

Administrative Procedure		Nicola Similkameen School District
Section:	Students, Instruction & School Operations	
Title:	Critical Incidents Memorials in Schools	Pending

Background

The Board of Education recognizes that the loss of a member of the school community is deeply felt by students, staff, and families. Following the death of a Nicola-Similkameen School District student or staff member, the primary focus of staff will be on supporting those affected and connecting them with appropriate school and community resources.

Memorials can set lasting precedents and must be approached with fairness and care. The District believes that remembering a student or staff member whose life ended during their time in the Nicola-Similkameen School District should be handled with consistency, equity, and compassion—honouring the individual while respecting the grieving process of family and friends. Memorials must also be engaged in accordance with Board policies and procedures.

In the immediate aftermath of a loss, proposals for memorials may arise without full consideration of their long-term impact on students, staff, families, and the wider community. Research supports that the *how* a memorial is planned often matters more than *what* is created. For this reason, it is essential that students, staff, and families play a central role in any planning process. It is equally important to allow time and space for reflection, ensuring that members of the school community can process their emotions and thoughts surrounding the loss.

This Administrative Procedure establishes clear parameters to guide decision-making related to school-based memorials.

Guiding Principles

1. *Normalize Grief While Preserving Routine:* Memorials and events will support emotional processing without excessively disrupting the normal function and activity of the school
2. *Voluntary participation:* Participation of both students and staff in any remembrance activities must be voluntary and consensual.
3. *Temporary, Inclusive, and Compassionate:* Best-practice memorials are time-limited and accessible to all, while respecting the privacy and preferences of the family.
4. *Equity and Consistency:* Every loss will be treated with the same level of care and intention, regardless of circumstances or visibility.
5. *Respect for the Family:* Memorial efforts will respect the family's wishes and cultural values, while also aligning with District protocols and the well-being of students and staff.
6. *Avoiding Re-Traumatization:* Decisions about memorialization will consider the emotional safety of both those impacted by the loss and the broader school population.

Procedures

1. Memorial activities that take place at school must be approved and coordinated through the School Principal. In consultation with the Superintendent of Schools or designate and the District Critical Incident Response Team (DCIRT), and with reference to these procedures. The Principal will assist families and students in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate for the school community and will assist students in healthy bereavement.
2. In recognition that schools are designed primarily to support learning, school sites should not serve as the main venue for the memorialization of students or staff.
3. Temporary school memorials, as approved by the School Principal, may be displayed until the day of the funeral, or within one week following the death, after which time they will be given to the family or charity as determined by the family and designated district officials.
 - 3.1 Allowable temporary memorials include flower arrangements, banners, pictures, notes, and locker and student desk displays.
 - 3.2 Any plans to sell memorial items must receive prior approval of the Principal.
4. The School District reserves the right to accept or decline permanent memorials.
 - 4.1 Permanent legacy memorials for deceased students and staff are limited to endowments, scholarships, or items with educational significance.
 - 4.1.1 Scholarship and endowment memorials may be established either as onetime or perpetual awards, with a description of the purpose of the endowment or scholarship.
 - 4.2 In general, the school district will avoid legacy memorials such as placing a plaque in the hallway or planting a tree. These are precedents that the school may not be able to apply consistently to all possible future deaths.
5. Dedications in the school yearbook are subject to the approval of the School Principal and Superintendent or Designate.
6. Memorials following a death from suicide or accidental drug poisoning must not glamorize, romanticize, or stigmatize the act of suicide.
7. School district facilities will not be used for memorial services or funerals.
 - 7.1 Exceptions may be made for rental of school facilities, on non-instructional days, by private parties with the approval of the Superintendent or Designate.
 - 7.2 In addition, the Superintendent or Designate, in consultation with the DCIRT, has the discretion to approve school-wide memorial activities in certain rare and extenuating circumstances. Due to the varying needs of students and staff, students and staff would not be required to participate in any school-wide memorial events.
8. School staff will monitor anniversary dates and may provide small group or individual counselling and/or other supportive activities to friends of the deceased in order to assist with grief recovery.
 - 8.1 School-wide recognition of anniversary dates will not occur.
9. Memorials established prior to the initial adoption of this administrative procedure are not affected.

A Note on GoFundMe and Similar Fundraising Platforms

In the event of a loss affecting the school community, the District maintains the following position regarding crowdfunding initiatives:

1. School staff and the District will not create or manage GoFundMe or similar fundraising pages in response to a death in the District community.
2. If individuals choose to contribute in a personal capacity to an established crowdfunding initiative, particularly within the context of their professional role, it is strongly recommended that donations be made anonymously, to maintain boundaries, preserve a sense of equity, and protect privacy.
3. Equity considerations must guide all responses—fundraising efforts may unintentionally create disparities in how different losses are perceived or supported.
4. All activities must comply with Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) guidelines, particularly regarding charitable giving and the use of public resources.

References: Memorials in Schools Central Okanagan Public Schools
 Critical Incidents – Memorials in Schools New Westminster Schools
 Managing Memorials Safer Schools Together

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Date Amended:

Cross Reference: