



# PORT TOWNSEND

## School District

LEARNING THROUGH A SENSE OF PLACE

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March 1, 2018

A Joint Message from Blue Heron and Port Townsend High School

Dear Families,

Since the school shooting in Parkland, Florida, numerous student-led events are being planned across the state and country. It has come to our attention that our students may be planning to participate in the nationwide school walkout scheduled for 10:00 a.m. on Wednesday, March 14, to hold a peaceful rally to demand an end to violence in schools, and to honor those who have lost their lives due to school violence.

Advocating for an issue can be a powerful learning experience; it is also a good lesson in democracy and the right to have a voice in government. A large number of students in some of our neighboring districts have already walked out and held demonstrations. We acknowledge that only some of our students may participate in future events while others may choose not to be involved.

Our objective is to ensure that all students feel safe and respected no matter what they choose to do. We are asking our student groups to work with us out of respect to their fellow classmates, school staff, and the educational process, by notifying us of their intended action. While any walkout or staged demonstration would not be a school or district sponsored activity, we want to be available to provide the guidance needed, to ensure student safety to the best of our ability. We want our students to make good choices, treat others with respect and act in a responsible and safe manner. In the event that a walkout does occur, teaching and learning will continue and classes will operate on our normal schedule.

We encourage parents to talk with your son and/or daughter about possible protests and their potential participation. If your son and/or daughter plan to attend an upcoming event, please follow the school's guidelines for acceptable attendance procedures and the excusing of absences. Students who arrive late or miss class will be marked tardy or absent and typical school requirements for attendance will be followed as per student handbooks. However, our schools will not be suspending students who choose to participate in such events. Although, while we would prefer that any student action would take place outside of the school day, there are moments in time when young people decide that they've had enough with what society has to offer, and they want their voices to be heard. We believe this is one of those times. Societal change is often led by the youth in our country, and in a democracy, they too have a right to express their views. While our schools and district remain neutral to any political agendas, we are committed to supporting our students and their first amendment rights.

We will continue to keep you informed about any other local or regional events we become aware of that may impact the school day. Thanks to each of you for your support, and for supporting us in caring about your kids, as we work together to develop our next generation of leaders.

Please feel free to reach out to any of us if you have questions.

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