



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: February 27, 2018
To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads
Route To: Principals, School Resource Officers, Teachers
From: Robert Bumpus, Assistant Commissioner
Division of Field Services

Guidance for Possible Student Demonstrations

Students in various schools across the state have conducted or have called for walkouts to raise awareness regarding gun violence. Most notably, a national school walkout is currently being coordinated for March 14, 2018, to begin at 10 a.m. and last for 17 minutes in remembrance of the 17 victims of the recent tragedy at Marjorie Stoneman Douglas High School.

School districts expecting staff and students to participate in such an event should be mindful of the increased security risks posed by such gatherings. Given the predetermined and widely publicized date and time-specific call for this walkout, it should be remembered that anyone intent on a possible attack against such a school will be aware of the time and date of the walkout.

The New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has worked with state law enforcement officials to prepare the following guidance to help school districts take proactive steps to ensure the demonstration occurs under the safest conditions possible. The NJDOE will continue to share additional recommendations and best practices as we strengthen our efforts in school safety and security.

Location of Student Gathering. Schools are encouraged to prepare by taking steps to ensure any student gathering is away from areas in view of, or easily accessible to, the general public wherever possible. Assembly sites and pedestrian routes should not be exposed to vehicular traffic. Controlling access to the gathering site is critical to maximizing safety. Where possible, schools should consider utilizing venues that have controlled access points and that have been successfully used for large gatherings and events. It is advisable to hold such assemblies within school facilities or on athletic fields in order to properly secure participants and maximize safety.

Any site proposed for such a gathering should be checked in advance for any safety and security risks with the assistance of first responders. Sufficient security personnel needs to be scheduled to staff the gathering, and local law enforcement should be informed, consulted and on-hand should they deem it appropriate.

Media Considerations. Monitoring social media will provide increased situational awareness for administrators and security personnel, and may assist in identifying potential challenges or risks.

Although the walkout is anticipated to be of short duration, schools should prepare thoroughly by reviewing all policies and procedures, denying visitor access during the event, anticipating the possibility that medical needs may arise, and giving thought how best to handle any members of the media who may cover the event.

Established Protocols. In addition, the NJDOE reminds districts of the reporting requirements and protocols specified in the Memorandum of Agreement ([MOA](#)) between education and law enforcement officials.

Specifically, the MOA requires districts to report to law enforcement any incident that involves threatened or planned violence “whenever any school employee develops reason to believe that anyone has threatened, is planning, or otherwise intends to cause death, serious bodily injury, or significant bodily injury to another person under circumstances in which a reasonable person would believe that the person genuinely intends as some time in the future to commit the violent act or carry out the threat.”

It is important for teachers and staff to know that reporting incidents involving students to law enforcement may not necessarily result in criminal charges being filed. Maintaining a collaborative and open relationship between law enforcement and districts is a central tenet in providing the safest environment possible for students, teachers and staff.

If further guidance is required, the NJDOE’s Office of School Preparedness and Emergency Planning, at schoolsecurity@doe.state.nj.us, is available to assist with questions and concerns.

- c: Members, State Board of Education
- Lamont O. Repollet, Ed.D., Acting Commissioner
- NJDOE Staff
- Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
- Garden State Coalition of Schools
- NJ LEE Group