



Watch: Central Jersey students participate in National School Walkout

[Mike Deak, Nick Muscavage, Bob Makin, Cheryl Makin, Pamela MacKenzie, Jenna Intersimone, Suzanne Russell, Susan Loyer and Paul C. Grzella](#), Courier News and Home News Tribune

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(Photo: Nick Muscavage/Staff Photo)

CENTRAL JERSEY - About 50 people — a mixture of adults and students — attended a rally Wednesday afternoon on the steps of the Somerset County Courthouse in Somerville to honor the 17 victims of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School shooting in Parkland, Florida, last month.

The cold, gusty winds and random snowflakes did not deter the enthusiasm of the crowd that cheered on the young speakers. Voter registration forms were handed out to those about to turn 18.

After asking for a moment of silence to remember the victims, Christina Gomez, president of the Student Council at Hunterdon Central High School, said, "we deserve to be safe" and parents shouldn't have to worry if their children will return home safe from school.

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She said it was time for young people "to take control of our futures," adding, "We are continuously underestimated as just kids." [Fullscreen](#)

They won't be underestimated — or unheard — any longer.

PHOTOS: National School Walkout in Central Jersey

Thousands of students around Central Jersey, along with millions around the nation, walked out of their classrooms at 10 a.m. Wednesday to protest gun violence after a shooter opened fire on students and faculty at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School on Valentine's Day, killing 17.

Sahil Patel, a senior at Watchung Hills Regional High School in Warren, organized his school's walkout.

"I am doing this because I'm tired of seeing kids die on the news," he said. "I'm tired of this happening regularly. I'm tired of kids being scared for their lives in their own schools."

Since the shootings, activists have chosen the date of March 14 — exactly one month after the shooting — for the organized nationwide student walkout to leave classrooms for 17 minutes in remembrance of the 17 people killed.

THE PLANS: [Central Jersey students plan to walk out today \(/story/news/education/in-our-schools/2018/03/09/central-jersey-students-walk-out-solidarity-parkland-florida/404815002/\)](#)

Some districts banned coverage Wednesday, citing student safety concerns. Some students face possible penalties if they walk, including students in Sayreville and South Plainfield.

For many districts, the event involved many meetings between students and administrators.

For example, student organizers at East Brunswick High School wanted to focus today on commonsense gun reform, which they believe is not a political issue, but the administration thought it was, according to Hema Kohli, a 17-year-old senior.

So, working with the administration, Kohli said the students conducted a walkout with the following rules:

- No disruption of the "learning environment"
- No political discussion (essentially)
- No media on school grounds
- No leaving school grounds
- Students must follow the school's code of conduct while walking out
- Students must follow instructions/directions given by officers outside
- Students are responsible to ensure the event is organized and maintains an orderly manner.

Kohli added that the "political" part of the discussion — gun control — would proceed outside the school grounds, and include a town hall meeting with the district's congresswoman, outreach to legislators and participation in the March for Our Lives event in Washington, D.C., later this month.

Here's a look at what happened in some Central Jersey public and private schools.



 **Colonia High School**
@ColoniaHigh



Students march in solidarity with students around the country to get lawmakers to hear their cries [#EnoughIsEnough](#) [#NationalWalkoutDay](#) nj [#NationalSchoolWalkout](#) @POTUS @NJSenatePres @GovMurphy @njdotcom @MarciRubinN12 @nmuscavage @Newseum @MyCentralJersey @jimmyfallon @1forAllus

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Linden High School student Sophia Blanc. (Photo: Suzanne Russell/Staff Photo)

Bishop Ahr High School

Shouting “enough is enough” and holding peace and protest signs, 750 students at Bishop Ahr High School in Edison added their voice to the national youth movement.

Senior Maryjolyn Megaloudis of North Plainfield was among four students inspired by a teacher to organize a prayerful protest.

“It’s so horrific,” Megaloudis said. “The youth need to get involved because without the youth, there is no change. We’re the most powerful ones in the country right now. The adults can’t really have a say because this is our problem, and we need to solve it.”

Religion/history teacher Matt Roche served as the faculty liaison for the Bishop Ahr walkout and prayer service. He was joined by 100 other faculty and staff members and their administration, including Joseph Vigilante, religion/finance teacher, who suggested the walkout.

