



On the Issue of a School Walk-Out

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To: Students, Staff and Families of Shelton
From: Christopher Clouet, Superintendent of Shelton Schools

The heartbreak and sorrow provoked by the wave of mass shootings around our nation has an impact on all of us. Most high school students, navigating the challenging waters between their childhood selves and emerging adult selves, have deep feelings about the violence in schools which has now sadly become a tragic pattern.

The question they pose, and all community members should reflect on, is:

Why?

Why are young men, choosing to go into schools to murder dozens of students and staff?

Why do adults seem powerless to stop the on-going series of school shootings?

Why can't we, as a nation, do better?

This is a moment in our collective history that begs the question: why?

Rather than retreat into rigid ideological camps, often characterized by name-calling and finger pointing, many students across the nation, around our state and in Shelton, have determined that they want to publicly express their sorrow and sense of bewilderment about the situation.

On March 14, students who choose to participate will peacefully leave their scheduled 'advisory session,' exit Shelton High School and gather for seventeen minutes. The chosen timeframe reflects the number of those murdered recently at a high school in Florida.

The planned action is led by our Student Council. They are a group of very thoughtful young people. The primary focus is to express solidarity with other students around the country and to speak together as a strong voice. These students have a variety of ideas about possible solutions to the problem of shootings in schools, but the March 14th event is not a rally to propose policy. It is a moment, their moment, to say firmly that the status quo is not in their best interest, nor is it good for the country.

But what if some students do not feel an action such as a brief “Walk Out” is meaningful for them. What if they choose not to participate?

Students will have a choice. They can participate in a well-planned, secure gathering (with administrators and police supervising) or remain in their advisories with their teachers.

Dr. Smith and the SHS administrative team have worked well in supporting the students’ plans. Members of the Shelton Police Department have also been part of planning for a safe event.

I met with the Student Council. I was impressed by their earnest desire to be part of this national moment. I was pleased to hear them grapple with the complexity of the situation and their realization that the many students at SHS have a variety of viewpoints on the issue of schools shootings and how to respond.

We will continue our efforts to keep our schools safe. Drills, protocols, appropriate equipment, a close partnership with law enforcement, and communication remain fundamental aspects of that work.

On March 14, many of our students will opt to participate in the gathering to express their sorrow and to remember those students and staff members so recently killed in a high school in Florida. They deserve the respect and support of the entire community. Whether one agrees with their plan or not, they are following in the footsteps of many before them who in times of cultural crisis have chosen to speak up and to speak out.

This is a difficult moment in our national history. Many students are using their voices (and education!) to express their opinion that changes are needed.

I believe we should listen to their voices.

They merit our support.

The mission statement, created by the SHS Student Council for the walkout, is “to provide a safe way to honor the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and provide an opportunity for students’ voices to be heard, calling for a change to lead to a safer society.”