

Gun Violence Prevention and Student Voice Talking Points for PTAs

We have all watched in horror as we have observed 6 K-12 school shootings so far this year, most recently, the shooting that occurred at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Florida where 17 students and faculty lost their lives. Over the next two months, students across the country are planning walkouts and marches to protest gun violence in response to these events and to mark the 19th year since the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado.

The following are walkouts and marches we are currently aware of:

- Students from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School are planning to march in Tallahassee the week of Feb. 20.
- On March 14, students and teachers are planning to walk out of their schools at 10 a.m. local time for 17 minutes to honor the 17 lives lost at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. This event is being planned in part by the organizers of the [Women's March](#).
- On March 24, the kids and families of [March For Our Lives](#) will take to the streets of Washington, DC. March For Our Lives is created and led by students across the country.
- Another [National High School Walkout](#) is planned at 10 a.m. on April 20, which will mark the 19th year since the shooting at Columbine High School in Colorado.

Students have a right to speak, as protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution. This is a critical time for all of us to be their audience—to respect their voice, listen to their experience and viewpoint and observe their emerging movement. We entrust our students to our school leadership to ensure a safe environment for our students' voices to be heard.

Some state and local PTAs may choose to support a walkout or march that is occurring in their school community. For all of us, we believe that it is important that our association in no way co-opts the efforts of our students. It is their voice, not ours. Above all, we believe it is essential that we listen to what our students have to say. As we listen to our students and our children, our resolve will be strengthened and our advocacy better informed.

This document seeks to provide suggested talking points on the walkouts and the importance of students raising their voice. State and local PTA leaders are encouraged to use this document if it would be helpful to guide their responses to membership, partner organizations and stakeholders concerning the issue. In the event media inquiries are received about National PTA's position on the walkouts, please direct them to Heidi May Wilson, senior manager of media relations for National PTA, at hmay@pta.org.

Talking Points on Student Walkouts and Marches

- We support students' rights to speak as these rights are protected by the First Amendment to the United States Constitution.
- This is a critical time for all of us to respect the student voice, observe their emerging movement, and listen to what they have to say.
- We recognize and appreciate that our students, like all of us, want and need to be heard.
- Our students are the ones living in the current environment in schools, and it is important that we learn from their experience and viewpoint.
- As parents, we all need to listen to our children's unique voice, and it is especially critical that we do so now.
- It is urgent that we work together to find solutions and make meaningful policy changes to ensure that all students have a safe environment in which to thrive and learn.
- Every student deserves to learn and grow in a safe environment.
- It remains a top priority of National PTA to promote safety for children and youth and improve education. As we listen to our students and our children, our resolve will be strengthened and our advocacy better informed.