After intercom prayers and student organizer speeches, Roche encouraged the students assembled outside to raise their voices.

#mycjwalkout



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They decided to create a picture with the kids spelling out the word #SAFE. mycj.co/2G8XVil
[#NationalSchoolWalkoutDay](#) [#MyCJWalkout](#)



Manville's Alexander Batcho Middle School students' statement: #SAFE

Instead of a political statement, the administration and faculty worked with their students to create a teaching moment.

mycentraljersey.com

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"It requires effort," Roche said. "It requires work. But don't be afraid to make change."

The assembled then walked around the school, echoing the plea of their peers, "Enough is enough."

Campus Minister Cynthia Babyak said she expected the Diocese of Metuchen to establish and announce new school safety measures soon.

Senior Jude Roche of East Brunswick, one of 10 students from the diocese's four high schools who recently met with Bishop James F. Checchio about school safety and gun violence, said he was glad to see the diocesan leader in solidarity with his students also with a taped message that commenced the walkouts at all four high schools, including Immaculata in Somerville, Mount Saint Mary in Watchung and St. Joseph in Metuchen.

"I expected him to give us ideas that we were to bring back to our school and students, but he wanted to hear our ideas," said Roche, Matt's younger brother. "We were able to make our voices heard, and they actually were followed through with this great walkout, which was amazing."

Edgar Middle School

Students at the Metuchen school gathered in the halls and link arms for a moment of silence. Other students had the opportunity to "walk out" if accompanied by parent or guardian.

In addition to supporting the victims, they wanted to make it clear to policy makers that change must happen at the state and national level so that all schools, houses of worship, and theaters are safe and violence-free environments.

"We feel it is important to stand with the victims of Parkland and to inform our legislative representatives that we need our schools to be safe," said Nika Rockafeller, one of the student leaders of the event. "Safe does not mean a having police monitoring our hallways or arming our teachers, it means greater gun control."

The other student organizers were Avery Byrne, Henry Cea, Elliot Gerlach, Charlotte Breen and Henry Busch.

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Students at Highland Park High School walking out of class Wednesday morning as part of a nationwide student protest calling for gun control in the wake of the Parkland school shooting one month ago. (Photo: Cheryl Makin/Staff Photo)

Highland Park High School

Close to the entire student bodies at the high school and middle school heading to the football field.

According to Superintendent Scott Taylor, the students expressed their desire to organize and take part in the demonstration of solidarity and need for change immediately after it was announced as a national walkout.

The students, accompanied by their teachers, walked onto the track and football field behind the school and participated in a solemn but inspired event that took about 17 minutes. Seventeen students spoke representing the 17 who died at Parkland for about one to two minutes each about the “why” and necessity of their action.

Each student talked about the murdered 17 and who they were and gave a reason why they as individuals were speaking. All reiterated that the 17 could not speak for themselves.

Before the planned action, Taylor expressed support of the students right to voice their opinion and protest. He added there would be a strong police presence, which included half a dozen uniformed officers and plainclothes detectives.

The students spoke about the need for change in gun laws but also for the need to change mental health policy and practice.

“It’s been 18 years since the attack on Columbine High School, which means that every single child raised in the American public schools has been raised in fear of shooting like those that happened at Sandy Hook, at Parkland, at Columbine,” said student organizer Julia Leibell-McLean, 18, a senior.

“We all know the fear that we live in every single day, the drills that we undergo and we are here today to say this is no longer OK. That the adults who have been in political power have been inactive and it is our responsibility as voters in the coming years to be the change.”

Staying a good distance from the students and recognizing this was a student-led event, Taylor and Highland Park Mayor Gayle Brill Mittler said they were impacted deeply by their words and action.

"I was emotional, partly because of what I heard, but also because I was so proud of our students," Taylor said.

"It was so good to see teenagers rising up and speaking," Brill Mittler said. "To see another generation of young people standing up for what's right, I might cry. It's an amazing thing."

After the outdoor demonstration, the students continued their effort to take action with a voter registration during lunch.

Delaware Valley High School

Most of the Delaware Valley High School student body walked out of their classrooms and into the Hutchins Gym on Wednesday, March 14, in conjunction with a national demonstration against gun violence.

