



Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher, Superintendent

Open Letter from Fresno County Superintendents- A Shared Call to Focus on Student Safety and Learning and End Off-Campus Student Walkouts



WESTSIDE ELEMENTARY
SCHOOL DISTRICT

February 7, 2026

Dear Students, Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers,

As superintendents across Fresno County, we are writing together to address recent student walkouts and to ask for your partnership in ensuring student safety and continued engagement in learning during the school day.

We respect the important role free speech and freedom of expression play in American society. This week, school districts across our county have seen students leave campus during the academic day without permission, a decision that puts both their safety and academic success at risk.

We also want to take this opportunity to clarify attendance procedures so parents and guardians understand their options. Students may not leave class or campus during the school day unless a parent or guardian checks them out through normal school procedures. When students leave without following these procedures, the absence is recorded as unexcused. California law recognizes students' right to participate in civic action by allowing only one excused absence per year for this purpose, provided families notify schools in advance and follow standard checkout procedures. We want to honor that right while ensuring safety.

Students who are off campus during the school day are without supervision and at risk of accident or injury. We have also heard that some students are being approached online by adults outside the school community to organize protests, further increasing safety risks. Instead, schools provide on-campus spaces that allow students to safely and respectfully express their opinions during break or lunch periods.

With this in mind, we ask that you take time this weekend to talk with your student(s) about the importance of learning and being in class, and to remind them of the safety risks posed by leaving campus during the school day. Your partnership is essential in helping us ensure both the safety and academic success of every student.

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We appreciate our students' engagement, our families' support, and our shared commitment to keeping Fresno County schools safe, respectful spaces for learning and expression.

Sincerely,



Dr. Michele Cantwell-Copher,
Fresno County Superintendent of Schools

District Superintendents:

Dr. Mark Marshall
Central Unified

Dr. Rafael Iniguez
Parlier Unified

Dr. Corrine Folmer
Clovis Unified

Dr. Dennis Wiechmann
Sanger Unified

Misty Her
Fresno Unified

Ed Gomes
Selma Unified

Felipe Peidra
Golden Plains Unified

Randy Morris
Washington Unified

Gordon Pacheco
Kerman Unified

Gary Cunha
Westside Elementary