

## Student Memorial Policy

The Mt. Blue Regional School District Board of Directors recognizes that the death of a student is deeply and broadly felt throughout the school and local community. For many students, it may be their first experience with losing a friend or acquaintance. For parents, it is an almost unbearable tragedy. For educators, it is a time of difficult balance between allowing students a time to grieve and encouraging and supporting a return to the normalcy of the educational day. The district must be sensitive to the needs of those individuals feeling the loss, and the purpose of this policy is to provide guidelines for various types of memorials which may be established in the school setting.

School administrators will access the district crisis team and other resources as deemed necessary for assistance in creating a plan to respond to any unfortunate tragedy involving our students.

The district is obligated to exercise care in the methods used to acknowledge the deceased student and his or her family. Research indicates two potential problems with memorials for a student death.

First, physical memorials have the potential to communicate immortalization, which essentially glamorizes the death in the minds of some students. In the case of a death by suicide, this poses the risk of contributing to suicide contagion in a community.

Second, memorials in or at a school can be an ongoing visual reminder of what happened, inextricably connecting school to the student's death. Individuals all grieve differently, and some students may find it very difficult to have a school setting linked to a peer's death.

Any student memorial involving the district or any of its schools, facilities or programs must first be approved by the superintendent and shall be limited to the following:

- a) Scholarships established in the name of the student.
- b) Donations to a charity program that is dedicated to helping students.
- c) A school awareness campaign relevant to the individual's cause of death led by a recognized state or national organization.
- d) The deceased student's picture can be placed with his or her class in the school yearbook. Any information with the photo will be limited to the student's name and year of birth and death. The size of the photo will be the

same size as the photos of other class members. There will be no “Memorial Page” for deceased students in the school yearbook.

- e) A staff directed temporary memorial, such as a card box for student messages to the surviving family and/or for reflection, or a signature poster may be made available to the students. A temporary memorial will be in place no longer than five school days and is at the discretion of the school principal.
- f) There will be no official student memorial practices at graduation. However, students may, with approval of the principal, wear or display discreet remembrances of friends and/or family members who have passed away.
- g) Any student memorials created prior to the adoption of this policy may continue to be in existence.

Adopted: September 23, 2014