

Death of a Student or Staff Member

Per District vision and mission, Amery schools are designed primarily to foster and support student learning. In recognition that the death of a student or staff member deeply impacts the school-community, the following guidance document was developed to establish a uniform response in the event of a student or staff member death. The district's memorialization protocol is based on guidelines set forth in *Lifelines Postvention-Responding to Suicide and Other Traumatic Death* (Hazelden Publishing).

The District's goal is to provide support to the school-community through four guiding principles, as follows:

- *To minimize the potential for putting other students at risk*
- *To respond to all deaths in a uniform manner*
- *To facilitate support for the process of grieving*
- *To reflect a desire to commemorate the life, not the death of the deceased in personal and meaningful ways*

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

1. The crisis team will be called together as soon as practical to brief on the situation and create a plan of action. In the case of a death during the school year, a statement will be prepared by the team to be read by teachers in individual classes (if applicable depending on the grade level or developmental level of the students). The statement may include relevant facts of the situation if provided by the family. The crisis team may notify parents and guardians of all students of the death.
2. Grieving students may be excused from class to speak with crisis team members or other appropriate staff.
3. Temporary memorials such as cards for students and staff to sign will be housed in a location designated by the building administrator, crisis team or designee and presented to the family as soon as practical following the funeral. The crisis team respects the need for spontaneous memorials shortly following a death. Memorials will be removed and presented to the family, if possible, at the end of the day or at a time determined by the crisis team.
4. Funeral services, visitations, wakes and other memorial services will not be held in District facilities unless with the express permission of the district administrator. In situations where school personnel are able to collaborate with the family regarding the funeral or memorial service arrangements, it is also strongly advised that the service be held outside of school hours. In the event services are held during school hours, schools will remain open. The District will not transport students to and from the service.

5. Funeral service attendance will be handled in a standardized fashion
 - a. Students may attend the funeral service with parent permission. Students excused for the purpose of attending a funeral will be excused from class but will be required to make up any missing assignments. Accommodations may be considered for relatives of the deceased.
 - b. Staff may submit personal or emergency leave for approval for the purposes of attending a funeral service, consistent with the certified or support staff handbook.
6. Gatherings or events (e.g., candlelight vigils), whether formal or informal shall not be held on school grounds. Students will be encouraged to be with school personnel designated to help students with their social and emotional needs (i.e.-pupil services).
7. Memorials for deceased students or staff shall be limited to awards or scholarships funded through private dollars. School property shall not serve as a venue for permanent memorials.
8. Memorial gifts (including fundraisers) organized in school must have the consent of the building administrator, building crisis team or designee, in addition to consent as required by corresponding fundraising policy and procedure.
9. Fundraising will be conducted separate from the School District, not during the school day, and not involving school staff during their contracted work hours.
10. School marquees will not be used to post messages about the deceased student or staff.
11. School student publications (e.g., newspapers, social media, yearbooks) should follow the established guidelines for the recognition of a deceased student or staff member
 - a. 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 through social media. 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.
 - b. A portrait of that individual will appear in the yearbook as it would under normal circumstances.
 - c. A memorial box will be placed in the closing of the yearbook with the name and dates of birth and death.
 - d. The newspaper and yearbook will maintain the dignity of the student or staff member by striving for accurate, fair coverage of the death.
12. Graduation ceremonies are reserved for the recognition of scholastic achievement and the anticipation of future opportunities available to all the graduates. The District will not recognize the death of a student or staff member in the graduation ceremony.

- a. Names read at the graduation ceremony will include students who have met the requirements for an Amery High School diploma and are physically in attendance for the ceremony.
 - b. The list of names on the program will include students who have met the requirements for an Amery High School diploma, whether they are in attendance or not.
13. The District will establish a committee to review all requests for memorialization activities. This committee will consist of, but is not limited to, the school crisis team [i.e., building administrator, school counselor(s), school psychologist(s)], and two additional members appointed by the building principal. The building administrator shall have final approval of all requests. The crisis team shall meet as needed and review and update guidelines accordingly.
14. The District acknowledges that memorials exist throughout the district, established prior to the development of memorialization protocol. Existing memorials will stay in place but not be expanded. As existing memorials erode over time, they will not be replaced. If possible, the memorials will be given back to families of the deceased.

Guidance to Memorial Team Members:

Memorial Activity Ideas

- Scrapbooks/cards/posters in a designated location for students to express condolences to family, given to the family at or shortly following the funeral.
- Activity focused memorial which may include fundraising for prevention groups related to the cause of death (e.g., American Cancer Society), groups that may have supported the deceased before death (e.g., Ronald McDonald House) or awareness groups related to mental or physical illness.
- Picture in yearbook as it would be if student or staff member was still alive.
- Picture in class video as it would be if student was still alive.
- Scholarship in memory of deceased.

Memorial Activities to Avoid

- Flying the flag at half-mast (this is reserved for the death of a public figure)
- Posting a notice on the outside sign board
- Dismissing school early or cancelling school
- Holding student assemblies, including graduation ceremony where deceased is remembered with an empty chair, presentation of diploma to family, or presentation of item in memory of deceased
- Planting gardens
- Erecting plaques
- Staging large, public memorial services on school grounds

- Creating a permanent part of the environment (e.g., planting trees) or adding to an existing memorial site.

APPROVED: April 15, 2019