But at Del Val, students were not so much walking out, as they were walking in — to a forum that outlined the national deadlock: anti-gun fear vs. the right to bear arms.

The walkout was organized by Maya Forman, a senior from Kingwood Township. She worked with the administration, whose primary concern was that if students walked out of the school building, they could be at risk of the very danger that sparked the walkout. So the roughly 500 participating students — of an enrollment of just more than 800 — left their classrooms at 9:30 a.m. and went to the gym and sat in the bleachers. No one went outdoors.

In the gym, five minutes of silence were observed. Then Forman called students one at a time to take the microphone and speak their piece.

Most of the two dozen students who spoke expressed fear of continued school shootings and demanded tighter gun control. Voter-registration forms were laid out on a nearby table.

Rachel Baransky, a senior, said that at age 12, when the Sandy Hook shooting occurred, "I thought, surely legislators would create some kind of protection for us, to help us feel safe in school again. But still, after 7,000 more children no longer living since Sandy Hook because of gun violence, I am still waiting."

"The thing is, those in protest are not asking for much: Regulation on military-grade, assault weapons that ordinarily many people don't have. Better mental health services. Thorough background checks. And at least an attempt to keep guns out of the hands of those who should not be wielding them. Students, if you hear something, and it doesn't feel right, report it. Let's help keep each other safe. And furthermore, let's all spread kindness, and love one another. It may not end the problem, but compassion is key to a better future, for certain."

Freshman Jordan Clapp said she wants to be a teacher, but her parents are asking her to rethink it because of the danger. Sophomore Sarah Nerwinski told of a recent visit to Scotland where she was informed that because of gun control that country simply doesn't have school shootings. Other students, at least one of them weeping, told of their daily fear for their loved ones and themselves, and outrage that so little is being done about it.

However, sophomore Kyle Doremus said Americans need guns "to defend ourselves against other people and even against our own government," citing the American Revolution, and also for hunting. "I refuse to believe that taking guns out of people's hands is going to resolve the issue," he said. Tyler Machado, a senior, said, "Guns are not the problem; people are."

More than one student pointed out that the AR-15, the semi-automatic rifle used in the Parkland shooting, is not an assault rifle. The "AR" stands for ArmaLite Rifle.

At the end of the session, after the lunch bell had diminished the audience to about 80 students, Forman said, "We have been coined Generation Columbine" by the news media after a mass murder in 1999, and the shootings continue with alarming frequency.

Politicians are unresponsive, she said, so contact them "and to stir up a fuss so that they can no longer ignore us. We can't let this end after today." She pressed for more school resources to help troubled students, and rigorous background checks for gun buyers.

Afterward, Principal Adrienne Olcott said, "I am so proud of our students! Their opinions were divided, but they were united in respect and courtesy. And that's really something to cherish these days."



During the March 14 National School Walkout event, Wardlaw + Hartridge School students in Edison, Rohan Arvinth of Edison, Tiffany Le of South Plainfield, Cathy Bi of Edison, CJ Stueck of Scotch Plains, Soorya Srinivas and Stan DeLaurentiis of Plainfield, hold banners in remembrance of the victims killed in Florida on Feb. 14 (Photo: Photo courtesy Wardlaw + Hartridge School)

Wardlaw+Hartridge School

Wardlaw+Hartridge Upper and Middle School students showed their solidarity and support for the victims of the Parkland, Florida school shooting by participating in the National School Walkout on March 14. Students wore orange to symbolize solidarity and 17 Upper School students carried banners commemorating the victims of the tragedy.

The students remained silent for more than 17 minutes, beginning with a march of Upper School students from the AP Room to the front driveway in front of the Lower School, where they were joined by teachers, administrators and Middle School students.

"It's important that students, teachers, and administrators stand in unity on the issue of safety. It's the best and most impactful way of honoring those who have died as a result of violence," CJ Stueck of Scotch Plains said.

"Education is a human right, and knowing that such an invaluable thing's safety is being compromised is disturbing to any student. I also participated because it is so important to not forget the lives that were lost, and that we, as a student body, need to honor their lives and also demand change," Anna Razvi of Somerset added.

Hunterdon Central High School

The school administration has not been willing to give any information about any observances. Up until 9:30 a.m., the campus was open, but there was a distinct police and security guard presence.

Security guards, local police and faculty members were positioned at all driveways to prevent the public from entering the grounds from about 9:30 through the designated time of the protest.

Immaculata High School

Immaculata, as well as each of the three other Catholic high schools and 23 Catholic elementary schools in the Diocese of Metuchen, held schoolwide prayer services at 10 a.m.

All of Immaculata's roughly 500 students attended a prayer service, which was led by Father Mauricio, the director of Catholic Identity at the school and clergy teacher, as well as the Campus Ministry Department.

Following the prayer service, students carried the 17 balloons and accompanying photographs of the victims of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School to the stage to memorialize the lost students as their names were announced and short biographies were shared in a presentation.

Then, the students and staff filed outside to the school's Shrine of the Blessed Mother, where the balloons and photographs of the victims were placed.

"We decided to have a prayer service because that's who we are here at Immaculata High School," said Principal Jean Kline. "It's the unique Spartan way.

"We keep the victims in our prayers and help our students create meaning about what's happening in our society with violence in schools and help them take action in a positive way through prayer."



A prayer service was held at Immaculata High School, attended by all of the roughly 500 students, where students memorialized each victim of the recent Stoneman Douglas High School shooting. (Photo: Jenna Intersimone/Staff Photo)

Before Wednesday's prayer service, students were given a presentation on the Parkland victims to "help them make a connection to the victims," said Kline.

At Immaculata, all students and staff carry a swipe ID badge to get in each school building, which are only open during designated school hours. Drills are held each month and students are continually educated on safety and security. Plus, any threats are taken very seriously and the Somerville Police Department is immediately notified.

Immaculata High School's Student Government Association is also currently hosting their Walk Up Challenge, where they are challenging students to say something to a teacher or staff member if they see something that could be threatening.

Katie Gorman, a 17-year-old junior from Flemington, said that she "absolutely" feels safe at school due to the students' ID badges and the fact she trusts all of her teachers and feels she could talk to any of them if she felt something was awry.

"I hope that National School Walkout Day continues not only as a discussion, but it leads to solidified action and change," she said.

Noah Jordan, an 18-year-old senior from Hillsborough, said that he thinks National School Walkout Day is important to remember victims of violence as well as stand in solidarity and bring attention to gun issues.

"I want people to have more of an awareness to these dangers so that they can take action to create change," he said.

Linden High School

A group of students held a sit-in in front of the main office and took turns reading the names of 17 victims and a short biography of each person.

At the same time, a large group of students, some with posters, walked out of the buildings front door to march around the school shouting "never again."

Junior Sophia Blanc said the students are activists for many things that happen in the world. Blanc said she met a few people from the Florida school and it hit home for her.

"The fact that we are doing this is really helping me find a way to protest the gun violence in the world," she said.

Junior Ty'zhe Boyd, 17, said the words "never again" went through her head after she heard about the Parkland shooting.

"Our peers lost their lives. They woke up one morning thinking they were going to have a normal day at school and they ended up losing their lives," said Boyd, whose orange shirt had the words "never again" the number 17 and the names of all the Parkland school shooting victims. "I don't want to happen anymore. No more gun violence."

Principal Yelena Horre said going forward that some students had talked about participating in the march, adding that she believes Westfield plans a local march and there may be buses going to the national event. She said some students also have talked about doing their own march to City Hall.

Linden High School has about 1,700 students.

"They wanted to focus on this first and then plan going forward," Horre said.

Sophomore Job Austin, 17, said kids shouldn't have to worry about if they are going to die today at school.

"I feel we should express to everyone that us as a generation as young as we are we are taking a step into wanting to make a difference in our life and in our school," he said. "We want school to be safe and not to have worry about something happening to us," he said.

Austin said seeing what happened to the Parkland students was tragic.

"They didn't deserve any of it," he said.

Sophomore Ryan Sautner, 16, said students want to feel safe coming to school and learn every day without feeling something tragic is going to happen every minute.

While there are drills in school to prepare for a shooting, just knowing something can happen sometimes makes him not want to go to school.

