

From the Office of the Principal

March 12, 2018

DSA Students, Parents and Community Members,

In effort to keep you informed, this communication is intended to provide you information on the plans for Denver School of the Arts student participation in the National High School Walkout on Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. As stated in the letter on March 9<sup>th</sup>, DSA will neither encourage nor discourage students to engage in this action. However, we will fully respect our students' interests in representing their voices in this manner. These are the final plans from the student leaders.

There will be three options in order to provide all students an opportunity to participate in these events;

## **1. DSA Students Walk to East High School and the State Capital:**

DSA students who wish to participate in this walk will be encouraged by student leaders through social media to walk out of class at 8:45 am on Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. The plan is for students to begin the walk to East High School at 8:55 am. The route for this walk will be Montview Blvd. west and crossing Colorado Blvd. Students will proceed west through City Park to the Esplanade and cross 17<sup>th</sup> Ave. onto East High School's grounds. At that time, DSA students will join the East High School student body in their 17 minutes of silence beginning at 10:00 am in front of East High School. This is intended to be an action to memorialize and pay tribute to the 17 lives lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018.

Students will then walk to the Colorado State Capital will with East High School students following 16<sup>th</sup> Avenue west to Sherman St, turning left and walking to the grounds of the State Capital.

***This is a reminder that once your student has exited the DSA campus, it will be their responsibility to arrange for transportation home, or to have a communication plan with their parent at the State Capital.***

***Students participating in this walk will be accompanied by DSA staff and parent volunteers. DPS Safety and Security personnel and Denver Police Department officers will also likely be on hand to assist with observing this protest. DSA staff members and participating parents will wear white baseball caps so they can be easily identified. Staff members will not be taking roll, and because students have exited the DSA campus these staff members will not be responsible for their return to DSA following this event.***

## **2. DSA Students Walk to East High School and Walk Back to DSA:**

DSA students who wish to participate in this walk will be encouraged by student leaders through social media to walk out of class at 8:45 am on Wednesday, March 14<sup>th</sup>. The plan is for students to begin the walk to East High School at 8:55 am. The route for this walk will be Montview Blvd. west and crossing Colorado Blvd. Students will proceed west through City Park to the Esplanade and cross 17<sup>th</sup> Ave. onto East High School's grounds. At that time DSA students will join the East High School student body in their 17 minutes of silence beginning at 10:00 am in front of East High School. This is intended to be an action to memorialize and pay tribute to the 17 lives lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018.

**After the 17 minutes of silence this group will walk back to DSA following the same route the followed earlier.**

***Students participating in this walk, either to East High School and back to DSA will be accompanied by DSA staff and parent volunteers. DPS Safety and Security personnel and Denver Police Department officers will also likely be on hand to assist with this protest. DSA staff members and participating parents will wear white baseball caps so they can be easily identified. Staff members will not be taking roll, and because students have exited the DSA campus these staff members will not be responsible for their return to DSA following this event.***

## **3. Alternative activity for DSA Students not walking to East High School and the State Capital:**

An announcement will be made at 9:50 am for those students who wish to participate in a walk of silence to proceed to the DSA Rotunda. Participating students will proceed to walk around the school in a clock-wise pattern, **in silence**, for 17 minutes to pay tribute to the 17 lives lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on February 14, 2018. At the end of the 17 minutes those students will return to their fourth (4<sup>th</sup>) period class. Since our student have elected to participate in this walk of silence there is to complete silence without the use of any technology.

As stated in last week's letter, as a school we are appreciative of every student's right to share their voice and perspective through protest. However, we must also acknowledge the inherent risks related to leaving our school campus. We have communicated the likelihood that students may leave campus to our DPS Department of Safety and Denver Police Department partners. Also, in

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response to district protocol we will have school representative(s) accompany students, not as a sign that the act of leaving campus is supported, rather, as a support related to student safety.

### **Once again, I am asking that you engage in these conversations with your student:**

- If your student is a 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup>, or 8<sup>th</sup> grade student we **highly** discourage their participation in the walk to the Colorado State Capitol building. I ask that you have a conversation around this issue with your student and decide if you will allow them to participate in this walk. Per DPS policy we will respect a student's right to participate. In addition, per DPS policy our staff will act only as observers and will not bare any responsibility to ensure your student either returns to DSA, or home from the State Capital grounds, or East High School. However, you are welcome to join the walk with your student.
- If you and your student are in agreement about their participation in this walk, we are asking for parent volunteers to walk along-side our students on the trip to East High School, and onto the State Capital. If you are a willing parent participant, I ask that you assemble in the DSA rotunda area at 8:30 am on Wednesday. We will provide further instructions at that time.
- It is important to explain to your student that per district policy, when students leave the school without parent and/or school permission, the absence is unexcused. As always, parents may contact our school office to excuses absences. Teachers will be encouraged to allow students the opportunity to make-up any missed work.
- A specified route will be developed for the walk that we ask students to adhere to. This route will be developed for their safety. Make sure your student understands that they must follow this route and must not walk outside of the designated route.
- As a family you will need to create a reunification plan in the area of the Colorado State Capital/Civic Center Park area for reunification if your student is NOT walking back to DSA with the entire group. Transportation back to Denver School of the Arts will not be provided. It is imperative that your student has a clear plan of how to communicate with you, and how transportation home will be provided for them at the end of the rally.
- The DSA Community fully supports any student who wishes to not participate in these events. Our staff will have classroom activities to support these students.

Again, I encourage you to have these conversations with your student related to how they are processing these issues and how they will approach the choices that may be made on Wednesday.

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I have received a few questions from parents regarding plans for the upcoming national protest being planned on April 20, 2018. The DSA administration, along with DSA student leaders have started to discuss plans for this event. As a collective body, we are going to discourage students from walking out of school on this day. There other events on this particular day that will make this a higher risk for student participation. Events on the DSA Campus during lunch and after school will be planned on April 20<sup>th</sup>. More details will follow after spring break.

In closing, I encourage you to contact me or any DSA staff members for discussion and to ask any questions.

Sincerely,



William M. Kohut,  
Principal, Denver School of the Arts