

Bend-La Pine Schools: Guidance to Staff on Student Walkouts

The year 2023 has already seen numerous mass shootings across a variety of settings. In response, groups of students across the nation are calling for walkouts to protest gun violence/gun laws. BLS had students at two middle schools participate in protests already, and another is being called for on social media for Monday, May 1. The following information is intended to serve as guidance for all staff in preparation for events such as this.

District Guidance for Staff

There are differing views on the solutions to school gun violence. Most are political in nature. Public employees are prohibited from promoting their political views during their paid time. We know some staff members want to show support for their students engaged in events protesting gun violence. Since not all students will be of the same mind, some students will want to participate in the event, while others may not. Because it's important for all students to feel safe and supported with the opportunity for uninterrupted instruction, we ask staff not to participate in walkouts or other non-classroom events unless assigned to supervise.

The district will create information for school newsletters that outlines schools' responses to student walkouts, including the information that once students leave campus, they are no longer under the supervision of staff.

We are asking staff, under the direction of the principal to do the following:

- Remain neutral by not suggesting or condoning walkouts or other disruptions to the instructional day.
- **Emphasize productive ways students can make their voices heard** such as letter writing campaigns to their legislators, voter registration campaigns, etc. While not encouraging any type of walkout or protest, IF staff are hearing that these might occur, work with student organizers to identify an on-campus location, SHORT time frame, and point(s) of contact. Again, remain neutral while providing supervision for any type of protest. Students who follow these parameters will not be subject to any disciplinary actions or the assignment of an unexcused absence.
- Maintain regular instruction for all elementary students and secondary classrooms with students who remain in classrooms.
- Clarify that all school rules apply, and attendance will be taken before and after events in secondary classrooms. Students may not leave campus and must follow safety protocols. Should they choose otherwise, they will be unexcused and unsupervised. School staff will not attempt to follow students who leave campus unless there is a safety issue due to a student's age, disability, etc. Emphasize school priorities will be student safety and minimal disruption.

- Remind students who participate in extracurricular activities or sports that students with unexcused absences may not participate in practices or games on the day of the absence.
- Develop a supervision plan for students who participate in secondary student-initiated events on campus and for students who choose not to participate in those events.
- As always, our campuses remain closed to the uninvited public during school hours.
- Refer all media requests to Scott Maben, Communications Director.

Staff have asked when it may be appropriate to share their personal political views with students and to what extent they can support students who participate in scheduled student protests. The following guidelines are listed to assist in making these decisions.

Permitted: You can share your personal political views when asked by students, if developmentally appropriate. It is also acceptable to politely decline to share your political views.

Not Permitted: *Do not try to persuade students to accept your views or disparage students or other individuals for their views.*

Permitted: Classroom time may be used for discussion of the recent events if you teach in a content area with supporting learning targets. It is important to create an environment in which all students can safely express their opinions even if they are in disagreement.

Not Permitted: *Extended classroom time should not be dedicated for discussion of these topics in content areas without supporting learning targets related to the recent events.*

Permitted: When on duty, remain neutral with students and families regarding student-led walkouts.

Not Permitted: *Do not encourage or participate in student-led walkouts. Supervising an event under the direction of your principal or supervisor is acceptable, though remaining neutral as a supervising agent is the expectation.*

Permitted: You can wear items such as armbands, buttons or a color in support or memory of students.

Not Permitted: *You may not suggest/require students to wear supportive items.*

Permitted: Participation in off-duty events is your choice.

Not Permitted: Do not promote or discourage students' participation in marches or walkouts.

Permitted: Expressing your personal beliefs during non-paid time through social media and other venues is protected by the First Amendment.

Not Permitted: Do not use District resources such as email or District social media accounts to share your personal opinions.

Permitted: Use instructional time as intended.

Not Permitted: Do not retaliate against students who participate in student-led events by scheduling major exams, etc.