

North Branford Intermediate School

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March 9, 2018

Dear Parents and Guardians,

We were all shocked and saddened by the events that occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida on February 14th, where 17 students and staff members were killed by a lone gunman. This tragedy has sparked intense national debate over gun control reform, mental health awareness and school safety/security. As you may be aware, a National School Walkout has been organized for Wednesday, March 14th to honor these 17 victims. As currently planned, students across the country will leave their classes and school buildings simultaneously at 10 AM in each time zone. This event is planned to last 17 minutes to honor the 17 victims.

At this time, several NBIS students have expressed an interest in participating in the National School Walkout. Part of our mission at NBIS is to prepare our students to be responsible 21st Century citizens of the world. With that said, we want to support our students in exercising their right to participate in a peaceful demonstration that honors the victims of this national tragedy. However, we are also mindful of the fact that many see the National School Walkout as a political event with the intention to further the debate, and that there are students who do not want to participate. Most importantly, our top priority is always to make sure our students, staff and building are as safe and secure as possible.

With this said, NBIS is going to handle this event in the following manner: We are going to allow students who wish to participate in the walkout to leave class at 10:00 AM on March 14th, and then walk to a pre-designated and supervised location within our building for a period of 17 minutes. I want to emphasize this is voluntary for students, participating students will not be leaving the building, and those who choose to participate are both responsible for missed instructional time and required to have the permission of their parent/guardian. Students who do not want to participate will remain in class with their teachers, and will continue to receive instruction. At the conclusion of the 17 minutes, as a school, we will honor the memory of the 17 victims of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School with a moment of silence.

Attached you will find the permission slip for participation in the walkout. NBIS teaching staff will neither encourage nor discourage student participation in this event. The choice to miss instructional time is one we believe our students should not be able to make without parental consent. If asked by a student if they are allowed to participate in the National School Walkout, the NBIS staff has been directed to explain that information regarding this event was shared with their parents/guardians via instant messenger, and they should speak with their parents/guardians about it at home. It is your choice as a parent to have an open conversation with your child about both this event and the option to participate in the walkout.

Lastly, permission slips will not be collected in advance. Students who have permission to participate should present the signed permission slip to their teacher at 10:00 AM on March 14th.

Please feel free to contact me personally if you have any questions or concerns.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Keith O'Rourke", written in a cursive style.

Keith O'Rourke
NBIS, Interim Principal