

Strategies to Address Student Walk-Outs and Threats of Walk-Outs (Regarding current immigration legislation)

In order for students to remain safe during student protests and threats of protests, different levels of strategies need to be in place. It is important that as adults we avoid a combative position with students, if at all possible. Protesting is every student's right. As adults we need to provide students with guidance in becoming proactive by implementing effective and peaceful activities in order to produce the change they desire. Their energy can be focused on positive activities instead of violent activities. These times can be teachable moments...affording us adults an opportunity to teach young people about: peaceful demonstrations; learning about the issue in more detail (studying the legislation carefully); reinforcing the need to be aware of the activities of our elected officials; and exercising our right to vote.

Tips for School Administrators

The following are **suggestions that school administrators** can implement as they identify the threat of student unrest:

1. Quickly research the issue via news articles, internet, legislation reviews, and interviews with key staff, law enforcement, and students to better understand their perspectives.
2. Develop talking points to help others understand the issue and how to support the students to find a positive outlet for their protest.
3. Involve local law enforcement in your plan and strategy so they understand your intent and collaborate with you.
4. Provide talking points to teachers and staff regarding the legislation.
5. Identify vocal student leaders and inform them where they may convene for a meeting to express their concerns and brainstorm ideas.
6. Identify key teachers who have a positive rapport with many students to assist in facilitating student forums.
7. Provide a well-supervised forum (an opportunity to convene) for student leaders to express concerns and brainstorm options that would appropriately benefit their goals of protest (peaceful demonstration).
8. Establish an atmosphere of respect for all in the forum.
9. Convene some members of the community and agency members, including law enforcement, who are student friendly and experienced to support their efforts toward developing a plan and activities that would include appropriate methods of protest with the greatest efficacy.
10. Provide highly visible law enforcement presence on and around campus throughout the day.
11. Provide communication to parents via letter or newsletter and utilize the media and the school marquee to inform members of surrounding community, parents, and other stakeholders of efforts to address this issue (See attached SAMPLE letter).

In case students are threatening to walk out of school during school hours and you do not plan on stopping them from leaving as this may cause further confrontation:

1. Plan a safe route with law enforcement.
2. Work with student leaders on safety issues.
3. Remind students they still may face school discipline issues to legal issues.
4. Video tape students leaving.

In case students are threatening to walk out of school during school hours and you will not allow them to go:

1. Place school under general Lockdown.
2. Inform students that they will only be allowed to walk from class to class during passing periods.
3. Inform students that there will be a meeting after school where they will be able to discuss the issues and have their voice heard.
4. Provide for guest speakers to come in to discuss appropriate ways to protest.

In case you are unable to stop a walk out during school hours, meet with local law enforcement to provide the most peaceful walkout possible under the circumstances.

Tips for Teachers

It is important that adults utilize these difficult times as opportunities for teachable moments. This is the time to demonstrate to students that the education offered is connected and relevant to their realities. The following are several **suggestions how teachers** can assist students to be proactive and positive in the pursuit of their objectives:

1. Include discussions on these issues when appropriate in classes such as political science, history, and others.
2. Inform all students of the cost to schools (ADA) when they leave campus, and how that cost affects student programs.
3. Encourage students to collaborate with existing student groups and clubs in order to strengthen their efforts.
4. Students may research adult groups such as unions, political groups, and others that support their efforts by taking a political stand with them.
5. Students may research supporting a campaign through letter writing, phone calling, faxing, and emailing to local, state, and federal representatives encouraging them to support their issue.
6. Encourage students to develop meetings during lunch and after school to educate other students on their issue (include speeches, music, poetry, and pamphlets).
7. Remind students that violent demonstrations, blocking traffic, or harming businesses may affect public opinion to adversely effect their cause.
8. Encourage students to develop theater/drama pieces to be performed in the school and community to raise awareness about their issue.
9. Students might develop web sites, write letters to the editor of newspapers, and write blogs to inform others about their issue.

10. Teach students that they have a powerful voice that can effect a change, and to develop all their activities in the spirit of great leaders such as Cesar Chavez, Martin Luther King Jr., and Mahatma Gandhi.

Lessons Learned

Lesson's learned from student walk-outs and protests from Los Angeles, Orange, Riverside, and San Diego Counties have indicated that working proactively with students has provided the safest outcomes. It is encouraged that schools discuss the real legislation with students due to misinformation being spread. In addition, areas that provide a safe opportunity for students to be heard have experienced fewer problems. The following is a list of recommended actions that have worked in other areas. Please review with your school safety team and district office to determine your best plan of action.

Suggestions for dealing with student walk-outs:

- Suggest students march after school.
- Partner with local law enforcement to identify protest routes.
- Identify and meet with vocal student leaders, and inform them that their voices are respected.
- Remind students of the cost to the school and the students when students leave during school.
- Organize the student leaders to inform students that there will be a meeting after school to cover the rules for a peaceful march.
- Hold the after school meeting.
- Law enforcement discusses peaceful protest, routes, including do's and don'ts for the peaceful march.

If you have utilized other strategies that have proven effective, please send those strategies to the San Diego County Office of Education Safe Schools Unit, Violence Prevention/Intervention Team. We would appreciate having a host of effective strategies for all schools. Email addresses are provided below.

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