

Dear parents,

Our future is in good hands.

Today about 700-800 FLHS students peacefully gathered on our football field to engage as active and responsible citizens. Our student organizers of the National Walkout welcomed everyone, shared some statistics, and conducted a moment of silence for the victims of school violence. This was also accompanied by a chilling seventeen chimes in honor of the seventeen victims at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The students had invited Nancy Lefkowitz (Fairfield resident, RTM member, activist) to address them, and she provided the perfect balance between a comforting voice regarding the many resources we have to protect them but at the same time inspiring them to take their passion and initiate the changes they want to see happen. A number of student speakers followed who articulately shared their fears, their reaction to the violence, their desire to make changes, and their hope for the future.

Today was not about politics. Today was not about division or opposing sides. The themes the students kept reinforcing were about taking action, unifying, standing up for what you believe, being respectful of each other's voice, and above all, creating conversation around keeping all schools a safe place to learn. We had the town's Registrar of Voters represented to hand out information about registering to vote and some of our activist school clubs had tables to sign-up new members.

As an administrator, it is not normally my place to condone a purposeful walkout away from school and instructional time. However, as a lifelong educator (and former social studies teacher, to boot), it was incredible to see our students organize and take part in a nation-wide movement so successfully. We adjusted our schedule so most of the walkout occurred during "activity time," to minimally impact instructional time. Students who did not participate were supervised in classrooms or the library. The student organizers created a station in the library where students can compose a postcard to a legislator at any point today. Our Women's Choir sang a tribute during the ceremony.

Some students from next-door RLMS joined FLHS students on the field. They were respectful of their high school peers and very attentive of the speeches. Many thanks to Ms. Tiley and the RLMS staff for providing support and assistance to our staff in supervising. Our entire FLHS faculty pitched in either by standing with and supporting our students outside, or by providing safe comfort inside the building. The Fairfield Police Department was wonderful in its support and extremely thorough by covering every possible angle in keeping our students safe. Dr. Jones was on hand to see the students handle things so well and congratulate the organizers for their success.

Sometime soon, we'll be launching a campaign around some newly designed social and civic expectations. As a sneak peak, our motto is "Your Falcon Footprint Matters," accompanied by the expectations to "be an active and responsible citizen" as well as "engage with the world around you and realize the impact." Today was a perfect example of how our students are already on the right path to these ends.

Thank you,

Greg Hatzis, Headmaster

P.S. Some pictures are attached since it was a closed campus to all outsiders today during the event.



michele hermsen
photography





Pictures provided by Photography Class students Christina Convertito, Josh Schaffer and Sarah Topar, as well as Photo teacher Michele Hermsen.