



Communicating About Safety in Schools: Up Next - National School Walk-out Day

In the wake of the Florida school shootings, I have talked and assisted many districts in the last several days about how to communicate about school safety. Some districts have had to respond to perceived threats, other districts have been proactively communicating with students and parents about current safety precautions and practices already in place.

This has caused me to think ahead to what's next. In particular, I am thinking about how your high school and middle schools will pre-plan for the March 14 National School Walk-out. I'm sure you and your staff will discuss it. It will undoubtedly draw local attention. Perhaps you'll hear from students (or you already have) and parents. I am not advising you on how to handle this situation: That is not my role. I am urging you to pre-plan communication.

Here is some food for thought on how to proactively communicate:

Please consider these as guidelines to developing key messages to help you deliver your communication:

- What have you decided? WHY did you make this decision? (Your WHY is very important.)
- Will you allow/disallow the activity and again, WHY?
- How else are you discussing school safety with students? Fill in the blank.

Here are the audiences to consider:

All staff and the Board of Education;

Parents and students (perhaps we would address them together, in this case);

Law enforcement, mental health partners, business partners;

Media if contacted.

People will undoubtedly agree and disagree with your decisions so it is important to be proactive and be prepared. In summary, once you decide how you are responding, decide how to proactively communicate, too.

And as always, if I can be of assistance, please let me know!