



Cherry Hill Public Schools Beck Middle School

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Bernard O'Connor, Principal
Albert Morales, Ed. D., Assistant Principal
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March 12, 2018

Dear Beck Middle School Family,

The Beck Middle School Administration, teachers and staff are aware of the local, national, and world-wide conversations around school safety. We are also aware that our students, your children, have varied knowledge and feelings about these world events.

We have taken an active role in speaking with student leadership to guide their level of participation in the nationally identified school walkout on March 14, 2018 while empowering their voices in a positive manner. Student leadership has indicated that some students are interested in walking out of school on this day as aligned with the national action to remember those lives lost in a tragic event that took place in a school which makes this very relevant to our students.

During our meetings with student leadership, I have shared with the students that walking out of our school building on March 14, 2018 is not the safest choice. We have spoken about alternate student-generated options to show support without walking out. One such option is to walk to the gymnasium where we would have 17 minutes of silence, one for each of the 17 victims, and we would release a balloon in honor of each victim. After the conclusion of the 17 minutes of silence, student leaders and I would take the 17 balloons to the front of the school where we would tie them in order to show #WeStandWithParkland.

We do know, however, that some students will still plan to participate in the walk out. We will be prepared to best supervise the students who choose this action by using those available staff members to assist with supervision. Students will be given time and guidance on how to participate in such an action with instructions on how to return to school in a timely and safe manner. Students who choose not to participate in either action will remain in classes supervised by their assigned teachers.

I ask you to please speak as a family about what choices your child can or should make on this day. I also ask that you continue to monitor social media and ask questions of your child to make sure the school is aware of any actions in which they or others wish to partake. Surprise actions are not necessary and can jeopardize safety.

PerSeverance • Integrity • Respect • Responsibility • COMPASSION

I will continue to support student voices and the school will always do what it can to keep students safe and learning. I will continue to have dialogue with students prior to and after March 14th in an effort to make safety a community responsibility so our students can ultimately focus on learning and enjoying age appropriate experiences that are aligned with their years in middle school.

As Dr. Meloche stated, “If you have a concern, even the slightest of concerns – speak up, say something, share your concern. Contact the school counselor, the school principal, or contact me directly if you have a concern. Contact the Cherry Hill Police Department if you have a concern that is criminal in nature – the men and women of the Cherry Hill Police Department, under Chief Monaghan’s leadership, are vigilant and engaged and involved, they are incredible partners for us all.”

Safety and security is everyone’s responsibility. If you have additional questions, please contact me. If your child is struggling, please contact their school counselor immediately – you may also find resources for parents, and mental health and crisis information resources, at www.chclc.org/departments/student-assistance.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Bernard O'Connor". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "B" and "O".

Bernard O'Connor
Principal