National Day of Action

Joint Statement

On April 20, schools, communities, educators, students and individuals across the country will mobilize and engage in myriad activities of civic engagement to spotlight the current reality of continued gun violence in schools and to raise awareness of the need for elected officials to act now to adopt policies that resolve this chronic problem.

In light of the horrific school shooting in Florida on February 14, we would be remiss if we did not acknowledge the critical importance of ensuring that this latest school shooting is the last school shooting and reiterate our commitment to working to improve federal policy as it relates to school and gun safety as well as mental health supports.

We have received countless inquiries from members about how to best support students and communities, balancing the enforcement of district rules and policies as it relates to attendance and student safety with the first amendment right of students. In response, we have compiled an initial listing of activities and programs that schools can consider adopting and implementing as part of the National Day of Action (and/or in place of a formal walk out).

In general, as it pertains to best practices during political demonstrations or days of action of any kind:

* The district should plan activities that respect the views of all students, particularly those who may disagree with the messaging around the National Day of Action. Any activity planned to coincide or support the National Day of Action should be clearly communicated ahead of time with parents, families, students and staff, including details about activities and expectations.
* The district must consider all students and staff, those engaging in the stated activity as well as those who may not participate. In particular, administrators should have a plan for how they will support students/staff for whom participation (or not) reveals secondary trauma or distress.  Will they make sure their psychologist/counselor is available to talk to students/staff during these events?

The following is an initial listing of activities and programs that schools can consider adopting and implementing as part of the National Day of Action.

* Wear Orange to show support for peaceful schools
* Organize a sit-in for your schools, whether before, during or after the school day
* Organize a teach-in
* Plan an on-site walk out, where students move to gymnasium or stadium for assembly or presentation or moment of silence
* Launch an anonymous reporting system in your school where students can report violence they have experience(d) or threats of violence
* Have students write letters to policy makers or to organizations that they support or oppose for their views on school and gun safety.
* Invite local, state and federally elected officials to your school for a discussion on mental health policies, bullying or community safety, e
* Hold a school assembly where the following could be discussed (with appropriate support staff leading the discussion):
  + Bullying
  + What to do if you see something on social media that is inappropriate or potentially dangerous
  + Presentations from school/district counselors on how to identify whether you or someone you know is depressed or needs help
  + How major tragedies like Parkland impact students and their feelings about coming to school
  + New options and opportunities for students to feel more included and safer in schools
  + The roll that students have in maintaining safe schools by following school safety guidelines (e.g. not providing building access to strangers, reporting strangers on campus, reporting threats to the school safety made by students or community members, etc.), communicating any personal safety concerns to school administrators, and accessing support for emotional needs.
* Invite community first responders (policemen, firemen, etc….) to speak to students
* Talk with students about what they should do if they hear others talk about guns or unsafe activities
* Let local press know what you are doing
* Host a walk-in, where community members, first responders and policymakers are invited on-campus for a scheduled student-led event.
* Create lessons on social justice and student activism that include discussion about how communities of color and poverty have and are impacted by gun violence, statistics about gun violence, youth agency, and the history of student-led social resistance that have sparked positive change.
* Before/After School or If Your School is Closed
  + Wearing orange, parents, educators, students, and community members encircle the school in locked arms, symbolic of protection. You can read the victims’ name or observe silence.
  + Plan a march to or schedule a meeting at a local legislator’s office.
  + Deliver letters that ask for sensible changes to gun laws and increases in mental health services.
  + Arrange a press conference with student and teacher speakers.