

CHERRY HILL PUBLIC SCHOOLS
Cherry Hill High School East
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February 27, 2018

Dear Cherry Hill East Community,

I am writing to provide information to the East community regarding concerns that have been expressed by students in recent days. Students have, in many ways, demonstrated the desire for their voices to be heard. Additionally, students have expressed a desire to both acknowledge and partner with the students of Parkland. Many East students have emerged as leaders in this situation. I am very proud of our students and the manner in which they have conducted themselves.

To provide clarity regarding much of what has been discussed, I offer the following:

On Monday morning, February 26, I was alerted to an online post that asked students to "...create as much disruption as possible." My immediate concern was for the safety of all students. As educators and adults, we have a responsibility to help our students channel their concerns, to have a voice, and to do so in an appropriate way. In an effort to preempt a potentially unsafe environment, I invited those students wishing their voices to be heard, to engage in dialog with me in the auditorium. Students absolutely have a right to share their thoughts and I have a desire to hear them. Many students participated and were able to share their concerns.

Today, Tuesday, February 27 many students arrived knowing that their classmates were calling for a "walk out" to occur at 8am. With this knowledge, I announced that my preference would be for students to come to the auditorium to have their voices heard. I expressed my concern for their safety in a walk out situation. Many students joined me in the auditorium and had an opportunity to express their concerns, while others decided to exit the building. Students walked to the track, joined by administrators and staff members who provided supervision. Ultimately, students chose to move to the front of the building, with a group congregating by the flagpole. Student leaders asked me to speak to the crowd. I was very proud of the students and the way in which they maintained their composure. The outside meeting moved into the auditorium where several students expressed their concerns for school safety. Many good ideas were shared and students were encouraged to continue their spirit of involvement.

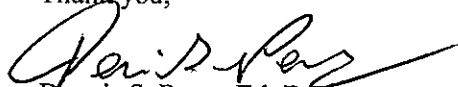
In an effort to move forward in a safe and productive manner, I am asking for the community to partner with the school as we continue to support our students through this impactful time. We are currently working to plan the following:

1. Students expressed a desire for regular open dialog with school administration. Moving forward, a time each week will be provided for students to meet with members of the school's administration.
2. Arrangements are being made to hold assemblies on school safety for students, engaging experts in the field.
3. An encouraging letter writing campaign to students in the Parkland schools.
4. An effort to provide students with the information and time to contact their congressional representatives about issues which are important to them.
5. On March 14, we are planning a student "Walk." This will be an organized and safe opportunity for students to participate in a national event.
6. A student-staff-parent-administration committee will be formed to discuss the current state of security at East and to make recommendations for improvement.
7. Support students in expressing their views in ways that will be heard.

I am formally retracting the statement that I made on Monday, February 26 regarding withholding participation in the senior trip, the senior prom, or graduation for participating in the "disruption" planned for that morning.

I want to thank our students for the respectful manner in which most have conducted themselves. We have amazing students who are passionate and involved. As a school community, I welcome this opportunity to work together for real change.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Dennis S. Perry". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Dennis S. Perry, Ed. D.
Principal