

Franklin Public Schools

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Superintendent's Report to School Committee February 27, 2018 School Committee Meeting

Keeping Our Schools Safe

On February 15, 2018, I sent a communication to families and staff across the district about the measures we take to keep our schools safe. Because this message went out via our e-mail Regroup list, members of the community at large may not have received it and may be wondering: How safe are the Franklin schools? I would like to iterate a portion of my message for the larger community.

"The safety and well-being of Franklin students and staff are our highest priority. Our buildings remain locked and well-supervised when school is in session; all visitors must check in at reception upon arrival and present identification. Security cameras provide coverage around all of our buildings. We have open communication with the Franklin Fire and Police Departments, and our response teams regularly review and practice safety protocols and procedures through training with staff and students. Additionally, we continue to refine our practices through continuing education on best practices within the field of school safety. Parents or staff members with concerns about safety should contact the building principal with specific questions.

We also stress climate and culture in each of our schools, centering our work around core values and relationships. It is important that each student feels connected to an adult and we strive to ensure we have supports in place to help students in crisis. We emphasize the importance of speaking up when there is a concern, and we have examples when students, parents/guardians, and staff have come forward to bring a concern about a friend or classmate to an administrator's attention.

You may be looking for resources to ensure that our students are supported as they learn more about the tragic event in Florida. This resource, from the American Psychological Association, may be of assistance to you: http://www.apa.org/topics/violence/school-shooting.aspx

Counselors, teachers, and administrators are available to help any student who may be experiencing difficulty as a result of the news. Please reach out to any member of the administration if we can be of help in any way."

Responding to Social Media Messaging of Student Walkouts

I am preparing a message to be sent tomorrow (February 28) to the school community in response to student-led events being organized via social media in response to the tragic school shooting in Parkland, Florida. I thought I would take the opportunity to share it portions of it tonight as part of the Superintendent's Report to School Committee:

"The tragedy in Parkland, Florida on February 14 and other losses of life on school campuses across the nation over several years have caused increased interest in student-led civic engagement and actions, including the idea of school walkouts. Franklin Public Schools supports students' Constitutional rights to peaceful assembly and free expression.

We have been keeping apprised to social media messages and are aware of a student-led walkout being planned for Wednesday, March 14 in schools across the country. As of the writing of this letter, student groups have reached out to administrators at the middle level and at Franklin High School. We respect and support the right of our students to advocate for causes that are important to them and we welcome the opportunity to work with student groups to discuss appropriate and creative ways to do so while at school. We also recognize and support that there will be students who do not want to participate. Our goal in responding to walk-out plans and other forms of peaceful assembly is to try and keep the focus on teaching and learning, while providing guidance and planning to support student and staff safety.

We encourage you to talk with your child/children about how they may be feeling and the importance of expressing themselves in appropriate ways at school. It's important to know that disorderly conduct that disrupts operations is not acceptable and will be handled compassionately but firmly as outlined within the Code of Conduct in our student handbooks.

Administrators will be responding to students' ideas over the coming days. As more information is available about what is being planned, we will issue further communications to keep parents and guardians informed."

A few key parameters around our response:

- The broad plans being shared via social media involve a walkout on March 14 at 10 AM for 17 minutes. Local plans are being proposed by students at this time.
- The effort will be student-generated and developed by students to include their voice and framed as a learning opportunity for civic engagement.

- Administrators will assist by structuring actions to be done in a safe way. School safety personnel (School Resource Officers) will also be included.
- We want to make sure that students who do not want to participate feel comfortable.
 We will be on the lookout for coercion.

Professional Days/Half-Day for Students on March 2, 2018

Friday March 2, 2018 is a half-day for students with professional development in the afternoon for faculty across the district. This is a building-based professional learning experience. Educators will be engaged in the following opportunities:

- ECDC staff will be working together to learn more about applying Teaching Strategies
 Gold, which is the assessment tool they use, to monitor student progress at the 3rd
 checkpoint of the year. Specialists and some staff will participate in webinars on
 inclusive practices.
- Davis Thayer and Parmenter staff will continue their learning with Lesley University on being trauma sensitive schools -- understanding the dynamics of acute and chronic trauma, its adverse effects on learning, and how trauma-sensitive schools can benefit all children.
- Oak Street, Keller, Kennedy and Jefferson Elementary School educators will be working
 in grade level teams to learn more about the implementation of the new science
 standards -- specifically life science and physical science standards.
- Middle school educators will participate in professional development focused on Keys To
 Literacy (which is a district-sustained professional development initiative) including
 sessions on vocabulary, note taking, and paired texts and how to implement these into
 their curriculum.
- High school educators will be working on departmental-based activities with a focus on both assessment and differentiation.
- School nurses will attend a workshop with Alyssa Gaudet, MSW LCSW, of Children's
 Hospital Community Education Initiative Program on "Psychiatric Issues in Children with
 a Focus on Acute Issues".