

BUCKS COUNTY Courier Times

Opinion

Consequence makes protest worth admiring

By Amy Strouse

Posted at 6:00 AM

March 14 is the date of the planned student walk-out for gun safety measures; it will be a most newsworthy event. I am so inspired by the teenagers in Bucks County and across the nation who — despite the risk of detention or suspension — are planning to walk out of school on March 14 to protest the seeming inability or unwillingness of the politicians that represent them to keep them safe.

In fact, it is precisely because they are willing to risk detention or suspension that their actions are so meaningful. Please, adults, don't cushion them from this consequence. Don't rob them of the power of their statement by trying to make sure it costs them nothing.

I have seen much discussion in PTO, school district and other parent-oriented social media groups I'm a part of, that in recent weeks is about putting pressure on school superintendents to not punish the kids who choose to participate in the March 14 walk-out.

But if there is no consequence, what is their protest worth?

If there is no consequence, those on the other side of the gun debate will accuse them of just wanting to spend a few minutes of a nice March day outside.

If there is no consequence, it will be harder for these kids to point to the walk-out as a statement of support. If everyone is allowed to walk out, there's no determining who supports the cause and who doesn't. Let them feel the sting of this small penalty and come out the other side stronger, knowing that whatever it cost them it was worth it because this is right.

This is how we build angry kids into determined adults, empowered to raise their voices when they see injustice — no matter what.

None other than Oprah Winfrey has said about the gun safety protesters that, "These inspiring young people remind me of the Freedom Riders of the '60s who also said we've had enough and our voices will be heard."

But just ask the civil rights marchers, if anyone provided a cushion for them when they marched for what they knew was right. They risked being ostracized from their families, beatings, prison, even death. That consequence is what made their protest worth admiring, it is what made others join their cause, and is what made the nation's leaders finally sit up and take notice — and make a change.

As the mom of three young children, I certainly understand the instinct to cushion our kids from the consequences of their actions. But it is up to us as parents to support our kids through whatever punishment their school decides to mete out. Let your child know you support their right to protest and will support them through the consequences of it too. Help them understand that doing something hard, like changing politicians' minds, isn't a one-off, and it isn't easy. It takes sustained effort, it takes sacrifice and it takes the willingness of people with something to lose to sign their names to it. But in the end, it will be worth it.

I worry every day when I send my young children off to school that they will be gunned down in the hallway on their way to art class. Our kids deserve to be protected from gun violence, they don't need to be protected from the consequences of walking out of school.

Middletown resident Amy Strouse is a board member of Bucks County Women's Advocacy Coalition, a Middletown Township supervisor and the mother of three young children.

**SIGN UP FOR DAILY E-MAIL**

Wake up to the day's top news, delivered to your inbox

MOST POPULAR STORIES

[◀ Previous](#)

[Next ▶](#)