



612 Schlador Street • Silverton, OR 97381 • Phone: (503)873-5303 • Fax: (503)873-2936

March 5, 2018

Dear Silver Falls School District Families:

As part of our ongoing efforts towards transparency and community engagement, we're sharing this information to keep you informed of the upcoming March 14 nation-wide walk-out to protest gun laws as they relate to school violence. I'd like to begin by clarifying that the school district and its employees are required to remain neutral in political matters and this issue is no different. The administration and our employees will neither promote nor discourage any particular political views or participation in this event. This is a strictly informational letter and applies to all schools of Silver Falls School District. The response described below appropriately balances the rights of students with the responsibilities of the school district, and serves the diverse perspectives of our communities.

1. The administration is aware several students have organized an event at one school (Silverton High School) and they have shared their intent to walk out of class at 10 AM on March 14th for the duration of the nation-wide protest. We are also aware of the potential for a counter protest on the same day and at the same time.
2. The school district's priority is to provide an environment that fosters growth for each student in both the content of their character and in their academic studies. A key component of this environment is that students feel safe and secure while at school. The administration fully understands and supports our students engaging in their constitutionally protected rights, including their ability to participate in political discourse. It is important to note that how students go about participating in their constitutional rights can be different in a school setting as compared to other public locations outside of the school day.
3. The District also recognizes this opportunity for genuine and authentic dialogue about a topic that generates a significant difference in opinions and we want to facilitate that for our students. We further agree with many of you that this is a teachable moment and real world lesson in civics for our students and our community members. While we cannot endorse the action of walking out of class, there are many alternatives to this action that will still allow for appropriate engagement in this discourse. School principals are aware of these alternatives and are communicating them as appropriate to their parents and student body.



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4. Silver Falls School District policy, school rules and the Guidelines for Student Conduct will be in effect during the walk-out as they are on any other day of school district operation. Any conduct by students which violate district policy, school rules or the Guidelines for Student conduct will result in fair, consistent disciplinary action which most appropriately addresses the nature of the conduct by each student.
5. Any participation in the protest is considered a student-led, student-centered event. As a result and due to it occurring during a regular school day and on school district property, it will not involve parents, community members or members of the media.
6. In the interest of security, we have notified local law enforcement of this event and have requested additional security during this time.

We want to stress that the safety and security of our students is our highest priority. Thank you for your understanding of this important information. Please contact your school principal if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Andy Bellando
Superintendent