

February 27, 2018

Dear EGRPS Families,

The recent school shootings in Parkland, Florida have refocused our nation and, especially, our East Grand Rapids Public Schools community on the question of how to keep our students safe. On behalf of the EGRPS staff, administrators, and Board of Education, I want to assure you that, as a district, we are committed to all children having the right to learn in a safe and nurturing environment and, as such, safety is a top priority.

As a district we will work to continually improve our school safety practices, and I also believe that it is critically important that federal policy as it relates to school safety needs to be enacted in order to ensure that this recent school shooting is the last school shooting. It is imperative that a national comprehensive approach is enacted to prevent future school violence. I encourage you to reach out to our state and national legislative representatives and voice your support regarding the importance of effective school safety legislation.

We are fortunate that EGRPS has had an active, long-standing PTO Legislative Committee that has engaged our parents in reaching out to our representatives on various topics impacting public schools, including safety. However, the recent tragedy has moved beyond just parental involvement and has students across our nation looking for ways to combat school violence and to have their voices heard during this ongoing national debate. Many of our students have shared their desire to participate in a national school walkout planned on Wednesday, March 14, 2018, for 17 minutes – one minute for every person killed at the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. We are supportive of our students participating in this event; and Mr. Craig Weigel, EGRHS Principal; and Mr. Anthony Morey, EGRMS Principal, have met with student leaders in their schools to coordinate their advocacy efforts to ensure a safe environment for a student walkout. Our elementary schools will be focused on discussions about kindness, friendship, and safety topics and will not participate in a walkout event; however, parents can excuse their child if they choose to participate in an outside sponsored walkout. While we value instructional time in the classroom, we also know that this is a teachable moment and student advocacy regarding safety in schools is equally important. In addition, we are mindful that not all students will have a desire to participate in a walkout and are working with the student leaders to be respectful of all students who choose to refrain from participating in the planned walkout.

Specific details regarding individual school walkout events will be shared with students during the school day and will not be posted publicly. Your middle school or high school student will know what is expected of them if they choose to participate and/or refrain from participation in the walkout.

Again, thank you for your ongoing support of EGRPS. As a school community, eliminating school violence is a goal we all share; unfortunately, how to achieve that goal has become a very divisive topic. I would encourage you to talk with your child regarding the importance of the debate surrounding school safety, whether or not your child chooses to participate in the March 14 walkouts at the high school and middle school.

Sincerely,



Sara Magaña Shubel, Ph.D.
Superintendent

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