RESPONSE TO DEATHS

Belief

The Division acknowledges that a plan of action is essential to offset the initial shock upon learning of the death of a student or staff member.

Guidelines

1. The guiding principle is to determine the impact of the death on the site and to provide appropriate supports to return to normal routines as soon as possible.

2. The site administrator shall notify the Superintendent and consult with the Director of Support Services immediately upon learning of the death to develop a response plan.

3. Outside supports may be called upon as they are not emotionally involved and can provide objective support and direction.

4. Sites may hold a memorial service; attendance is voluntary for students and staff.

5. Normally sites will not be closed and arrangements will be made to address the needs of students and staff.

6. Ongoing supports may be necessary for some time after a death as experts indicate that aftershocks may continue for several years.

Procedures

7. Flags may be flown at half-mast at the site from the time of notification of the death up to and including the day of the funeral in accordance with AP 162.

8. The site administrator or designate shall contact the immediate family members of the deceased to ensure accurate information is obtained and to express sympathy on behalf of the site and / or division.

9. At a school, a team composed of the Principal and appropriate staff (e.g., guidance counselor, peer support team, Family School Liaison Worker) shall meet to make a response plan for dealing with the needs of students, staff and parents.

10. A staff meeting shall be held as soon as possible so the site administrator may review the known facts of the case in order to establish a common reference base and to dispel rumors.
11. The Principal or designate shall review with the staff the characteristics of high-risk students; staff shall compile a list of individual students who may need follow-up and these students will be directed to the counseling centre for support.

12. The Principal or designate, shall inform the total student body that a tragic death has occurred and that further information will follow in a letter that will be sent home.

13. The Principal, Counselor and / or Family School Liaison Worker may meet with each grade, either by individual homerooms or the total grade in order to:

13.1 Review the known facts and to dispel rumors;
13.2 Inform them of the counseling support centre;
13.3 Ask them to be supportive of one another and to escort any friend who is upset to a teacher or to the counseling centre;
13.4 Encourage them to discuss their feelings with their parents.

14. Telephone calls shall be made to parents of high-risk students.

15. The Superintendent will send a sympathy card to the family from the Division and flowers to the funeral or a donation in-lieu as directed by the family.

16. Death of an Employee or Employees Immediate Family

16.1 In the case of a death of an employee, the Superintendent will send a sympathy card to the family from the Division and flowers to the funeral or a donation in-lieu as directed by the family.

16.2 When notified of the death of an employee’s immediate family member, the Superintendent will send a sympathy card to the employee.

17. Requests for information regarding the death shall be directed to the site administrator or designate.

Reference: Section 60, 61, School Act