

September 17, 2019

Dear Parents/Guardians:

We have recently been made aware of an effort encouraging student participation in a “Climate Strike” walk-out planned for 10 AM on Friday, September 20, 2019. This is not a District-sponsored activity, and to date, neither the event organizers nor any students have approached school officials regarding participation. In fact, our High School Student Government representatives were not even aware of the event.

That said, we understand that some students may feel strongly about this topic and wish to participate in the protest. We believe that civic engagement allows our youth to learn vital skills needed to form, support, and express personal positions on issues. For this reason, the District will support student participation, with the condition that written parent/guardian permission has been given in advance per the procedures outlined below. Any student who leaves without written parent/guardian permission is subject to discipline as outlined in the Code of Conduct.

Please carefully review the following process if you wish to authorize your student’s participation.

High School:

At the High School, any student wishing to participate in the Climate Strike is required to present **written** permission from their parent/guardian PRIOR to 9 AM on Friday, September 20. Telephone permission will not be accepted.

For parents/guardians wishing to email their permission to the school, the communication must be sent prior to the end of the school day on Thursday, September 19. Letters that are signed, scanned, and attached to an email should be sent to the principal at mfernandez@newpaltz.k12.ny.us. Generic emails (those without a scan of a signed note) cannot be accepted unless we can verify they were sent by a parent/guardian, therefore, those choosing to notify us in this manner **must** also follow up by calling the school at 845-256-4100 in order to personally confirm they submitted the email.

All classes will continue as planned. Students who miss school to participate are expected to speak with their teachers in advance and make up any missed work per the teacher’s expectations.

Elementary and Middle School:

Any parents/guardians wishing to allow their Middle School or elementary-aged child to participate are required to sign them out of school following the standard protocol for doing so. A letter prior to Friday, September 20th indicating you will be picking your child up for this purpose would be appreciated, so that your child will be ready and the other students’ education will not be disrupted.

We understand that an article on page two of the September 12 *New Paltz Times* implies that New Paltz Middle School is the starting location for the Climate Strike. The first priority of any school district is the safety and wellness of its students and staff. The logistics of protecting our students during a walkout such as this are complicated and require significant planning and organization. After consulting with the New Paltz Police Department about potential safety risks, we must stress that students and/or community members will not be allowed to gather in the Middle School parking lot. Only parents who are at the Middle School to sign their students out will be allowed on campus, and they must leave the premises upon doing so.

If your child is planning to take part in the Climate Strike, we also encourage you to discuss the purpose of the walkout and the role of peaceful protest with them. Information about the organizers and their message can be found online at <https://strikewithus.org>.

While we support students' rights to express their views and opinions in a respectful and meaningful way, please remember this is not a District-sponsored activity and we do not endorse any particular viewpoint or advocacy group. In addition, it is important that you know that once your child has left school to participate in this event, the school district is no longer responsible for their supervision, safety, or welfare.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Maria C. Rice".

Maria C. Rice
Superintendent