

998 MEMORIALS FOR DECEASED STUDENTS OR STAFF

I. PURPOSE

It is recognized that the loss of a member of the school community is deeply felt by students, staff, and families. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that ISD110 will support staff, students, and families impacted by death by assisting them with connections to appropriate school and community resources. Because it is recognized that memorial decisions made immediately in the aftermath of a crisis or death may be made without full consideration of the potential implications for students, staff, families, and the community, ISD110 will provide a process for memorial decision-making.

II. DEFINITIONS

- A. **Memorials:** Objects, activities, or donations to remember an event or deceased person(s).
- B. **Building Crisis Team:** A designated group of staff members within each school building who plan and implement support specific to the crisis event.
- C. **Crisis:** Any natural disaster or unexpected event that is perceived as extremely negative, generates feelings of helplessness, powerlessness, and/or entrapment, and may occur suddenly, unexpectedly, and without warning.
- D. **Impact:** The magnitude of the potential loss or seriousness of the crisis.
- E. **District Support Team:** A designated group of staff members who develop and execute district-wide procedures specific to the crisis event.

III. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

- A. Memorial activities expressed at school need to be coordinated and approved through the Building Crisis Team. The Building Crisis Team will assist families and students in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate and assist students in healthy bereavement.
- B. 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. Schools should focus on maintaining the regular schedule, structure, and routine.

- C. Temporary school memorials, as approved by school administration who will consult with the Director of Buildings and Grounds. The memorials may be displayed for one week or until the day of the funeral, whichever is sooner and will then be offered to the family. Selling of memorabilia items on school grounds is prohibited. Allowable temporary memorials are banners and pictures displayed in an area accessible to all students but not in an area where all students will have to view the memorial. Viewing of the memorial needs to be optional. Memorials that may spontaneously arise on lockers and desks should be transferred to the designated area. Memorial symbols displayed by individual students or staff on school grounds will be limited to one week after death, or to the day after the funeral, whichever is sooner and will then be offered to the family.
- D. Permanent memorials for deceased students and staff will be limited to endowments, scholarships, and books or items with educational significance. Scholarship and endowment memorials may be established one time, or in the form of a perpetual award, with a description of the purpose of the endowment or scholarship. Existing memorials established prior to the implementation of this policy will not be affected.
- E. Schools should strive to treat all deaths in the same way. Having a different approach for death by suicide reinforces prejudice associated with suicide and may be deeply painful to the deceased's family and friends. However, memorials following suicide are particularly important to monitor. Schools can play an important role in channeling the energy and passion of the students (and greater community) in a positive direction, balancing the community's need to grieve with the impact that the proposed activity will likely have on students, particularly on those who might be vulnerable to suicide contagion.
- F. Whenever possible, schools should communicate with the student's family and friends to coordinate memorialization with the family in the interest of identifying a meaningful, safe approach to acknowledging the loss. Make sure to be sensitive to the cultural needs of the deceased and family.
- G. School district facilities will not be used for memorial services or funerals. However, the superintendent, in consultation with the District Support Team, has the discretion to consider school-wide memorial activities when a crisis event has a significant impact on a majority of students, staff, and community.
- H. Other possible memorial activities include:

1. **Yearbooks:** A student or staff member who has died may be acknowledged the year the death occurred. Information shall be limited to the student's name, photo, dates of birth and death, and school activities in which the student participated.
2. **Commemorative Events:** A commemorative event may be established and held in the name of the deceased student or staff member. Activities cannot be held during the school day and should be sponsored by a class, club, or activity in which the deceased student or staff member participated. Advertisements of events must occur outside the school day. It is recommended that commemorative events utilize community partners (e.g., employers of the deceased, faith communities, etc.)
3. **Graduation Recognition:** One symbol representing all deceased members of a graduating class, such as a plant or bouquet of flowers, may be present on stage. A member of the school administration can also direct the audience in a moment of silence to collectively recognize deceased members of the graduating class.
4. **Moment of Silence Recognition:** A 'moment of silence' may be used following the death of a student or staff member to honor their memory. School-wide moments of silence should occur within 2 school days following notification of the death. Moments of silence are also approved for use at ISD110 Board of Education meetings, co-curricular events in which the deceased participated, and community-based events.

Legal References:

Cross References: MSBA/MASA Model Policy 706 (Acceptance of Gifts)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 801 (Equal Access to School Facilities)
MSBA/MASA Model Policy 806 (Crisis Management)
ISD 110 Policy 809 (Naming Rights)

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Waconia Public Schools ISD 110
Waconia, MN