"If this keeps on happening, I might not feel safe anymore," he said.

Chanting "No more guns, no more death," students returned to their classes after marching around the building.

Middlesex High School

Instead of demonstrating outside the Union Avenue school on an unseasonably cold March day, most of the school's 640 students gathered in the gym for a somber assembly. It was a mature show of solidarity that together their collective voice can make a difference in the future.

In the halls, the students were orderly and relatively quiet and they sat on the bleachers quietly as their fellow students read the names of those who had lost their lives in Florida.

"We stand for something bigger than our high school, bigger than our small town," said one of the students leading the assembly.

"If we continue to stand together," another student said. "Perhaps we will change the world for the better,"

"We are lucky to go to a school where people are standing up," another said.

At the end of the program, all of the students gathered on a bleacher to have a group photo that will be posted on social media to show the students' solidarity.

Principal Alex Guzman was impressed with the maturity, respect and responsibility the students displayed.

The walk-in was created after a series of meetings among students, teachers, administrators and police, he said.

"The main goal was to honor those who died," he said.

After the assembly, students returned to their third-period classes in an orderly manner.

Monroe High School

Senior Sahil Parikh, 18, thought it was amazing how the event came from the ground up.

“It wasn’t one leader or one person who really brought everyone together,” he said. “It was every single student.”

Parikh said once the idea was put out there hundreds of students wanted to be involved.

“I think it’s important that we made this a nonpartisan event,” he said. “Once you make it political, people start to ignore what I think is the most important part — feeling unified as a student body against violence. Having that feeling of community is something that you don’t often have which is why I felt this was such an important event to pull together.”

Students were asked to wear white to signify unity.

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Students at Monroe High School walking out of class on the morning of March 14 as part of a nationwide student protest calling for gun control in the wake of the Parkland school shooting one month ago. (Photo: Susan Loyer/Staff Photo)

Senior Pranav Mallampalli, 17, thought the event was a “great reflection of the culture that is developed here. To make it nonpartisan really really shows us the power that student activism can have and the voice that students can have especially when going out and showing support for peace.”

Senior Class President Hanna Touri, 18, said she was so amazed and grateful when the principal reached out and suggested doing something as a school.

“I thought it was the best way to make this whole thing come together and execute it correctly,” she said.

She also said she didn’t expect to see that many students and staff come out in support of the event.

“To see that many was amazing “ she said.

Senior Kiera Sears, 18, said she loved how the school community came together.

“A lot of politics usually divide people and the way that we made this nonpartisan allowed us to be unified and I liked the fact that we wore white not only to show unity but also peace,” she said.

She said the cooperation of administrators, as well as the event, “made me be really happy to be part of the school.”

The Monroe Township Middle School also participated in various in-house activities to mark the event.

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Students at Plainfield High School walking out of class Wednesday morning as part of a nationwide student protest calling for gun control in the wake of the Parkland school shooting one month ago. (Photo: Paul Grzella/Staff Photo)

Mother Seton High School

Students at the Clark school assembled to view a video from Cardinal Tobin encouraging all students to pray for a safe environment in all our schools. After listening to Cardinal Tobin's message, everyone proceeded outdoors and gathered around the statue of Saint Elizabeth Anne Seton on campus for a prayer service for Peace, Hope and Healing.

The prayer service was under the direction of Sister Mary Anne Katlack, campus minister. The event is supported by the Archdiocese of Newark and framed by the Archdiocese of Newark. Students participated in the prayer service through reflections, a Psalm Prayer and Intercessions. Prayers were offered for the Parkland victims.

The prayer service concluded with everyone praying together in one voice the Prayer of Saint Francis of Assisi.

Plainfield High School

Nearly 1,000 students took part in the walkout. According to school officials, the student council approached the administration Monday to discuss having an event. School Principal Heather Jackson said that the administration worked with the students so that they could safely exercise their First Amendment rights.

"The students felt passionate about taking part in the National Walkout," Jackson said. "This is what they planned and this is us supporting them in a way that they can be kept safe."

The event began with a meeting in the school auditorium in which students spoke about the importance of the event, why they were doing it, and the need to support their fellow students in Parkland.

Then the nearly 1,000 students walked out of the building in an orderly fashion and quietly walked around the perimeter of the high school property. At all times, Plainfield police accompanied the students to make sure they were safe. School administrators and teachers also walked with the students in the brisk morning air.

Students did not talk during the event, as a way to honor the 17 people killed. Some students carried signs, including one that said "Hugs Instead of Guns."

The walkout was open to all students, and administrators said that approximately 80 percent of the student body took part.

Lead teacher Dr. Shaniesha Evans and history teacher Jeff Truitt worked with the Student Council members to plan and organize the event, which blossomed organically in just two days.

"I am very proud of our students," Evans said as students went back into the school after their 17-minute walk. "This was their idea and this is what they wanted to do."

South Plainfield High School

About 70 students participated in the walkout organized by students Hailey Medina, Tala Abdeljaber, Jade Scotti and Simran Modhera and walked down Lake Street around the block and back to the high school's entrance within 17 minutes.

THURSDAY NIGHT UPDATE: [South Plainfield H.S. students get suspension \(/story/news/education/in-our-schools/2018/03/15/south-plainfield-high-school-students-walkout-punishments/428277002/\)](/story/news/education/in-our-schools/2018/03/15/south-plainfield-high-school-students-walkout-punishments/428277002/)

Borough resident Ann Marie Saccente was standing on Lake Street with a group of about 10 other people waiting to watch the students' walkout. She heard that the administration was trying to crack down on students walking out, which made her upset.

"It's horrific," she said. "It's a letdown of our kids. We're trying to save our children's lives. The superintendent of South Plainfield should be brought to court. There's controversy that the kids are doing the right thing. They should be brought to court and sued."

Resident Shehnaz Abdeljaber, who has a child in the school district, said "it's wrong" that district may be planning to punish students who walked out.

"They are actually very smart kids," she said. "They planned this, they spoke with the administration, they kept it real with them."

Student organizers created an Instagram account called "sphswalkout" to update other students on the status of the walkout. Over the course of three weeks, the account has garnered 283 followers.

According to one Instagram post, which was created Wednesday morning, organizers met with the district superintendent and it was decided that students who participate in the walkout will not be kicked off sports teams or the National Honors Society.

Voorhees High School

Students gathered in the gym for a student-run walkout to honor the Parkland students and demand action by Congress to keep schools and communities safe across America.

The efforts were spearheaded by Bella Hanley, Annalise Rodgers, Nick Fabbroni, Laura Chen, Abby Thompson, Natalie Bivos-Chen, Emily Ryder, Julia Silberman, Benji Beard and Lyra Tomljanovich. Each of these students talked about the changes that need to be made in schools and government, read the names of the victims of the shooting in Parkland, and had a moment of silence.

Tables were set up along the side of the gym with forms for voter registration and templates for letters to government officials. After the crowd was done filling out forms and writing letters, Principal Ron Peterson talked about safety at Voorhees and gave a brief Q&A regarding the subject.

Watchung Hills High School

During the walkout, the names and short biographies of the 17 victims of the Parkland shooting were read. There was tight security to keep everyone safe, and approximately 800 students walked out.

Students came with signs, and felt very empowered. It went very smoothly, and everyone walked out quietly, and the teachers continued to teach the kids who remained in class.

Westfield Public Schools

At 10 a.m., more than 1,000 students at Westfield High School and Edison and Roosevelt intermediate schools proceeded peacefully and respectfully to a location outside of each school. Student leaders at all three schools spoke briefly, some reading poems, others remembering by name each of the 17 victims, all expressing togetherness.

"Currently schools across the nation are joining together as we value school safety. You're all using the most powerful weapon today — your voice — which cannot be ignored," said Westfield High School junior Emma Wolynez.

"Please use your voice to educate others and talk to family, friends and anyone who will listen to your ideas about safety and schools. At WHS, we are lucky to have administrators who will listen to us and value our voices, so use that to tell them what you want to see and what you are afraid of."

"Today will be a day that Westfield students will not soon forget and will serve as a model in the future for how students can impact change within their own communities," senior Dexter Cypress said.

Sophomore Colin Sumner expressed the collective concerns of students, teachers, parents and administrators in the wake of school shootings and thanked the school district, Westfield police, fire and EMS departments and School Resource Officer Elizabeth Savnik for "putting our lives first and doing so much to ensure our safety."

