

Dear Ponderosa Families,

I hope you had a good weekend. Some of you may have heard about a peaceful protest or gathering organized that may take place at our school on Wednesday, March 9. When these concerns came to my attention and to the attention of district leaders on Friday, February 26, we immediately began to work with the PHS leadership team and district leaders to create opportunities to understand and resolve the concerns.

We feel it is important for all staff and students to pursue opportunities provided in our district to get accurate information and work together to find solutions. As you may know, this usually starts with building leaders, like myself, and then goes to the director of high schools, assistant superintendent and superintendent. We have many levels of appeal for all students, staff and parents. We have done great things using this approach.

In an effort to find a win-win solution, we offered a voluntary forum where PHS students could come and have their questions answered and voices heard by both building and district leaders. This option was declined. In addition, DCSD Superintendent Liz Fagen reached out and offered to meet prior to the planned protest. Unfortunately, this meeting was declined until after the protest.

We had hoped that efforts to respond to concerns would lead to a resolution. However, it appears the protest will move forward this Wednesday. While we do not prefer this approach, as it may be disruptive and potentially unsafe, please know that we have created a safety plan for our students if this protest does occur. If students are going to make this choice we feel it is important to do what we can to keep our students as safe as possible.

We also want to make sure you are aware that students who choose to leave class to attend the protest will be marked unexcused. This is consistent with the DCSD Student Code of Conduct - an unexcused absence means an absence with or without prior knowledge and approval of the parents, but for reasons not acceptable to the principal. In addition to missing classroom instruction, the Ponderosa administrative staff may impose appropriate penalties regarding an unexcused absence. Penalties for student truancy with no other complicating factors may include a warning, school detention or in-school suspension. This is in alignment with our school truancy policies and practices.

Finally, our team is working closely with DCSD Security and our local law enforcement partners to have an increased presence in the area to provide the highest level of safety to our students, given the circumstances. If you are planning to visit our school on Wednesday, as always, you will be required to provide identification. Under no circumstance will any unidentified individual be allowed inside our school. **Classes will be held as planned and we will follow our normal schedule.** If you have any further questions or concerns, please let me know.

Thank you,

David Haggerty  
Principal, Ponderosa High