

MORRIS AREA SCHOOL DISTRICT POLICY #723

ADOPTED – NOVEMBER 2022

REVIEWED - *

#723 MEMORIAL POLICY

I. PURPOSE

Morris Area Schools recognizes that the loss of a student or staff member deeply impacts students, staff and families. The purpose of this policy is to outline the district's structure to support staff, students and families impacted by a traumatic death, including death by suicide, by providing information to assist connecting with 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, Morris Area Schools will provide a process for memorial decision-making, as well as Board-approved policies regarding memorial activities. This policy also recognizes that memorials after suicide may glamorize death and communicate suicide as an appropriate or desired response to stress; therefore, careful and deliberate consideration was given in determining approved memorial activities. This policy will be reviewed on a three year cycle by district and building administration to ensure it continues to further the stated purpose.

II. DEFINITIONS

1. Memorials: Established objects or activities to remember an event or deceased person(s).
2. Crisis: Any natural disaster or unexpected event that negatively affects a student, a staff member or a significant group of the school population and usually involves serious emotional, psychological and/or physical injury or death.
3. Impact: The magnitude of the potential loss or seriousness of the crisis.

III. 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. Memorial activities expressed at school need to be coordinated and approved through building administration. The administration will assist families and students in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate for school and assist students and staff in healthy bereavement. It is further recognized that building administration should 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 community as a whole.

IV. MEMORIAL POLICY

Memorials for deceased students and staff are limited to endowments, scholarships, a paver no larger than 12"x12", 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 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 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. Any existing trees that die, sustain storm damage, or need to be moved for construction will not be replaced. The district will provide a paver no larger than 12"x12" to be placed in lieu of replacing the tree.

Memorial activities may include:

1. Should a current student or member of the school staff pass away anytime during the current coverage period, the yearbook staff will treat the death in a tasteful, respectful manner. The portrait of that individual

will appear as it would under normal circumstances, with the appropriate section's portraits. Pages covering sports, academics, or activities that have already been published may also feature the individual.

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. Advertisement 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. Additional recognition might be possible at the discretion of the building principal.
4. Moment of Silence Recognition: Upon request or permission of the deceased student's or staff member's family, 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 two school days following notification of the death, but will not be observed at the commencement ceremony. Moments of silence are also approved for use at ISD 2769 School Board meetings, co-curricular events in which the deceased participated, and community based events.
5. Spontaneous Memorials: In the aftermath of a death of a student or staff member, spontaneous memorials such as placing items by a student's locker or desk may be appropriate until after the funeral. The administration will monitor and manage spontaneous memorials.

V. PROHIBITED MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES

1. Selling and/or fundraising of memorial items during the school day is prohibited. District student activity accounts cannot be used to support, finance, or fundraise for memorialization. Proceeds from district co-curricular events or contests cannot be donated to agencies for memorialization. Utilizing formal all-school or school-wide events, including Commencement, Homecoming festivities, Prom, and other thematic events or weeks to memorialize deceased students or staff is prohibited. Commemorative items or events can be sponsored by community based agencies and promoted outside the school day.
2. Utilizing formal all-school or school-wide events, including Commencement, Homecoming festivities, Prom, and other thematic events or weeks to memorialize deceased students or staff is prohibited. Commemorative items or events can be sponsored by community based agencies and promoted outside the school day.
3. The Superintendent, in consultation with the administration, has the discretion to consider memorial events that utilize district facility rentals outside of the school day when the death of a student, staff member, or community member has a significant impact on a majority of students, staff and community.
4. School Yearbooks are not dedicated to the memorialization of deceased persons.
5. Formal, school-wide recognition of anniversary dates will not occur. 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 will not provide memorial monitoring.

The school district administration may consult the School Board policy committee for unique or unusual circumstances that should be considered but may not meet these guidelines.