Dear DASD Families and Staff,

It’s been more than a couple of weeks since the tragedy that took place in Parkland, FL, and we know it continues to weigh heavy on the hearts and minds of all Americans. As you might be aware, students around the nation are planning walkouts to honor those killed - and to protest school violence. Anticipating that this movement may come to DeForest Area Schools, we want you to know how we are planning to respond.

While we support the good intentions behind this movement and appreciate student voice, the district is not endorsing a walkout. We understand some students at the high school and middle school may choose to exercise their First Amendment rights and decide to take action. Student advocacy can certainly be a powerful learning experience, but we also recognize that not all students will want to participate and may prefer to stay in class. In either case, our goal is to ensure that all students feel safe and respected.

If a walkout does occur, school will be in session and classes will continue on their normal schedule. If a student is planning to participate in a walkout, please note that we are requesting parents contact their school’s attendance office in advance to excuse their child from school for that time period. Absences without a parent excuse will be treated as we typically handle attendance with a call to a parent to inform them of the unexcused absence.

We are partnering with our local law enforcement to ensure the safety of our students on March 14. Available staff will be deployed as necessary, along with a planned presence of our local police, to promote student safety should a walkout occur at any of our schools. I want to encourage all of us to continue to honor those impacted by these senseless acts of violence by thoughtfully supporting the values of citizenship, responsibility and compassion - even as we strive to find a teachable moment in this tragedy.

In response to the increased anxiety around school safety, leadership from the school district and local law enforcement will be hosting a repeat (and update) of the informational session from this past fall on the district’s new school safety protocol for active threats. This meeting is scheduled for **Wednesday, March 21, 5:30-6:30 pm**, in the high school Performing Arts Center. Parents and guardians are invited to come and learn about our Options-Based Response to active threats.

Please continue to keep the Parkland, FL community in your thoughts as they continue to heal. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Eric Runez, Superintendent
(608) 842-6577