

## **MEMORIALS AND COMMEMORATION**

The Sunnyside School District adopts this policy to establish consistent, equitable and safe guidelines for memorials created after the loss of a student or staff member. The Sunnyside School District recognizes that the loss of a student or staff member deeply impacts students, staff, families, and the community. Through implementation of this policy, the Sunnyside School District expects to establish consistent, culturally responsive, trauma-informed, and equitable guidelines for memorials so that students, staff, families and the community can heal from the loss and honor the life of the individual without causing or worsening trauma.

### **Definitions**

In order to provide transparent, consistent, trauma-informed and equitable implementation of the memorials policy, it is imperative that there be a shared understanding of the components that surround crisis response and memorials as they relate to the schools in the district.

1. Memorial: Objects or activities to remember a deceased person or an event that resulted in death.
2. Impact: The magnitude of the potential loss or seriousness of the crisis
3. 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.
4. District Crisis Team: A designated group of staff members, within each school building, who plan and implement mental health support, including grief recovery. The work of the Crisis Team is centered around providing support, safety and structure at the time of the crisis. Long term resources can also be made available.
5. Safe Room: District level crisis teams, when appropriate, will provide Safe Rooms, at impacted buildings, where students and/or staff can gather to grieve. Crisis Team members and mental health staff will be available for a designated timeframe to assist students through the grieving process and offer appropriate activities to assist with grieving.

### **Services, Memorials and Commemorations**

Students wishing to attend a funeral service occurring during the school day may do so with parent permissions. These students will be excused from class and will be required to make up any missing assignments. Special considerations for classwork or absences will be made for siblings and/or relatives of a deceased student or staff member.

### **Temporary Memorials**

It is recognized that temporary school memorials for deceased students and staff allow students and staff to express their grief in a positive and constructive manner. Temporary memorials may be displayed in a designated area within the school building until the day of the funeral, but for

no longer than one week following the death, and will then be given to the custodial family by designated school officials. Temporary memorials can only be displayed in administrator designated areas monitored by school officials and cannot alter or damage District furniture, equipment, or property.

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.

#### Authority

The building principal or designee, in consultation with the Superintendent, has the discretion to remove inappropriate temporary memorials that are in violation of School Board Policy/Procedure, the student code of conduct, or are likely to cause a substantial disruption to the school environment. Input from the family and students will be considered.

#### Acceptable Temporary Memorials

Students and staff may benefit from expressing their grief in different ways within designated Safe Rooms. Students and staff may partake in appropriate activities such as: writing letters and sympathy cards, listing the attributes of lost friends or loved ones, developing memory books, creating a mural or collage, writing a poem, story or song about the person(s) who died. These types of memorials will not be displayed within the school but be delivered to the appropriate family member at a time designated by school administration. The building principal or designee will identify a temporary memorial site on school property; for example, the locker of the deceased student, the guidelines listed under Temporary Memorials will apply.

#### Anniversary Dates

School-wide recognition of anniversary dates will not occur; however, staff will be available to support students during these times.

#### Existing Commemorations

Existing memorials established prior to the implementation of this policy may remain intact. 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 or relocate a memorial if it is not or cannot be maintained, is contrary to the overall educational needs and well-being of students or hinders future construction or maintenance work.

#### Permanent Memorials

No permanent memorials will be established.

#### **Other Considerations**

Some of the items listed below could be labeled district traditions and are considered events or milestones in the lifecycle of a school year or a student's school career. Special consideration must be paid to these items.

### Yearbooks

While yearbooks are a way to formalize memories, it can be traumatizing to see students and staff who died highlighted in this format. Therefore, there will be no memorial acknowledgement (this includes special messages, memorial pages, religious symbols/images printed next to the picture etc.) in school yearbooks. Student and staff pictures will only appear in the yearbook within the school year that the death occurred. (For example, a student who passes in eleventh grade will be pictured in the 11th grade yearbook but not in subsequent yearbooks or 12th grade.). These guidelines shall be applied to all deaths, regardless of the circumstances.

### **Graduation Ceremonies**

Graduation is a special time to celebrate the hard work and accomplishments of our students. We also understand it can be a time to remember classmates who are no longer with us. Finding a healthy balance between acknowledging a loss and protecting the emotional safety of participants and attendees is the goal.

Sunnyside High School has thoughtful procedures in place to honor the memory of students who pass away before graduation, ensuring the moment is handled with care and respect while keeping the focus on celebrating the graduating class.

With family approval, a chair may be set out for each deceased student from the graduating class.

The family will receive a posthumous diploma in accordance with RCW 28A.230.120