

909 MEMORIALS AND MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES FOR STUDENTS AND STAFF

I. PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish the criteria and procedures for memorials and memorial activities for students and staff. Owatonna Public Schools recognizes that the loss of a student or staff member deeply impacts students, staff, and families. Following the loss of an Owatonna student or staff member, the primary focus of staff will be on helping those (staff, students, and families) affected by the death to make connections to appropriate school and community resources.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY

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. Temporary memorials and memorial activities expressed at school need to be coordinated and approved through the Crisis Support Team, as well as the principal or their designee and in consultation with the superintendent or their designee. The crisis support team will assist families and students in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate for school and assist students and staff in healthy bereavement. School district funds and district student activity accounts cannot be used to support, finance, or fundraise for memorials or memorial activities. It is further recognized that the principal or their designee shall have a certain amount of discretion in these situations to make professional judgments, in consultation with the superintendent, to best meet the overall needs of students, staff, parents and the community. Finally, the approval, implementation and display of Memorial and Memorial Activities should consider our underlying value of equitable and consistent approach for all, including deceased students and staff, recognizing all are a loss to our community and none are more or less important.

III. DEFINITIONS

- A. "Memorials" means a physical object or digital content created or intended to remember an event or deceased person(s).
- B. "Memorial Activities" means activities to remember an event or deceased person(s).
- C. "Permanent Memorials" means a memorial intended to be sustained over time.
- D. "Crisis Support Team" means a designated group of trained professionals as assigned by the principal, providing grief services following a death of a student or staff member.

IV. RECOMMENDED MEMORIAL PROCEDURES

Sometimes, in the aftermath of a crisis or death, Memorials or Memorial Activities are proposed without full consideration of the potential implications for students, staff, families, and the community. This policy provides district parameters to guide decision-making regarding school-related Memorials & Memorial Activities.

V. RECOMMENDED MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES

A. Permanent Memorials and Donations

Dollars donated may be used as a scholarship in coordination with the family.

B. Temporary Memorials

Temporary Memorials, as approved by the crisis support team and the building principal, can be displayed within the school building or on school grounds until one week after the death, at which time they will be given to the family by the school principal. Temporary Memorials may include banners, pictures, student desk displays, digital content etc. that foster a sense of hope, recovery, and positive action.

C. Memorial Activities

A Memorial Activity may be held in the name of the deceased student or staff member. The event may be sponsored by a class, club, or activity in which the deceased student or staff member participated; such events may not be held during the school day. Notice of a Memorial Activity should occur outside of the school day. It is recommended that the memorial activity utilize community partners such as employers and faith communities and be approved by the principal, superintendent or their designee.

D. Graduation Recognition

It is recommended that one symbol representing deceased members of the then current graduation class, such as a plant or bouquet of flowers, may be present on the stage. It is also recommended that the name of a deceased student or students from the then current graduating class be read at the beginning of the commencement process. The superintendent is the final authority for all additional high school graduation decisions.

E. Dedication in School Yearbook

A "dedication" in the school yearbook may be requested during the same school year as a student or staff member's death. Dedications are subject to the approval of the district's crisis support team and administration.

F. Moment of Silence

A "moment of silence" may be used at the discretion of district leadership following the death of a student or staff member. School-wide moments of silence should occur within two school days following notification of the death. Moments of silence are also approved for use at ISD #761 Board of Education meetings, co-curricular events, and community-based events, and should occur as near the date of the death of the student or staff member as possible.

G. Other Notes

It is recommended that existing memorials established prior to the implementation of this policy will remain intact. Existing memorials are generally the sole responsibility of the entity providing the memorial. District staff and/or finances may only be used to maintain current memorials as part of the regular maintenance processes and/or to ensure safe conditions. The district reserves the right to remove a memorial if it is not or cannot be

maintained or is contrary to the overall educational needs of students. The family of the deceased will be notified of any removal of previously established memorials that the district has recorded and be given the option to take ownership of the memorial off of school grounds.

H. Family Communication

It is recommended that the superintendent, principal, or their designee communicate as appropriate with the family of the deceased in applying the policy and procedure.

VI. NOT RECOMMENDED MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES

A. Fundraising

Selling and/or fundraising of memorial items shall occur outside of the school day. District student activity accounts cannot be used to support, finance, or fundraise for memorialization. Proceeds from co-curricular events or contests cannot be donated to agencies for memorialization.

B. Memorial Services at School

It is recommended that school district facilities not be used for formal memorial services. However, the superintendent has the discretion to consider approving community-based memorial events that utilize district facilities.

C. Anniversary Dates

It is recommended that formal, school-wide recognition of anniversary dates only occur with very limited circumstances and only with approval from the superintendent. If the death of a student or staff member occurred in a public location accessible by community members, such as a crash site, district staff should not provide anniversary monitoring.

Legal References: None

Cross References: Policy 809 (Naming Rights Policy)