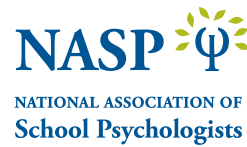




## Workshop 1 (3rd Edition, 2019)



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# Handout 43: Sample Memorial School Board Policy

The School District recognizes the far-reaching impact a student's or staff member's death may have on other students, staff, families and the community. The District believes that remembrance of a student or staff member whose life ended during his/her years in the School District should be consistent and equitable from case to case, and considerate of the grief process of family, friends, and coworkers, and in accordance with Board policy. Further, the District recognizes that decisions made about memorials immediately after traumatic events may not take into full consideration the potential impacts to students, staff, and community members. Memorials set a precedent for the future and need to be equitable. The purpose of this policy is to assist staff, students, and families affected by a death by providing guidelines for decision-making regarding memorials and memorialization activities.

### DEATH OF A STUDENT OR STAFF MEMBER

The School District establishes the following protocol in respect for the needs of individuals experiencing grief due to the death of a student or staff member.

1. The District's crisis response plan will be followed.
2. Grieving students will be excused from class to speak with appropriate staff members and counselors.
3. Students wishing to attend the funeral service may do so with parent permission. These students will be excused from class, but may be required to make up any missing assignments. Special arrangements will be made for siblings or relatives of the deceased student or staff member.
4. Funeral services will not be held in District facilities (see Board Regulation #: Community Use of Facilities). Memorial services may be held with approval by the building principal or Superintendent, but the service cannot be held during the school day and should not disrupt school events.
5. Memorial gifts/fund raisers organized in school must have the consent of the school administration and any other consent as required by District policies and/or procedures. The District's established processes and procedures for fund raisers should be followed. Students and staff may be given direction as to what is appropriate as a memorial. Suggested memorials include a blood drive, partnering with local nonprofit organizations and related activities, or establishing a scholarship. As a courtesy, the family of the deceased student or staff member should also provide consent before engaging in the activity.
6. If staff members wish to attend a funeral service or a student or staff member, they need to coordinate their absence with their supervisor and the HR Dept. If they are absent for a half-day or less, the absence will not be charged as personal leave, sick leave, or vacation. If they are absent more than a half-day, the absence will be treated as one day of personal leave, sick leave, or vacation (see Board Regulation #).
7. In a situation where informal events or gatherings such as a candlelight vigils, which are not school sponsored, occur on District grounds, it is requested that the school administration be notified.
8. School marquees will not be used to post messages about the deceased student or staff member.
9. The United States flag will only be lowered to half-staff in accordance with the laws and policies of the State.
10. School publications (newspapers and yearbooks) should follow the established guidelines as delineated in the high school journalism classes' obituary procedures:
  - If a death is ruled a suicide, school publications will follow "Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide" as specified by [www.reportingonsuicide.org](http://www.reportingonsuicide.org). The guidelines are to be followed so as to reduce the risk of suicide contagion.
  - In the event that a current student or staff member passes away during the course of the school year, the newspaper will include coverage of the death in the next edition and possibly online.
  - The death will be reported as a combination news story and standard obituary and will be covered in the most appropriate space according to the timeliness of the publication.
  - The portrait of that individual will appear in the yearbook as it would under normal circumstances.
  - A memorial box will be placed in the closing of the yearbook with only the name of the person and dates of birth and death.
  - The newspaper and yearbook will maintain the dignity of the student or staff member by striving for accurate, fair coverage of the death.
11. The graduation ceremony is reserved for the celebration of scholastic achievement and the anticipation of future opportunities available to all of the graduates of the School District. The school administration will work together with the family of a deceased student to properly recognize the student's completion of high school. A member of the family will be invited to accept the diploma prior to the awarding of diplomas to all graduates.

## MEMORIALS ON FACILITIES AND GROUNDS

District facilities are designed to support learning; therefore, changes to facilities that interfere with that purpose or detract from the District's educational mission cannot be permitted. If a death is ruled a suicide the school should follow the recommendations offered by the National Association of School Psychologists (<http://www.naspcenter.org/principals/aftersuicide.html>) and the American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, & Suicide Prevention Resource Center (<https://afsp.org/our-work/education/after-a-suicide-a-toolkit-for-schools/>).

The following guidelines apply to all other requests for memorials in school facilities or on District grounds.

### Approval of Memorials

All memorials must be approved by the superintendent, building-level administration, and any other party required as set forth in Policy #, depending on the type of memorial (the "Approval Authorities") before being placed within a school building or on school grounds. To avoid unnecessary expense and possible disappointment, the District recommends that individuals refrain from purchasing any type of memorial until it has been approved.

The Approval Authorities will determine the location of all memorials on school grounds or in school facilities. While requests will be considered when possible, the Approval Authorities must consider such issues as design parameters, whether the memorial blends with the school campus, ongoing and future maintenance, and the effect a memorial may have on students and staff. Individual schools may define the types of memorials that are appropriate for their school grounds.

### Memorial Options

*Unacceptable Memorials/Activities.* Memorials and activities not allowed include

- Those that require the use of public funds to purchase, develop, or maintain (such as plantings of trees, shrubs, or perennials);
- A monument, statuary, or marker on school property;
- Memorials attached to a wall or in a trophy case;
- Memorials that require the altering of school property;
- Memorials that may alter the routine of a regular school instructional day, and Memorials that require the altering of school activities or the activity schedule.

*Benches, tables, and other outdoor furnishings.* The Approval Authorities will accept memorials of this type only to the extent that there is a suitable location and the style is complementary to the buildings and grounds. Each item may contain a plaque engraved with the memorialized individual's name, dates of birth and death, and the words, "donated in memory of" or "in memory of." Maintenance, replacement, removal, and other long-term considerations must be considered and clearly delineated prior to approval of any memorial.

Other types of memorials are addressed in the District's policy on acceptance of gifts. All items received as memorials become the property of the School District, and the District cannot guarantee that memorials that become damaged or worn will be replaced at District expense.

### Existing Memorial Options

Memorials established prior to the implementation of this policy will remain intact.

### Resources

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention, & Suicide Prevention Resource Center. (2018). *After a suicide: A toolkit for schools (2nd ed.)*. Waltham, MA: Education Development Center. <http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/AfteraSuicideToolkitforSchools.pdf>

Heath, M. A., Bingham, R., & Dean, B. (2008). The role of memorials in helping children heal. *School Psychology Forum: Research in Practice*, 2, 17–29.

National Association of State Mental Health Program Directors. (2010). *Preventing suicide: A toolkit for high schools*. HHS Publication No. (SMA) Rockville, MD: Center for Mental Health Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration.

Paine, C. K. (2007, January). Hope and healing: Recovery from school violence. Paper presented at the Confronting Violence in Our Schools: Planning, Response, and Recovery symposium of the Public Entity Risk Institute. Retrieved from: [https://www.riskinstitute.org/peri/images/file/Paine\\_HopeandHealing.pdf](https://www.riskinstitute.org/peri/images/file/Paine_HopeandHealing.pdf)

Reporting on Suicide. (2018). Recommendations for Reporting on Suicide. Retrieved from: <http://www.reportingonsuicide.org>. U.S. Department of Education, Emergency Response and Crisis Management (ERCM) Technical Assistance Center. (2007).

Paying tribute to deceased school community members. *ERCM Express*, 3(3), 1–8. Retrieved from [http://rems.ed.gov/docs/ERCMNewsletter\\_Memorials.pdf](http://rems.ed.gov/docs/ERCMNewsletter_Memorials.pdf)

Zenere, F. (2009, October). Suicide clusters and contagion. *Principal Leadership*, 12, 12–16.