**A Joint Message from Bellingham, Options, Sehome and Squalicum Principals**

Dear High School Students and Families,

It has come to our attention that some students from all four of our local high schools (Bellingham, Options, Sehome and Squalicum) are planning to walk out of class at 11:22 a.m. tomorrow, Wednesday, Feb. 21 to gather in their respective schools to honor those who died in the school shooting last week in Parkland, Florida. Some students are then planning to leave campus to attend a rally at Bellingham City Hall to protest school violence. Other students may return to class, while others may choose not to participate in either event.

We are proud that student representatives from all four high schools are collaborating together and taking action for something they believe in. This is a great example of The Bellingham Promise’s One Schoolhouse Approach in action. It’s also a good lesson in democracy and the right to have a voice in government. Students feeling passion and advocacy about an issue can be a powerful learning experience. Students are spreading the word about this event through social media and fliers.

That said, we want to ensure that ALL students feel safe and respected no matter what they choose to do. School and classes will be operating on our normal schedule. Some parents may decide to excuse students from school to participate in the off-campus protest.

We encourage you to talk with your child about the protest and their participation. If your child plans to attend the event at city hall, please discuss how they will be getting there (and if necessary, what transportation they will be using). Our first priority is to keep all of our students safe, and when students get into cars and leave campus, it is more challenging to look out for their well-being. Bellingham Police are expected to be at city hall to help students peacefully protest.

Since the school shooting last week, many student-led events are being planned across the state and country and may occur in the coming weeks and months. We will continue to keep you posted on any other local events that may impact the school day.

Please feel free to reach out to any of us if you have any questions,

Linda Wise Miller, Bellingham Principal

Byron Gerard, Options Principal

Michelle Kuss-Cybula, Sehome Principal

James Everett, Squalicum Principal