"I am extremely proud of our student organizers who were respectful and thoughtful in every step of their planning process," Principal Derrick Nelson said. "It is always important to listen to our students, especially on such an important topic as school safety which affects us all."

Students at each of the schools held a moment of silence before returning to their classrooms to resume instruction by 10:17. Participating students were required to get parental permission in advance while a regular schedule remained in place for those students who chose to remain in class.

"I am glad that our student leaders proactively reached out to administrators at the high school and intermediate schools to plan this thoughtful remembrance," said Superintendent Margaret Dolan. "This morning our students continued the strong tradition of Westfield students as active participants in our democracy."

Carteret High School

Carteret High School students organized a walkout Wednesday to showw their solidarity for those who lost their lives in the Feb. 14 school shootings in Florida..

Approximately 250 students walked out of Carteret High School at 10 a.m. Wednesday to join youth around the country in a show of peaceful protest against violence in schools. The students gathered in the school parking lot and respectfully listened while the names of all 17 people lost in Parkland Florida were read.

Concluding the event, Amy Casale, a sophomore at Carteret High School, read a statement and called for a moment of silence. This student led movement was initiated by Erin Mena, Cameron Wilson, Lester Castillo, Amy Casale, Mirical Martin and Brenda Borero; supported by Pathways, the school administration, the district and the town.

Pathways is a partnership between the East Brunswick-based Wellspring Center for Prevention and the Carteret school district. According to the news release, the partnership works to create a safe, structured environment within the school to address the social and health needs of students, ensuring that they are better able to graduate, become employable or continue their education, and lead physically and mentally healthy, drug-free lives.

New Brunswick High School

Hundreds of students at New Brunswick High School, New Brunswick Middle School, Woodrow Wilson School, and Paul Robeson School participated in Wednesday's nationwide demonstration against gun violence, which also memorialized those who lost their lives last month at Florida's Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School.

The students took the lead in planning the events at all four schools, and were supported by New Brunswick Public Schools faculty, staff, and administrators, according to a news release.

New Brunswick Mayor James Cahill and Dr. Aubrey Johnson, Superintendent of Schools, board of education members, and a school principal were among the speakers at the high school.

"I support their commitment to making changes for a more peaceful future," Johnson said. "Voices raised in solidarity do not go unnoticed."

Rahway High School

The mood was somber but the feelings were strong and the hopes, high. "We are the future," pronounced Student Council President Tymek Jones. "We must be the change we need to see."

In solidarity with schools nationwide, over 250 Rahway High School students gathered in their school's gymnasium at 10:00 AM for a 'Walk In' to honor the memory of the 17 Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School students and 2 teachers who tragically lost their lives in the Parkland, Florida shooting. As dedicated student volunteers, one by one, held up a placard bearing the name and age of one of the victims, a minute of silence was observed in honor of each.

Following these moments of personal reflection, Junior Imani Griffin stepped forward to announce that, in recognition of the 2,828 students who were victims of gun violence, "Enough is enough." She went on to advise her classmates to "speak up about what we see wrong" and to "be aware as possible of what's around you." She then presented her peers with the charge to "make 17 friends" or to "give 17 hugs" to show that they "remember".

RHS Principal John Farinella was pleased to provide an arena for his students "to speak up about safety in our schools" and "to demonstrate the compassion that we as a school community have for the families of the victims from Parkland, Florida." "The horrifying acts that have occurred on school campuses and in other places across America have unified student voices." Junior Izabell Wilk was proud to join her classmates in this solemn moment of remembrance. "Hearing the names of those students made me realize how important it is not to see young people lose their lives over something that can be changed and prevented." She continues, "It was so empowering being with my fellow classmates and taking a stand."

Mr. Joe Brown from the Rahway Prevention Coalition, who visited the high school to share in the day's special event, found the program "very moving" and was "extremely impressed with the level of respect shown by the students." He was also pleased to learn that "Our students are not apathetic!" It is also Principal Farinella's wish that "our students will continue to pursue heightened levels of meaningful activism. Their voices do matter. Their numbers do count. And, their efforts are commended."

Rob Kinch

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