REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE SUPERINTENDENT
MEMORANDUM

TO: School Committee
FROM: Dr. Zielinski
DATE: March 30, 2018
SUBJ: Update on Nationwide Student Walkout

At our last School Committee meeting on March 19, 2018 a student, Piper Lapointe raised concerns about the High School’s support for the planned Nationwide Student Walkout. I provided the School Committee with information about the assemblies held and the planned student activities (see attached). It should be noted that the events are all student generated and student run. These events were scheduled to take place during school hours, and the administration had been working with student representatives to ensure that the event would run, be safe for those students who wished to participate, and cause the least amount of disruption as possible to the school day. As you are also aware, our weather-related closure interfered with the planned walkout on March 14, 2018.

At this time, please be aware that Piper LePointe did hold a student meeting after school in the Media Center, she had approximately ten other students participate. The students generated many ideas and are working with a teacher advisor to implement these ideas.
Begin forwarded message:

From: "Zielinski, Elizabeth" <ZielinskiE@KingPhilip.org>
Subject: Inquiry related to student complaint
Date: March 21, 2018 at 3:10:03 PM EDT
To: Mike Gee <creegee2@aol.com>
Cc: School Committee <schoolcommittee@kingphilip.org>

At Mondays School Committee meeting a student, Piper Lapoint, as well as Marian the School Committee Student Representative spoke about issues they had regarding the assemblies held by the administration to discuss the March 14, 2018 Nationwide student walkout. I spoke with Dr. Mobley at length regarding the walkout prior to the date in regards to the what students might be planning and in response to inquiries received related to Dr. Mobley’s connect-ed messages to families about the organization of the walkout.

I have included Dr. Mobley’s timeline of events as it pertains to the assemblies and specific communication between herself and Piper Lapoint who presented the complaint to the School Committee on Monday night. Piper did have her meeting yesterday in the Media Center and the assembled group generated ideas.

1. 3/2/18 the High School Administration held two assemblies to gain ideas from the student body of what message and actions they would like to convey and execute on March 14th.

2. The first assembly was for the juniors and seniors. The assembly started off with a review of our core values and that we wanted to hear what message the students had and how they wanted to convey that message on March 14th. The assembly quickly turned into a political gun control battle with students booing and clapping for various messages. They communicated they did not have one unified message but when asked to stand if they believed violence in schools should stop the whole auditorium stood. While trying to regain the flow of the assembly, at the very end of the assembly, I interrupted a student and moved on to wrap up. Students remained in the auditorium after the bell rang despite the 9th and 10th grade students being in the auditorium.
3. The second assembly was for 9th and 10th graders. The assembly started 10-13 minutes late as the students from the first assembly wanted to talk more. Ground rules of no clapping or booing were laid out as we did not want the assembly to become a political debate with students pitted against each other. Unfortunately, the discussion went immediately to second amendment and gun control. We tried several times to redirect the conversation towards solutions and support for the Parkland students. 25 minutes into the assembly it was not productive so we ended the assembly.

4. Later that evening reflecting upon how the assemblies went I sent an email to the student whom I felt I owed an apology to. (Piper Lapointe) It was not my intention to be rude or disrespectful, but in cutting her off I felt I needed to reach out to her.

5. A string of emails went back and forth from March 2nd through March 15th where Piper and I discussed her hosting an after school meeting to continue the discussion of how our students could support the students from Parkland.

Below are the emails:

On 3/14/18 Piper sent me this:

Dear Dr. Mobley,

Thank you for your help and support. I have just reached out to Mrs. Rowe about looking into a space and time to put together this discussion. As school was cancelled today and since the walkout did not happen, I was thinking this discussion could be more about what other actions we could take as a school. I don’t know what you and Dan may already be in the works of planning but I would be glad to give any input about what we may do next/instead of the walkout. Thank you again and have a good snow day!

From,

Piper LaPointe
My response was this:

Hi Piper,

We have no plans as of now. I am trying to figure a way to not have seniors make up additional days. We might have school on Good Friday and that would take care of this one, but more snow is scheduled for next week. Ugh...

