



Administrative Procedures

AP-433	Date of implementation: September 2020
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MEMORIAL SERVICES AND MEMORIALS	Date of review: May 7, 2025
	Related Administrative Procedures:

Purpose: To guide schools in providing compassionate support to students and the school community following a critical incident or traumatic event. Tragic events, such as the loss of a member of the school community, require a thoughtful and coordinated response. Division employees will support staff, students and families who experience this loss, and will assist with connections to appropriate community and Division resources.

Background: As places designed primarily to support learning, school sites should not serve as a venue for the memorializing of students or staff. However, instances may arise in which a school site, in some communities, may be considered an appropriate venue for a memorial service.

Procedures:

1) Memorial Services

- a) Schools are spaces dedicated to learning and well-being. While we recognize that students and staff may leave a lasting impact on the school community, it is important to approach memorialization with care. Research on trauma and loss indicates that some individuals – particularly those who are vulnerable – may be adversely affected by ongoing reminders of death or by memorials that unintentionally idealize the loss. For this reason, school buildings should not serve as a venue for memorializing students or staff.
- b) On rare occasions, situations may arise in which a school site may be considered an appropriate venue for a memorial service. The following criteria should be considered when determining if a request for a memorial service in a school facility is appropriate:
 - i) Learning - There can be no interruption of student learning. Therefore, memorial events held in a school building must take place on a weekend or during an extended school break.
 - ii) Necessity - The potential number of people who wish to attend the event creates the necessity of holding the event in a large gym-like space. The facility booking would be treated as a special form of rental and, therefore, require reasonable attention to fire regulations.
 - iii) Nature of event – A Celebration of Life - The nature of the memorial service should be that of a Celebration of Life. Symbols of life and positive messages of hope should be major components of such services.
 - iv) This is a memorial event, not a funeral. Therefore, no physical remains of the deceased,

including, but not limited to, cremated (ashes) may be present. Memorials may not be appropriate in certain types of situations. Each situation will be studied at the time and decisions will be made by the Director or designate.

- v) Memorials may not be appropriate in certain types of situations. Each situation will be studied at the time and decisions will be made by the Director or designate.
- vi) The Individual - The person being memorialized must be a member of the school community – a student, staff member or member of the learning community directly related to the school.

2) Permanent and Temporary Memorials

- a) Best practices outlined by the National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children recommend the establishment of only temporary school memorials that are removed immediately after the funeral or memorial service.
- b) Current research indicates permanent memorials in schools or on school property are not advised. Schools should not initiate permanent memorials such as pictures, benches, plaques or trees. If students identify a need to express their feelings of loss during the traumatic response process, school and Division staff will work with them to create temporary memorials that suit the needs of students.
- c) The deceased student should not receive greater mention in graduation ceremonies or the yearbook than would be given to any other student.
- d) Research into trauma and loss recommends that memorials should be in the community where they can be easily accessed by those who need their comfort and benefits, while also easily avoided by those who are activated by the “reminders”.
- e) Community memorials provide the same benefits as school memorials while avoiding the many conflicts and challenges created when erected in closed environments such as schools.

3) Removal of existing memorials

Schools are to work as a team to sensitively plan to remove existing memorials in a respectful and thoughtful manner. The team would consist of the Administrators, school-based Counsellor, Learning Superintendent and/or designated Coordinator.