

Dear Montesano School District families and community members,

Following the tragic shooting at a Florida high school on February 14, there has been a collective movement by some students around the country to organize school walkouts and marches to honor the victims in that shooting and protest school violence.

We are aware of a student-led national 17-minute school walkout planned for 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 14. National organizers are calling for 17 minutes of action/activity in each time zone on that day to commemorate the 17 lives lost at the high school in Parkland, Florida.

Planned events such as these are student-led events and not school-sponsored activities. We respect our students' right under the First Amendment to express their views about this important topic. When students advocate for an issue they feel passionate about, it can be a powerful learning experience. We also recognize that some students prefer to stay in class.

At this time there appear to be similar marches/gatherings being planned after March 14th as well. This message outlines how our schools will respond to a walk-out or similar events during a scheduled school day.

If a walkout occurs on any of our campuses, schools and classes will continue on their normal schedule. Student safety is essential. For the March 14th event only, our jr/sr high school administrators are working with student leaders to ensure a safe supervised place on campus for those who choose to participate, as well as alternative learning opportunities on campus for those not participating. Our elementary schools will operate a regular instructional schedule as will our jr/sr high school for any events after March 14th. We encourage students to remain on campus to ensure their safety. If students choose to leave campus, we will follow our existing protocols in taking attendance and informing parents that their student is absent from school. We will also follow existing district policies regarding excused and unexcused absences. Staff will not be supervising students who choose to leave campus. The Montesano Police Department is aware of these possible walkouts and we will continue to communicate information we receive regarding any student-led off-campus walkouts as needed.

Actions Families Can Take

We encourage you to talk with your child, as is age-appropriate and/or appropriate for your family, about the collective national conversation about school safety and your child's possible participation in any planned student-led walkouts. Parents are also encouraged consider and discuss safety risks and consequences associated with the choice to leave school for these events

as well as their expectations for school attendance. Some events after March 14th are scheduled for non-school days which may be an alternative families wish to consider instead. As with any school-related issues you or your child may feel passionate about, you are always welcome to contact your state or federal legislators. You can identify your state and federal representatives by visiting www.leg.wa.gov and selecting the "Find Your District" (legislative or congressional) link on the left side of the page.

We appreciate your understanding as we navigate this balance of respecting people's desire to make a difference versus our commitment to provide quality educational opportunities to our students and meeting our 180 school-day requirement.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dan Winter". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Dan Winter, Superintendent