

AP 1405: Memorials For Deceased Members of the School Community

Background:

School District No. 8 (Kootenay Lake) recognizes that the death of a student or staff member deeply impacts students, staff and families and that memorial decisions made immediately in the aftermath of a crisis caused by a death may be made without full consideration of the potential implications for students, staff, families, and the community. The purpose of this Administrative Procedure is to provide a process for memorial decision making, as well as memorial activities. It also recognizes that memorials may require careful, and deliberate, consideration in determining approved memorial activities. This Administrative Procedure will be reviewed on an annual basis by district staff and school principals to ensure it continues to further the stated purpose.

It is important to note that erecting memorials may have the potential for re-traumatizing both students and staff who knew the victim. Memorials erected at schools will be a constant physical reminder of the victim and may continue to trigger trauma responses in students and staff long after the event took place.

Definitions:

Memorials: Objects or activities to remember a deceased person or an event that resulted in death.

School Critical Incident Response Team (SCIRT): A designated group of staff members, within each school building, who plan and implement mental health support for grief recovery.

Critical Incident: Any natural disaster or unexpected event that negatively affects a student, a staff member or a significant group of the school population and usually involves serious emotional, psychological and/or physical injury or death.

Impact: The magnitude of the potential loss or seriousness of the critical incident.

District Critical Incident Response Team (DCIRT): A designated group of staff members who develop and execute district-wide procedures for the handling of mental health needs during the recovery phase of a critical incident needing grief support.

Procedures:

1. Approval
 - 1.1. Memorial activities that take place at school must be approved and coordinated through the DCIRT. The DCIRT will assist families and school staff in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate for school and will assist students in healthy bereavement.
 - 1.2. School sites are generally not used for funerals or memorial events for students or staff members.

2. Temporary school memorials:

2.1. As approved by the school principal, temporary school memorials may be displayed until the day of the funeral and will then be given to the family.

2.2. Allowable temporary memorials are:

2.2.1. Flower arrangements;

2.2.2. Banners;

2.2.3. Pictures;

2.2.4. Notes; and,

2.2.5. Locker and student desk displays.

2.3. Any plans to sell memorial items must receive prior approval from administration.

3. Display of memorial symbols:

3.1. Memorial symbols displayed by individual students or staff on school grounds will be limited in duration to one month past the funeral and must have prior approval of the school principal.

4. Permanent memorials for deceased:

4.1. As approved by the school principal, and supported by the family of the deceased, memorials for students and staff are limited to:

4.1.1. Endowments/plaques;

4.1.2. Scholarships;

4.1.3. Plantings; or,

4.1.4. Books, or items with educational significance.

5. Spontaneous Memorials

5.1. Spontaneous memorials are subject to the approval of the DCIRT (i.e. Graduation dedications in the school yearbook).

5.2. Management of Spontaneous Memorials:

5.2.1. It is useful to involve students in these plans as much as possible. This helps students feel that decisions made are respectful of their wishes.

5.2.2. Discuss with students:

5.2.2.1. How long such a memorial will be left in place (generally, a few days to a week);

5.2.2.2. When they may have access to the memorial; and,

5.2.2.3. What will happen with the items left at the site. Ex: the family of the deceased student might be offered a special scrapbook created using photos taken of the memorial.

5.2.2.4. When a spontaneous memorial is to be removed, the organizer of the memorial will be contacted. Artifacts will be respectfully removed outside of regular school hours.

5.2.3. When schools do not engage students in the process of planning for commemorative and memorial activities, there is a greater risk that spontaneous, informal memorials will appear in the school or community. These might include collections of notes, flowers, photos, stuffed animals, or something associated with the interests of the person who died. It may also involve the writing of messages and notes directly on the student's locker or desk, or at the site of death.

5.2.4. Often, these spontaneous memorials appear almost immediately after notification occurs. When this happens, it is important to communicate appropriate limits. For example, no permanent writing on property may be permitted. Objects left at the memorial cannot be perishable or pose a risk to safety (e.g., lit candles, alcoholic beverages).

5.2.5. If on school grounds, the memorial may not block exits, hallways, or access to student lockers. Temporary memorials should generally not be in locations where all students pass regularly, such as cafeterias or main hallways. If necessary, work with students to relocate a temporary memorial to another site.

5.2.6. Monitor the site regularly. Inappropriate material, whether written comments or objects, should be removed promptly by the school principal or designate.