



EHS principal, staff, prepare for National Walkout Day set to honor Florida victims

by Dan Brannan, Content Director
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EDWARDSVILLE - Edwardsville High School Principal Dennis Cramsey and staff are preparing for an organized student participation in the National School Walkout scheduled for 10 a.m. on Wednesday, March 14. The walkout has been planned and coordinated nationally by Women's March Youth Empower in response to the Florida shooting.

On Feb. 14, 2018, at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla., an alleged gunman Nikolas Cruz, 19, hid in closets and fired a semiautomatic AR-15 weapon into classrooms, killing 17. He shot in five classrooms on the first and second floors of the freshman building. He eventually discarded the rifle, a vest, and ammunition in a stairwell, then blended in with fleeing students and initially escaped for being caught, authorities said.

In a letter to parents, Principal Cramsey said the following: "For the past several days, I have been in many conversations with students, parents, teachers, and administrators, including Superintendent Dr. Lynda Andre, regarding the National School Walkout scheduled to take place March 14 at 10 a.m. in each time zone. The walkout has been planned in response to the Florida school shooting last week.

"The event, planned by Women's March organizers, calls for students, faculty, parents, and others to walk out of school for 17 minutes — one minute for each person who was killed in the tragic shooting. The movement has gained momentum through social media. A second event is also being planned for April 20 to coincide with the 19th anniversary of the Columbine school shooting.

"In addition to discussing this with Dr. Andre, I have met with students who have expressed that they plan to participate in the walkout in March and April. At some level, we will facilitate a meaningful and safe event for our students in March. Please discuss with your child whether they plan to participate in the walkout. In any event, our teachers will remain in classrooms to provide valuable instruction for those who choose not to participate."

Cramsey continued with the following: "I would like to accomplish the following **three main objectives** by having a well-developed plan in place for March 14:

Minimize the disruption to the learning environment

"Validate students feelings and ideas surrounding school shootings and school safety. Maintain a safe school environment for all students, faculty, and staff during the event. I plan to meet with students in the coming weeks to prepare for the National School Walkout. By opening a dialogue with students about the senseless tragedies that have occurred in schools throughout our nation, we hope to gather their thoughts on how to make a difference and prevent future occurrences.

"I have directed our faculty to carry on instruction at the same high level that always occurs at EHS. I have also encouraged teachers to use the issues facing our schools and our nation as learning opportunities while remaining focused on the Board-approved curricula and without inserting political bias into instruction.

"I am asking you to speak to your child about their feelings pertaining to school safety and school shootings. Encourage your child to talk to me, a counselor, teacher, or an administrator about ways that we can ensure that the National School Walkout accomplishes the goals expressed above.

"I want to reiterate that school safety remains a number one priority for all of us. As we communicated in a letter to parents sent in the last week, I want to reassure you that we have a well-developed safety plan in place. We continually review our safety plan and execute drills throughout the year to practice our response to emergency situations in an effective manner, and our School Resource Officers Sergeant Breihan and Officer Arendell remain a visible presence in our buildings.

"Despite these safety measures, we continue to count on parental support in communicating to your child the importance of students complying with safety measures we already have in place."

Principal Cramsey reminded parents of **two important rules** that help keep your children safe:

"A critical factor in school safety centers on our ability to **identify which students should or should NOT be in our building**. Our students can and should be an integral part of keeping our school safe, and by following the two school rules listed below, students can help implement our safety plan. Failure to comply with these rules will result in disciplinary consequences.

"Each student has the responsibility to dress in a manner that allows the student to be easily identified. It has become fashionable for students to wear the hood on their hooded sweatshirts up on their heads in the building. I have reminded students that hats; headgear, including hoods on sweatshirts; caps; and outerwear such as coats and jackets may NOT be worn in the building during the school day and must be stored in the student's locker or book bag. Please reinforce this rule with your child to ensure they comply with this expectation. Failure to comply will result in disciplinary consequences.

"The **other key factor** in identifying students is having students wear their student IDs at all times while in school. Please discuss with your child the need to have his/her ID displayed at all times to allow school personnel to identify him/her as a student at EHS. Again, failure to comply will result in disciplinary consequences."