I think continuing the conversation about the power students have for change is an excellent idea! Keep me posted and thanks!

Dr. Mobley

Her response:

Hi again Dr. Mobley,

Thank you so much for your support! I will definitely keep you posted!

-Piper

6. Piper and I exchanged a few more emails about the Boston March on 3-24 and she was interested in getting a group of students together for that. I explained the facility use form to her and she filled it out and sent it to Mrs. Rowe the next day, which I later signed (process).

7. I met with Piper on 3-15-18 to be clear that the discussion could not be about a plan to miss any class time. We were already at a deficit for seniors in regards to time on learning but that she is welcome to hold the discussion and if they have other ideas I am open to them. We discussed that she would get the message out through social media.

8. The process at KPHS for use of facilities, announcements or posters/flyers is that all must be signed off on by an administrator. On Monday while I was at DESE I received a text from Mr. Lewis to call him because Piper was upset that her announcement did not go through. Mr. Lewis was not aware of the discussion group and would not approve the announcement without speaking to me.
9. I called Mr Lewis who read the announcement to me: "Tomorrow right after school, there will be a discussion held in the library to talk about what we can do as a school since the walkout last Wednesday did not happen due to the snow day. Anyone is welcome, every idea is appreciated, however, this will not be a debate. If you have any questions, See Piper LaPointe."
   
a. The wording of this announcement was not the approach that we had agreed upon. I was under the impression from our emails and our meeting that the discussion was about alternatives to the walkout and specifically trying to organize a group of students to participate in the Boston March on 3-24-18.

10. Piper was not happy with what Mr. Lewis communicated and later that day sent me this to which I did not respond:

3-19-18 email

Dear Dr. Mobley,

After school I went to see Mr. Lewis after having talked to him earlier that day about him not letting my announcement be put over the loudspeaker this morning. He informed me that after you two discussed, you would not allow my announcement to be spoken at all over the loudspeaker. When I asked why not as you had approved the event, he said that when you signed the paper, it was to allow me to use the space and not because you essentially approved of the discussion. He said that the school did not want to be associated with the discussion. Obviously this frustrates me because I have worked so hard in the little time there has been to put this event together and the whole time I thought you were on board and wanting to help. However, now I see a line has been drawn in the sand. In part I have felt that I am doing the job that I feel the school should have taken up in keeping this discussion going as it is applies to schools across the country. I feel very strongly about this cause too and after the assembly, the snow day last Wednesday which prevented the walkout from happening, and now this, I hope you can understand my frustration. After the snow day last Wednesday, many students felt that we should have been able to have school as the conditions seemed fine all day. As a result, many felt that school was cancelled because you all did not want to have to allow the walkout to happen. I am increasingly starting to believe this as now I see what the school’s true intentions are. You seem only to have allowed the walkout and my discussion in order to please those who wanted to participate. As you may be able to see, I am very upset by all that has happened and would like to speak with you tomorrow morning if at all possible.

Piper LaPointe
11. On Tuesday 3-2-18 Piper never came to see me to discuss the announcement. She distributed flyers without approval. I did not call her down to discuss the flyers because they were well written, I would have approved them and I didn’t want to upset her. The flyer specifically stated, “Today March 20th, after school a DISCUSSION will be held in the library. We will talk about what we can do together as a school as an alternative to the 3/14 walkout.”

12. Yesterday, Tuesday 3-21-18 I phoned Mrs. Levesque to ask about the meeting and get her thoughts. She explained that she told Piper she would supervise the discussion as long as it was not political and focused on getting a group to attend the 3-24-18 March on Boston and ideas about that. She also informed me she had told Piper to change the announcement and she was surprised when I read her the announcement as it was not written as she had expected. Mrs. Levesque stated that about 10 students attended the discussion and that they generated ideas. She reminded the students that they would need to obtain permission to carry out some of their ideas.

Dr. Liz