March 8, 2018

As you may know following the tragic shooting in Florida on February 14, national organizers have promoted a 17-minute nationwide student walkout in protest of school violence for Wednesday, March 14. At Hacienda La Puente, we recognize that students who express empathy for their peers in Florida are demonstrating the very habits of heart that we wish to cultivate in all. Additionally, we appreciate our students’ desire to exercise their habits of mind by seeking to understand the multiple perspectives around ways to address such tragedies. As educators, we seek to foster the growth of all of our students intellectually, emotionally, and socially. We know when students use their Constitutional right to freedom of speech to advocate for an issue they feel passionately about, it can be a powerful learning experience, and we want to facilitate that learning in our schools. As a District, we seek to address possible walkouts and other forms of peaceful assembly by continuing our focus on educating and providing guidance while supporting student and staff safety on campus. As a District, we must ensure that activities that occur are respectful, developmentally appropriate for our students, and safe for both participants and non-participants.

Our high school student leaders will work closely with their school administration to plan learning activities that appropriately reflect the school culture and environment. Please be assured that classes will continue on their normal schedule on March 14. We will deploy staff as necessary and are working with the Los Angeles Sheriff’s Department to ensure student safety throughout the day. We want all students to feel safe and respected, no matter what they choose to do. We encourage parents to engage in meaningful discussions with their students at home following the day’s activities.

In the elementary and middle school grades, including our K-8 schools, our school administrators are encouraged to work with their student leaders and staff members who may want to develop appropriate age-level activities at their schools, such as maintaining a caring school community and the importance of speaking up and school safety procedures.

Any parent whose student expresses an interest in discussing this issue is encouraged to contact your home school or the District. Additionally, all of our schools have access to counselors, social workers, and/or school psychologists who are also on hand to address your child’s needs.
Re: National Student Walkout  
March 8, 2018  
Page 2

Our hearts go out to the victims’ families and the Parkland, Florida community, as they cope with this senseless tragedy that occurred in a school. Our ultimate goal is to provide a safe and secure learning environment for all students, staff, visitors to our school campuses, school buildings, and school events. Our schools cannot do this without a partnership between parents, communities and local safety officials. We continue to be proactive in doing everything possible to protect the safety and welfare of everyone on our school campuses and ask for your continued cooperation, assistance, and support as well.

This also reminds us of the important role we all play, as a source of prevention to tragic and senseless acts of this nature. Our school safety plans are updated annually and reviewed by the District Police Department. These plans include protocols for addressing serious threats to the safety of students, employees, administrators, visitors and school property, and protocols for responding to emergency events that may occur. We will continue to work with our law enforcement officials to ensure we are providing our students an environment in school in which they feel safe and comfortable about reaching out to one of our staff members when they or someone they know needs help. Chief Babbitt will be convening a Safety Committee representing the four quadrants to review and ensure that the plans are reflective of safety needs.

Thank you for your continued support of your district and your school.

Sincerely,

Cynthia Parulan-Colfer  
Superintendent of Schools

CPC:nr