

This Administrative Procedure is based on input from the Division's Education Services Staff, School Counsellors and Family/School Liaison (FSL) workers in response to recommendations from Mental Health.

Guiding Principles

The Division intends to provide a safe and positive environment for all students. However, when tragedy does occur, it is the responsibility of the Division to respond in a sensitive, sympathetic and timely manner. The death of a student impacts the entire school community. These guidelines have been established to provide an orderly, effective, and caring response.

- An attempt should be made to try to respond to all student deaths in a uniform fashion so as not to give the appearance that the loss of some students is considered a greater tragedy than others.
- Schools must be cautious not to glorify deaths related to suicide as research suggests the danger of copycat behaviour.
- Schools are in a unique position when a student passes away. The school community serves as an emotional base of support and can help students learn how to deal with the grieving process.

Recommended Practices

- Schools should consult the Critical Incident Team Coordinator to arrange the most appropriate individual student support.
- The school should not initiate permanent memorials, such as large pictures, dedicating scholarships, etc.
- The deceased students should not receive greater mention in graduation ceremonies or the yearbook than would be given to any other student.
- Students should be encouraged to channel their energies into constructive projects that assist the living such as collecting money for a community organization (such as SADD or the cancer society) or creating an item that can be given to the family (such as a video or cards).
- It is suggested that if schools wish to establish a practice of holding a memorial service, that the following procedures be followed:
 - Communication with parents occurs first
 - Attendance should be voluntary
 - 20 to 30 minutes at the longest.
 - Involving short comments or readings by clergy, a school staff member and/or a family member
 - Should be opened and closed by a school official
 - Does not involve speeches by students

Reference

Handbook - [PHRD Critical Incident Manual](#)