

Good evening. This letter is intended to provide information about today's walkout at East Greenwich High School as well as inform students of opportunities available to them tomorrow to meet with Mr. Heath and me to discuss events related today (3/14/2018).

East Greenwich High School operated today as we do on any Wednesday, with the exception of the one hour delay due to the weather. First period was cancelled due to the delay, and the second period began as normally scheduled at 9 AM. At the conclusion of second period, I called down any student to the auditorium who wished to participate in the Civic Action Club's organized activity in recognition of the national walk out. I had met with members and leadership of the club, their advisor Mr. Houghtaling, as well as a few members of student council, in the weeks prior to today to go over the details of what activities could occur and those that could not. We discussed how students could have an event to promote improving school safety while still honoring the school's responsibility of conducting a normal school day. In our conversations, it was agreed upon that interested students would "walk out" to the EGHS courtyard. This way students would be promoting school safety, and we would still be able to provide a level of security consistent with normal operations. However, due to yesterday's weather the courtyard was not available, and the event was moved to the auditorium.

As students began to file into the auditorium many were pausing at the entrance so another door was opened so more students could enter the auditorium. Students who were standing still and not moving were directed to either enter the auditorium or return to advisory. At this point some students went in, others went back to advisory, while others elected to walk out of the school's main entrance and gather at the front of the school. As an extra member of the East Greenwich Police Department was on hand at EGHS, this officer went outside with the approximately 50-60 students at the front of the school while Officer Branch remained inside EGHS.

Contrary to some inquiries I have received about today's events, no member of the student body was suspended from school or threatened with suspension from school. No doors or hallways were blocked or shut off to prevent students from exiting. No students were forced to participate or not to participate. Students in advisories, in the auditorium, and in hallways were supervised by faculty, staff, members of the EGPD, and administration. At the conclusion, when students who went outside returned, they signed in and were directed back to advisory, not to the auditorium as the 150-200 students involved in the Civic Action's Club were wrapping up.

Throughout the rest of the advisory block and the rest of the day I had numerous conversations with students along with Officer Branch, Mr. Heath and Mr. Houghtaling about students' ideas about what they expected to do during the walk out, what they had heard was going to happen in various schools throughout the State and Nation, and what some of the strengths and shortcomings were of the events at EGHS.

This evening I have received several emails from students, some with questions and concerns about rumors they are hearing about what occurred today, some requesting clarification of the decisions made by individuals and groups, while others want to talk about how student voice can be amplified at EGHS. It is with this in mind that Mr. Heath and I will be available to meet with students tomorrow morning before school in the auditorium, during all three lunches, and again after school in the auditorium to address any and all concerns they may have. I, along with Mr. Heath, look forward to tomorrow to hear more from our students about their experiences and perspectives. We thank you for your support of East Greenwich High School. Have a wonderful evening.

Sincerely,

Michael Podraza, Principal
East Greenwich High School