

Community Relations

SUBJECT: RESPONSE TO DEATH OF A MEMBER OF THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY

It is a basic human desire to remember members of the school community; students, staff, and members of the Board of Education, who have died. It is the intent of this policy to guide members of New Paltz Central School District (NPCSD) to respond to and treat such deaths with care and compassion while fulfilling the District's primary purpose of education. It is the intent of this policy to care for and support the school community by responding to deaths with consistency and honoring the deceased with dignity.

Students

Protecting and supporting students is the first priority. All NPCSD staff and volunteers with information about the recent death of a student or adult member of the school community must report that information to a building principal or the school Superintendent. Release of information about the death must be handled with care and in accordance with this policy and any resultant procedures to ensure the well-being of the students.

Ascertain Facts

It is critical that the District first obtain confirmed and accurate information about the death before any information is disseminated. Information about the death should not be disclosed until the family of the deceased has been consulted and the facts verified.

Crisis Response

Upon verification of the facts, a coordinated crisis response should immediately be implemented to compassionately and effectively manage the situation, provide opportunities for grief support, maintain an environment focused on normal educational activities, help students with their feelings, and minimize risks.

To the maximum extent possible the District will keep the regular school day intact for the benefit of the entire student body (including those who may not have known the deceased).

The Superintendent of Schools and/or building principal is responsible to develop and maintain a Crisis Response Plan which shall include, but not be limited to, safety, operations, community liaisons, funeral, media relations, social media, and crisis intervention. The Crisis Response Plan shall be reviewed after each implementation and, as needed, revised and updated.

District Website Obituary

With family permission, an obituary and picture of the individual will be placed on the District's website. The Obituary will remain on the website for two weeks.

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Funerals and Memorial Services

Maintaining a consistent focus on the District's primary purpose of education, to the maximum extent possible for the benefit of the entire student body the regular school schedule will be kept intact. Using a room or space in the school building or on school grounds for a funeral or memorial service is not permitted.

Use of school buses to transport students to and from a funeral or memorial services is not permitted. Students wishing to attend such services held during school hours are permitted to leave school with appropriate parental permission. Parents are encouraged to accompany students attending services.

Spontaneous Memorials

Memorial materials and activities not covered in Board of Education Policy #3160 -- Naming and Dedicating School District Property, are outlined in this policy, such as spontaneous memorials.

Spontaneous memorials, such as leaving flowers, cards, poems, pictures, or other items in a place closely associated with the deceased, in the aftermath of a death may occur. These Spontaneous Memorials are temporary and may be displayed until two weeks after the day of the funeral and will then be given to the family, if appropriate. The District shall not be responsible for damage to or loss of temporary memorials on school property.

Requests to create and distribute t-shirts and buttons bearing images of the deceased, or other memorabilia will not be allowed. While these items may be comforting to some students, they may be quite upsetting to others.

Suicide

It is the intent of the District that all deaths are honored and responded to in the same way regardless of the cause or circumstances of death including suicide. Suicide contagion is a process by which one suicide may contribute to another and should be considered when making decisions in responding to the death.

NOTE: Refer also to *After a Suicide: A Toolkit for Schools*, American Foundation for Suicide Prevention.

Adoption Date 01/04/2023