

# The Log's View:

## Forum vs. Walkouts: Where will your voice be heard best?

After a massacre in Parkland, Fla., the tide maybe turning on gun control. Dozens of student survivors from Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School have stepped up to speak about the shooting. They organized protests and social media campaigns, while tens of thousands more high school students, teachers and administrators across the country have vowed to walk out of their high schools on two different dates in solidarity and in a plea for change. At Oak Park High School, many students already planned via social media to walk out on those dates.

Principal Chris Sartain, Ed.D., has said he plans to host a forum of students and administrators on Monday, March 12, during AR “in lieu of the walkouts.” But this plan potentially leaves some voices unheard.

At this point, selection for the panel would be “student-led, because the last thing I want is for students to think we are trying to steer the conversation a certain way,” Sartain said.

The Log sees that this process reflects good intentions, though by its very nature it excludes many voices. Imagine any given student being asked to select other students to participate. They would almost certainly choose either their friends or ‘popular’ students, thus nullifying any attempt at diversity in all its forms. Even with a more formalized process, there will be too much opportunity for bias to make the forum truly representative of all students. Another option would be to select students by random selection, which may end up with a group unfairly biased in one direction by accident.

There is no way 10 students can ever truly represent

all 1,500-plus of us. The idea of a forum or panel while well-intentioned is insufficient in The Log’s opinion. With a walkout, each student represents himself or herself by walking or not. The visual is the message.

Sartain said, “I think the purpose of a walkout is when people refuse to listen to you, and at Oak Park, I think that’s just not the case.”

While it is true that the Oak Park administrators and teachers are good at asking for, interpreting, and often following student feedback and suggestions, the walkouts are not about Oak Park.

The walkouts are about our federal government’s refusal to listen to students and to provide for their safety. They are also about showing solidarity with students at schools where administrators and teachers don’t ask for their opinions.

Other schools across the nation are sponsoring walkouts so students, teachers, and administrators can take part and be heard together, despite any possible safety concerns. Sartain said, “What if you guys advertise a student walkout on March 14th and someone that wanted to do harm to the students of Oak Park saw that? That might be a day that they might circle on their calendar.”

But on the day of the eclipse, nearly every single student in the school was outside on the football field, and there was no harm done. To compare, on an ordinary day in March 2017, a threat was called in about a bomb inside Oak Park and students were held in a lockdown until transferred to Staley. In fact, the highest fatality school shootings (Sandy Hook, Parkland and Colum-

bine) all took place indoors.

Ultimately, that is the reason why The Log feels that we need an official walkout. Though schools and districts may take actions to feel safer, we will never actually be safe until changes are enacted on the national level. The Log staff believes there is only so much one school or district can do to make its students safe.

Instead of a forum comprised of specially-selected students and adults, or a students-only walkout, The Log suggests the administrators of Oak Park should decide to sponsor a walkout on the days and times that students already planned to walk out and participate. Sartain is correct a walkout wherein students alone leave the school might be unsafe. But if the school sponsors the walkout then competent adults can join them and keep them safe. This solution also offers teachers and administrators a chance to participate in the walkout

movements when they might not have otherwise, given they would be teaching and supervising students who choose to stay in class.

Of course, any student who did not agree with the walkouts for any reason, or who did not want to participate, or whose parents did not want them to participate, would not have to do so. Just as with the eclipse, students could get permission forms signed to go outside and express their opinion.

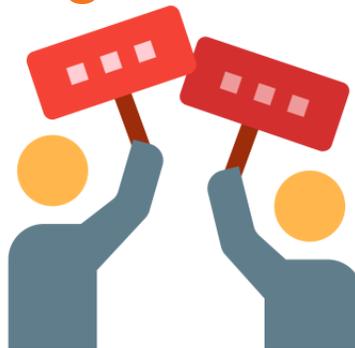
This kind of sponsored walkout is not a difficult task. Other schools across the nation, including Park Hill School District, plan to do so. These walkouts are as much a once-in-a-lifetime event as the eclipse. Oak Park should not be offering

alternatives to the walkouts, but instead encouraging and helping its students to advocate for themselves in a manner they see fit.

**“The walkouts are not about Oak Park. The walkouts are about our federal government’s refusal to listen to students and to provide for their safety.”**

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**We are the change.**



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