



MEMORIALS IN SCHOOLS

Context

The Board of Education recognizes that the loss of a member of the school community is deeply felt by students, staff, and families. Following the loss of a Central Okanagan Public Schools student or staff member, the primary focus of staff will be on helping those (staff, students, and families) affected by a death to make connections to appropriate school and community resources.

Memorials set a precedent for the future and need to be equitable. The School District believes that the remembrance of a student or staff whose life ended during their years in the Central Okanagan Public Schools should be consistent and equitable from case-to-case and considerate of the grief process of family and friends; and, in accordance with Board Policy.

Sometimes, in the immediate aftermath of a crisis or death, memorials are proposed without full consideration of the potential long-term implications for students, staff, families, and the community. Research supports that “the how is often more important than the what,” and therefore, it is critical that students, staff and family play a central role in planning. In addition, it is important to allow sufficient time and space in which members of the school community can identify and understand their thoughts and emotions about a loss of life. This administrative procedure provides District parameters to guide decision-making regarding school-related memorials.

Definitions

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

Crisis: 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 the seriousness of the crisis.

District Post Critical Incident Response Team:

A designated group of trained staff members who develop and implement District-wide procedures for responding to critical incidents.

The District Post Critical Incident Response Team strives to provide collaborative leadership to support the safety and well-being of school communities by:

- encouraging a calm controlled response following a critical incident,
- demonstrating respect for the systems within each unique site,
- providing guidance and resources,
- making a commitment to do no harm, and
- sustaining a response for as long as needed.

Procedures

1. Memorial activities that take place at school must be approved and coordinated through the School Principal. In consultation with the Superintendent of Schools/CEO or Designate and with support from the District Post Critical Incident Response team, the Principal will assist families and students in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate for the school community and will assist students in healthy bereavement.
2. In recognition that schools are designed primarily to support learning, school sites should not serve as the main venue for the memorializing of students or staff.
3. Temporary school memorials, as approved by the School Principal, may be displayed until the day of the funeral, or within one week following the death, after which time they will be given to the family or charity as determined by the family and designated district officials. Allowable temporary memorials include flower arrangements, banners, pictures, notes, and locker and student desk displays. Any plans to sell memorial items must receive prior approval of the Principal.
4. The School District reserves the right to accept or decline permanent memorials. Permanent legacy memorials for deceased students and staff are limited to endowments, scholarships, or items with educational significance. Scholarship and endowment memorials may be established either as one-time or perpetual awards, with a description of the purpose of the endowment or scholarship. In general, the school district will avoid legacy memorials such as placing a plaque in the hallway or planting a tree. These are precedents that the school may not be able to apply consistently to all possible future deaths.
5. Graduation dedications in the school yearbook are subject to the approval of the School Principal and Assistant Superintendent.
6. Memorials following a death from suicide must not glamorize, romanticize, or stigmatize the act of suicide.
7. School district facilities will not be used for memorial services or funerals. Exceptions may be made for rental of school facilities by private parties with the approval of the Superintendent of Schools/CEO. In addition, the Superintendent of Schools/CEO, in consultation with the District Post Critical Incident Team, has the discretion to approve school-wide memorial activities in certain rare and extenuating circumstances. Due to the varying needs of students and staff, students and staff would not be required to participate in a school-wide memorial.
8. School staff will monitor anniversary dates and may provide small group or individual counselling and/or other supportive activities to friends of the deceased in order to assist with grief recovery. School-wide recognition of anniversary dates will not occur.
9. Memorials established prior to the initial adoption of this administrative procedure are not affected.

Relevant Board Policy: 625 – Sites, Facility and Equipment Enhancements

Developed by: Assistant Superintendent responsible for Critical Incidents

Date Agreed: September 10, 2021

Date Amended:

Related Documents: