out, and draw or write about an act of kindness or a peaceful action. These handprints will be gathered and displayed in a rainbow formation in the hallway/breezeway area.
- Students and staff will dress in school colors or will dress in “Gator” gear.

### **Millstone River School**

- March 14 will be a Millstone River School Spirit Day; students and staff will dress in school colors (red, white, and blue).
- Millstone River School will participate in a unified activity in which students and staff will engage in a schoolwide read aloud of the book, *Ordinary Mary Does an Extraordinary Deed*. The book is about the ripple effect of kindness and paying it forward!
- After the read aloud, students will complete a follow-up activity in which each classroom will create a poster entitled, “No Ordinary Day for Millstone River School.”

### **Village School**

- Students and staff will dress in Village School colors to show unity.
- Village School will honor these 17 minutes with a focus on kindness and peace.
- Staff members will create a list of choice activities in which each class can participate.

### **Middle Schools and High Schools**

As with every protest, there will be those students who wish to participate and those students who do not wish to participate. No student is to be made to feel that they are required to participate. The walkout is being initiated by the students -- for those students who wish to participate.

Based upon conversations between student representatives and building administration, WW-P anticipates a sizeable walkout protest at all four secondary buildings. As a precaution, the entrances and exits to Community Middle School, Grover Middle School, High School South, and High School North will be closed from 9:45 a.m. to 10:45 a.m. Access to school grounds will be blocked. Further, we will have a police presence to ensure maximum safety for students and staff.

Furthermore, teachers, administrators, and support staff will provide supervision and guidance to ensure safety during the National School Walkout.

### **Community Middle School**

- Students will be walking out to a designated area to gather together.
- During the 17 minutes of the National School Walkout, students can speak or have a moment of silence.
- Students may carry and sign banners of support or write notes that they send to Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.
- Students may wear orange; this is the color of school violence prevention.

### **Thomas Grover Middle School**

- The student body will assemble at a designated location outside the school.
- Student leaders will explain to the student body why they are there and will remind students that this is a somber and peaceful protest and everyone should remain silent and respectful for the duration of the event.
- To support the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School, students will wear black in protest of school violence.

### **High School North**

- The National School Walkout activity will take approximately 30 minutes as students will be walking the track for 17 minutes; the scoreboard will countdown the 17 minutes.
- Upon conclusion of the walk, several short speeches will be made to the student body from midfield and students will remain on the track.
- Students at HSN may be wearing black as a part of the walkout.

### **High School South**

- Students will walk outside to the football field.
- There will be several student speeches that focus on remembrance and a moment of silence. There will be other student speeches that focus on other action steps, such as registering to vote or contacting local politicians.
- Students at HSS may be wearing black as a part of the walkout.

To parents and community members, I must reiterate that these events and this walkout are for the students. The event is not open to the public and no adults will be allowed on school grounds. For parents who want to participate with their children, we ask that you find options off school grounds.

Access to the middle schools and high schools will be blocked after 9:45 a.m. We ask that any parent seeking to sign out a student must do so prior to 9:30 a.m. As the safety of all students and staff is of great concern, I trust that parents and community members understand why we are taking such actions.

WW-P remains committed to providing support for students in processing the recent tragedy. Further, if you need support to talk to your child about such events, please know that the district

remains committed to supporting you. If you or your child needs support, please reach out to your child's school counselor or building administrator. My thanks and appreciation to all district staff that have worked to make this day one of reflection and remembrance for students. To our students, March 14 is an important day in leveraging your voice. We trust that you will exercise your right to assemble peacefully.

Sincerely,

Dave Aderhold, EdD, Superintendent of Schools