

## **Memorial Policy**

### **Policy #536**

#### **I. Purpose**

Montevideo Public Schools recognizes that the death of a student, staff member, alumnus, or community member is a profound loss. The District extends deep sympathy to grieving families and friends and is committed to responding with compassion, dignity, and respect.

At the same time, the District is entrusted with the long-term stewardship of school buildings and grounds for present and future generations. This policy establishes a clear, consistent, and caring framework for memorial requests so that decisions are made thoughtfully, equitably, and in a manner that preserves the integrity, safety, and flexibility of school district property.

#### **II. Guiding Principles**

1. **Compassion First** – The District acknowledges grief and will respond with empathy and care.
2. **Educational Mission** – School property exists primarily to serve educational purposes.
3. **Equity and Consistency** – All memorial requests will be handled under the same standards to avoid inequity or favoritism.
4. **Future Stewardship** – Permanent installations may limit future construction, renovation, safety planning, or land use decisions.
5. **Non-Permanence** – No memorial installed on District property shall be everlasting.

#### **III. Temporary Spontaneous Memorials**

In the immediate aftermath of a loss, students and community members may create spontaneous memorials (flowers, cards, photos, small items).

- Such items may remain in place for up to fifteen (15) days.
- Items must not obstruct entrances, sidewalks, traffic flow, or create safety hazards.
- After fifteen (15) school days, all items will be removed by the District.
- Prior notice of removal of items is not required.

#### IV. Permanent Memorials Prohibited

The District shall not approve permanent or perpetual memorials on school property, including but not limited to:

- Memorial benches
- Memorial crosses or religious symbols
- Memorial trees intended as permanent dedications
- Plaques affixed to buildings or grounds
- Named gardens or landscaped areas
- Statues or other fixed installations

This prohibition ensures the District retains flexibility for future construction projects such as parking lots, building additions, safety improvements, or site redesign. It also prevents future emotional hardship associated with relocating or removing permanent memorials.

#### V. Limited-Term Memorial Installations

Under limited circumstances, the school board may approve a temporary memorial installation subject to the following conditions:

##### 1. Time Limit

Maximum term: Seven (7) years.

The removal date will be established at the time of approval.

At the conclusion of the term, the memorial will be removed by the District without further notice.

##### 2. Location

Placement must not interfere with current or future construction, utilities, traffic flow, supervision, or safety plans.

Final location is determined solely by the District.

##### 3. Design and Durability

Must meet District standards for safety and maintenance.

Must be modest in size and appearance.

Must not include political messaging or controversial content.

#### 4. Funding

The District will not allocate public funds for memorial installations.

All costs, including design, materials, installation, maintenance, and removal, must be paid in full in advance.

#### 5. Removal

Removal will occur at the end of the approved term.

Notification is not required at the time of removal.

The District is not responsible for damage due to weather, vandalism, or natural deterioration.

#### VI. Preferred Forms of Remembrance

To balance compassion with stewardship, the District encourages alternatives that do not involve physical installations on school grounds, such as:

- Scholarships administered by an independent community foundation.
- Donations to existing student support programs.
- Contributions to academic, arts, or athletic initiatives.
- A moment of silence or commemorative event.

All requests must be submitted in writing and include:

- Proposed design
- Proposed location
- Funding plan
- Agreement to all terms of this policy

Approval of any temporary memorial shall not establish precedent. Each request is considered individually within the boundaries of this policy.

Montevideo Public Schools is not indifferent to loss. The boundaries established in this policy are not a reflection of the value of any life, but rather a recognition that:

- Schools must remain places of learning and growth.
- Facilities, including buildings and grounds must possess the ability to adapt to future needs.
- The District must avoid circumstances where current or future school leaders are forced to remove permanent memorials under emotionally difficult conditions.