

# Springfield Public Schools

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March 12, 2018

Dear Parents and Students,

I am writing with respect to activities planned for March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018. We are all aware of the tragedy surrounding the community of Parkland, Fla., and Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. It is certainly hard to believe we are one month out from that tragic day. Unfortunately, it is only one in a series of significant tragedies that have taken place in our recent history.

I am completely aware of the need for our students to express how such incidents impact all of us on a daily basis. We need and certainly deserve the right to feel safe in our homes, community and especially our schools. The Declaration of Independence clearly establishes the role of government in securing that desire and right.

I truly appreciate the desire of our students to honor the victims of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and their right to expect an environment that is safe and nurturing when they enter their schools. I am proud that they have grown into citizens who feel a responsibility to speak out and effect change.

In light of the type of incidents we have become too familiar with, safety remains our paramount concern. While some may allude to the minute odds of something untoward happening, I simply cannot take chances with other people's lives. I am legally and morally required to provide as safe an environment as I possibly can, which is what I and my staff intend to do.

We have met and continue to meet with the Springfield Police Chief who is helping us coordinate our plans with the police department to ensure the safest possible environment for everyone on March 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018. While not necessarily what some may want to hear, the interior of our schools is far safer than the exterior. As such, while we strongly support and will facilitate the students' desires to express their feelings and their empathy for the victims of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shootings, we can not facilitate their desires to leave the building because the circumstances surrounding this event do not enable us to provide a level of safety outside the building that we believe is required.

After a series of meetings with student leaders over the past several weeks, the school administration will provide several options on March 14, 2018 for the students to express their views with a level of safety that we can feel confident in embracing. The auditorium will be available for students to express their sympathy, solidarity with the victims of the Parkland and other mass shootings, as well as their right to have safe and secure schools. The students

organizing that effort will be providing information, including voter registration information for those of age to make their views known at the ballot box. Provisions are also in place for those already impacted and fearful, as well as those who choose not to participate in any way. As stated previously, this will be a regular school day and the “student code of conduct” will be operational as it always is and will be applied to those who choose to leave the building without authorization.

To ensure the highest level of safety we can for our students, whether they choose to take part in these activities or not, no parents or other visitors will be permitted to enter any of our schools on March 14 unless they have an appointment scheduled in advance. Please help us ensure our students’ safety and their ability to meaningfully express their views by cooperating.

I look forward to hearing the student’s express themselves on Wednesday. I share their concerns and look forward to joining them as they pause to reflect on the senseless tragedy and show our solidarity with the Parkland community.

Sincerely,

Michael A. Davino  
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