

**California Department of Education  
Official Letter**

March 2, 2018

Dear County and District Superintendents and Charter School Administrators:

## **A Guide for Possible Student Walkouts**

School shootings are devastating for victims, survivors, and communities and increase fear for students, parents, and educators throughout the nation. Our hearts go out to the victims and their families after the mass shooting at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida on February 14, 2018, as well as all victims of school shootings.

Some students may wish to show solidarity with the Florida victims by planning and taking part in walkouts on March 14, 2018. I applaud these students' empathy and civic engagement and support the right of all students to exercise their First Amendment rights.

I encourage administrators to work with students to create opportunities for all students to safely and respectfully express their views on this tragic event. This can be an extension of the Safe Havens discussions occurring in many districts, which involve making our schools safe for all students and parents while honoring student voices.

Administrators working with students, teachers, and parents can set up forums, assemblies, or small group activities. Teachers can guide students through age-appropriate discussions on key topics in classes such as American Government, history, civics, and language arts.

Students must, for their own safety, be urged to stay on campus.

I encourage educators to inform students that if they leave campus or class without permission, they may face school discipline. In addition, students should be reminded that acts such as blocking traffic or harming businesses are wrong, will shed a negative light on their cause, and can lead to legal action.

A walkout is unlikely to lead to a loss of funding based on average daily attendance (ADA) unless a student misses the entire day. Any loss of funds related to the walkout would not be recoverable through the emergency ADA (J13-A) approval process.

The Association of California School Administrators has created a Student Demonstrations Resource Web page at <http://bit.ly/2F96K8a> that may be helpful as well.

My hope is that plans for a walkout can lead to an opportunity for educators to understand the range of students' feelings and students can learn about government, civic participation, and how to engage in civil, respectful dialogue about critical and often emotional issues.

Sincerely,

Tom Torlakson

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2018-01511

Last Reviewed: Monday, March 5, 2018

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