



# HANOVER COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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*Michael B. Gill, Ed. D.*  
*Superintendent of Schools*

March 9, 2018

Dear Families,

As you may be aware, a national movement on social media and through other sources is promoting a student walkout on March 14th as a response to the tragic events that occurred last month at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida. Hanover County Public Schools respects all of our students' right to free speech, freedom of expression, and civic responsibility. We also believe that maintaining safety and a productive learning environment is our highest priority.

We are committed to helping our students learn about civic engagement and stand ready to help them navigate these issues. As a public school division, we cannot, however, promote one perspective, issue, or cause over another in order to avoid establishing bias or an unintended precedent. Nevertheless, our principals (primarily at the high school level) have had productive conversations with students, teachers, other administrators, and division-level leadership regarding this matter over the past week or so. I am encouraged to learn of our students' desire to find opportunities to give voice to their feelings and perspectives without interrupting our instructional focus. I ask that students continue to reach out to their principal or any administrator with ideas that will strengthen our community in positive ways. Individual students or student groups that wish to organize activities during non-instructional time, such as during lunch or before or after school, are encouraged to connect with their school's club sponsors or administration.

As an additional consideration, please note that many of our secondary students will be engaged in the Virginia Writing SOL on March 14th. This test is a state requirement. Therefore, it is critical that this testing not be interrupted or disrupted.

As always, students should continue to abide by the expectations for behavior and attendance (as outlined in the *Code of Student Conduct*) by reporting to and staying in their designated, supervised areas during instructional time. We also remind students that they are not permitted outside of the school unsupervised as a matter of safety.

In the event of unapproved student demonstrations, our immediate focus will be to ensure the safety of all students. As always, we work in coordination with our law enforcement partners and other first responders to maintain up-to-date plans for a wide variety of scenarios. This helps to ensure a high level of readiness among our administration, faculty, and staff in order to address unplanned events on any given day.

I sincerely appreciate your support of our efforts to maintain our focus on student safety and learning.

Sincerely,

Michael Gill, Ed.D.  
Superintendent of Schools