



Procedure Name: Memorial Services and Memorialization			
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Legal Reference(s):	<i>The Education Act – Sections 175, 231</i>		

Background

Tragic events such as the loss of a member of the school community requires a thoughtful and coordinated response. School division employees will support staff, students and families who experience this loss, and will assist with connections to appropriate community and school division resources. There are several supports available within Living Sky School Division Schools including the in-house counselling team and their resources as well as outside agency support.

Scope

This procedure applies to school communities who are experiencing or have experienced a tragic loss of staff or student from within their building.

Definitions:

Memorial/Funeral Services - a funeral/memorial/celebration of life, is a beautiful way to acknowledge, celebrate and honour the life of a loved one who has passed away.

Procedures

1. **Memorial/Funeral Services:** As places designed primarily to support learning, school sites should not serve as the main venue for the memorialization of students or staff. Although some students and/or community members have contributed greatly to the school, research confirms that vulnerable people may be inadvertently placed at risk by either “glorifying death” or by having students and staff faced with a constant reminder. On rare occasions, situations may arise in which a school site may be considered an appropriate venue for a memorial service.

The following criteria should be considered when determining whether a facility request for a memorial is appropriate:

- a. **Necessity** - The potential number of people who wish to attend an event creates the necessity of a large gym-like space in which to hold the event. The facility booking would be treated as a special form of rental and, therefore, require reasonable attention to fire regulations.
- b. **Learning** - There can be no interruption of student learning. Memorial events should take place a reasonable time following school dismissal or on a weekend.
- c. **Nature** – A Celebration of Life - The nature of the memorial service should be that of a Celebration of Life. Symbols of life and positive messages of hope should be major components of such services. This is a memorial event; not a funeral. Therefore, there will be no bodily remains permitted for this type of memorial. Memorials may not be appropriate at all in certain types of situations. Each situation will be studied at the time and decisions will be made by the



director or designate. Student participation or involvement in such services should remain limited and carefully monitored by school/division representatives.

- d. **The Individual** - The person being memorialized must be a member of the school community – a student, staff member or member of the learning community directly related in some manner to the school.

2. Temporary/Spontaneous Memorials

- a. Temporary school memorials are generally discouraged as they can inadvertently become traumatic stimuli for others. However, if approved by the director or designate, a temporary memorial may be displayed for a short time, usually until the funeral/memorial service has taken place, and will be then offered to the family. Examples of possible temporary memorials are flower arrangements, banners, pictures, notes or locker displays.
- b. The school administration should regularly monitor informal memorials to ensure that there is no harmful messages or inappropriate items. Memorial items must not pose a safety concern.
- c. No memorial should be removed without the school first communicating the plan to the school community, including what will be done with the non-perishable items (i.e.: the memorial will be removed on Friday afternoon and the stuffed animals will be donated to the pediatric department of the hospital).

3. Permanent Memorials: Best practices by the National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children and the Center for Trauma Informed Practices (CTIP) recommend the establishment of only temporary school memorials that are removed immediately following the funeral or memorial service.

- a. Permanent memorials for deceased students and staff are limited to scholarships, and books or items with educational significance.
- b. Schools should not initiate permanent memorials such as pictures, benches, plaques or trees. If students identify a need to express their feeling of loss during the traumatic response process, school and division staff will work with them to create temporary memorials that suit the needs of students.
- c. Existing markers (limited to those accompanying the planting of trees, shrubs, perennials on school grounds) will be moved when necessary and may be permanently removed after 10 years and offered to the nearest relative.
- d. The deceased student should not receive greater mention in graduation ceremonies than would be given to any other student.
- e. Research into trauma and loss recommends that memorials should be in the community where they can be easily accessed by those who need their comfort and benefits, while also easily avoided by those who are activated by the “reminders”. Community memorials provide the same benefits as school memorials while avoiding the many conflicts and challenges created when erected in closed environments such as schools.

4. Memorial Gifts or Fundraisers: Memorial gifts or fundraisers organized in a school must have the consent of the school administration. Suggested memorials include a blood drive, partnering with local non-profit organizations and related activities or establishing a scholarship. As a courtesy the family of the deceased student or staff member should also provide consent before engaging in the activity.

5. Removal of Existing Shrines and Memorials: Current research indicates permanent memorials in schools or on school property are not advised. While a student or community member may have contributed greatly to the school, vulnerable people may inadvertently be put at risk by either glorifying



death and/or having students/staff faced with a constant reminder. Therefore, schools are expected to work with the School Community Council to plan to remove existing shrines in a thoughtful and respectful manner.

Related

2.01 School Community Councils