

From the Office of the Principal

DSA Students, Parents and Community Members,

I am confident that our entire DSA community is aware of the national conversation surrounding school safety. In response to the most recent episodes of school violence, including the school shooting tragedy in Parkland, Florida, students across our metro area are processing ways in which they may effectively represent their values, interests and beliefs. Our students are fully engaged in being a part of this national conversation.

DSA students, in partnership with school staff members, have also been discussing ways to share their perspectives and represent their ideas. As a school, we recognize that there are different perspectives and ideas that are a part of our inclusive community. Respecting and valuing both our common and varying interests has been an important part of our discussions. Our students are continuing to plan for their actions to support these perspectives and ideas. They have many ideas to ensure they have a strong voice in this conversation.

We are committed to keeping you updated on issues that involve school safety and that support our students voices in this movement. In meeting with student leaders, they have expressed their determination to join the National High School Walkout on Wednesday, March 14th. 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. As of today, the plan from student leaders is that our students will be encouraged through social media to walk out of class at 8:45 am on Wednesday, March 14th. The plan is for students to walk to East High School and 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. Additionally, we have been made aware that many of our students are planning on continuing with a protest walk to the Colorado State Capitol building.

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 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.


DSA administration will meet with DSA student leaders again on Monday to hear final plans, and for administration to have an input on plans for student safety. You will receive another notification on Monday with more detailed information concerning plans for March 14th. **In the meantime, I am asking that you engage in these conversations with your student:**

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- If your student is a 6th, 7th, or 8th 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.
- 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 excuse 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. This route will be communicated on Monday.
- 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. 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.

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 next Wednesday. And, as always, 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