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March 2, 2018

Dear Elk Grove Unified Families,

My team and I are closely monitoring the aftermath of the horrific and frightful events that unfolded in Parkland, Florida. As the investigation and analysis of this event continues, please know that we are working closely with District staff, local law enforcement and community agencies to ensure our safety plans and protocols are in place. In response to the tragedy in Parkland, students across the nation are organizing to share their thoughts, fears and hopes that such an event never happens again. Events such as walkouts are especially challenging for schools as we have to balance student safety and required school attendance with the rights of students to express themselves.

Please know that student safety is our top priority and we will work diligently to ensure that our campuses remain disruption free on March 14th, the day of a planned nationwide school walk-out, and on other subsequent days when a walkout might be planned. The District has policies and procedures in place to support and protect students in situations that relate to freedom of speech, civic engagement, and controversial issues where we can encourage calm and civil discourse, provide appropriate supervision and discourage unsafe or disruptive behavior.

We are working with our site administration at every school site to put plans in place that puts student safety first, allows for student voice and upholds expressions of freedom of speech. As educators, we are well-equipped to help students with developing critical thinking skills, creative problem-solving, community engagement and integrity when discussing complex and controversial issues. Given the difficult nature of topics we currently face, your help to remind your student(s) about proper student conduct at school will be helpful in maintaining a peaceful and productive environment for discussing complex issues.

We have communicated our support for students with all staff and have also asked that our students' voices be allowed to be civilly and calmly heard by encouraging everyone to:

- Be cognizant of safety protocols and procedures, including substitute scenarios
- Keep empathy and humanity the focus of our conversations
- Involve families, students, staff and our community
- Be honest, trusting, non-defensive and transparent
- Stay intentionally focused
- Be action-oriented
- Be respectful and open to all voices; an impartial approach is key

The Elk Grove Unified School District leads by example on what good participatory citizenship looks like holding constructive discussions and forums where all students feel safe and valued. We want students to be excited about coming to school and confident in their belief and ability to be successful. Safety is our top priority so that learning remains our first priority. Thank you for your care, support and concern for our students' voices regarding the tragic situation.

Sincerely,

Christopher R. Hoffman
Superintendent