

{Date Here}

## **A Message to Parents and Caregivers Regarding Student Safety and Student Demonstrations (Walkouts)**

Dear {Name of District or School Here} Parents and Caregivers,

As educators, we have a sacred responsibility not only to teach students, but to help them grow and thrive. We take this responsibility with the utmost seriousness, yet sometimes traumatic events cast it in a new light. The recent tragedy in Parkland, Florida, underscored the importance of our obligation to protect and care for the children in {Name of District or School Here} schools.

Like much of the country, we have spent the past couple of weeks grappling with the horrific scene at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and thinking about how we can make our own schools and communities safer. Many of our students are eager to turn words into action through a student walkout demonstrating support for tougher gun control laws. We are encouraged to see our students involved in critical thinking and public advocacy. This is as much a part of the learning and growth process as the lessons in the classroom. We also want to make sure that our students are safe when they engage in the political process.

To that end, we're asking that you speak to your child about the student marches scheduled for March 14, March 24, and April 20, and if they do plan to take part, encourage them to be mindful of their safety. We also request that you inform your child's school of their expected absence. As required by Education Code, school sites will take attendance as normal on the days in question. At the same time, we recognize that the decision to excuse a child from school for political protest is a personal decision and we support parental choice in this matter. Knowing that you have approved your child's decision to miss school for a protest helps us keep all students safe and accounted for.

For those students who choose to stay in school, many teachers are developing lessons specific to the issues of guns and violence in America and the history of public protests. In keeping with the daily work we do in our classrooms to promote social and emotional learning (SEL), these activities will be focused on developing consciousness and providing a respectful, restorative and empowering forum for our students to develop and share their views.

You should feel free to contact your school administration with questions or concerns related to the walkouts or broader issues related to school climate and security. In the meantime, please know that for {Name of District or School here}, along with fostering personal growth and academic achievement, ensuring the safety of our students is our highest priority.

Respectfully,

{Name Here}