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Director of Schools

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Dear Cleveland Middle and Cleveland High School Parents and Staff:

Recently, I have learned students are considering plans to exercise their constitutional right to peacefully assemble in order to bring national attention to the topic of school safety. I respect and support the right of our students to advocate for causes that are important to them and welcome the opportunity to work with any student group to discuss appropriate and creative ways to do so while at school. School Superintendents across the state received guidance from the Tennessee Department of Education supporting the rights of students to peacefully assemble.

We are currently aware that students may consider peacefully assembling at Cleveland Middle and Cleveland High on Wednesday, March 14, as part of a national movement, and we are working with student leaders and teachers to ensure students can express themselves through peaceful assembly in a way that protects the safety of every student, including those who both do and do not participate, and respects the views of every member of our school community. In addition, it is important to know that disorderly conduct that disrupts school operations is not acceptable and will be handled compassionately, but firmly, in accordance with our board policy and internal procedures. This assembly is expected to last 17 minutes in honor of the 17 victims in the recent Florida school shooting. No one from outside the school community will be allowed to come on campus to join in this assembly.

I encourage you to talk with your child(ren) about how they may be feeling about this topic. Our educators will also be highlighting the connection between what students are learning in the classroom, particularly on civic engagement and students' constitutional rights, and what they are seeing in the real world. We love the passion of our students on various issues, and we recognize that student activism is part of the learning process.

If you or your child(ren) would like to speak with a school counselor regarding fears or anxieties regarding school safety or what they may see on social media or TV regarding incidents like what happened in Florida, please feel free to reach out to your school's counseling team. The Tennessee Department of Mental Health is also available at 855-274-7471 and they are available 24/7.

Thank you for your continued support of Cleveland City Schools. You are welcome to contact your school administrators with specific questions.

Respectfully,

Dr. Russell Dyer
Director of Schools