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March 14, 2018

## **Bellevue Students Participate in Walkouts**

### *Student-led demonstrations call for action*

**BELLEVUE, Wash.** – More than 2,600 students at middle and high schools in Bellevue participated in student-led walkouts, demanding action from elected officials to improve school safety, protesting gun violence in schools, and honoring school shooting victims, including the 17 students and teachers killed at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Fla.

Events were student-organized and led, varying by school. At all schools, students left their classes at 10:00 a.m., gathering outside their school buildings. At most schools, students walked around campus, with students at some schools briefly leaving campus on pre-determined routes before returning to campus to continue their demonstration. At each school, students from different student groups spoke out to advocate for increased school safety, with some calling for gun legislation and others requesting more mental health support, other students held posters with similar messages or representing other viewpoints.

“The argument (around gun control) is very polarized so I thought students needed to hear each other’s perspectives and start taking the first step into civic action and trying to make a difference,” Newport High senior Trisha Dey said about why she got involved with the walkout. “I thought this would be a good way to stand in solidarity with Parkland and show politicians that though we might disagree, we all want to see a change.”

Like their peers throughout the country, Bellevue students honored the 17 victims of the Parkland shooting, with many demonstrations observing a moment of silence or reading aloud the names of the 17 students and teachers killed. After 17 minutes, most students quietly returned to class. At least one school extended their demonstration to allow for further discussion amongst students.

“This was a platform going on around the entire country,” said Bellevue High junior Hailey Cook, one of the leaders of the protest at her school. “We can step up and use our voice to get the attention of our representatives and the media.”

School and district staff members were present at the protests to ensure student safety throughout the events.

“I’m proud of how our students respectfully and peacefully exercised their rights to speak up and advocate for change,” Superintendent Ivan Duran said. “Our most precious resource is our students and we will continue to make their safety a top priority.”

Bellevue students united to care for their community, speaking out on a topic that impacts them all.

“This is my second family,” Sofia Larrondo, a junior at Bellevue High and one of the leaders of the school’s protest said. “These people mean a lot to me. We’re all here together for the same reason and that’s meaningful.”

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