



## **523 MEMORIALS FOR DECEASED STUDENTS AND STAFF**

### **I. PURPOSE**

South Washington School District recognizes that the loss of a student or staff member deeply impacts students, staff and families. The purpose of this policy is to ensure that South Washington County Schools support staff, students and families impacted from a death by assisting with connections to appropriate school and community resources. It is recognized that memorial decisions made immediately in the aftermath of a crisis or death may be made without full consideration of the potential implications for students, staff, families and the community. South Washington County Schools will provide a process for memorial decision-making, as well as Board approved policies regarding memorial activities. This policy recognizes that memorials after suicide may glamorize death and communicate suicide as an appropriate or desired response to stress; therefore, careful and deliberate consideration will be given in determining approved memorial activities. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by district and building administration to ensure it supports and recognizes the stated purpose.

### **II. DEFINITIONS**

Memorials: Objects or activities to remember an event or deceased person(s).

Living Memorials: A non-tangible memorial needing to be sustained over time.

District Flight Team: An appointed group of staff members who develop and execute district-wide procedures for the handling of mental health needs in the recovery phase of a crisis situation needing grief support.

Crisis Support Team: A designated group of trained professionals providing grief services following a death of a student or staff member.

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.

Impact: The magnitude of the potential loss or seriousness of the crisis.

### **III. GENERAL STATEMENT OF POLICY**

In recognition that schools are designed primarily to support learning, school sites should not serve as the main venue for memorial services of students or staff. Memorial

activities expressed at school should be coordinated and approved through the District Flight Team, as well as building administration. The District Flight Team will assist families and students in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate for school and assist students and staff in healthy bereavement. It is further recognized that building administration should have a certain amount of discretion in these situations to make professional judgments, in consultation with the Superintendent or their designee, to best meet the overall needs of students, staff, parents and the community as a whole.

#### **IV. MEMORIAL POLICY**

Temporary memorials, as approved by the District Flight Team, may be displayed within the school building until the day of the funeral, or within one week following the death, after which time they will be given to the family by designated district officials.

Allowable temporary memorials include banners, pictures, and student desk displays, and are only allowed in locations monitored by school officials. Temporary memorials cannot alter district-owned property, including lockers and desks. Memorials displayed by individual students or staff on school grounds (outside school building) will be limited to one month past the funeral. All temporary memorial activities must occur under the direct supervision of the District Flight Team. It is further recognized that building administration should have a certain amount of discretion in these situations to make professional judgments, in consultation with the Superintendent and District Flight Team, to best meet the overall needs of students, staff, parents and the community as a whole

Living memorials for deceased students and staff will be limited to endowments, scholarships, or items with educational significance. Scholarship and endowment memorials may be established one time, or in the form of a perpetual award, with a description of the purpose of the endowment or scholarship. Memorials may not include the retirement, alteration, or discontinued use of school property. Other recommended memorial activities include:

Yearbooks: A student or staff member that has died may be acknowledged in the yearbook during the year of their death. Information will be limited to their name, photo, date of birth and death, and school activities they participated in.

Commemorative Events: A commemorative event may be established and held in the name of the deceased student or staff member. Activities cannot be held during the school day, and should be sponsored by a class, club, or activity in which the deceased student or staff member participated. Advertisement and communication of events must occur outside the school day. It is recommended that commemorative events utilize community partners (e.g., employers of the deceased, faith communities, etc.).

Graduation Recognition: One symbol representing deceased members of a graduating class, such as a plant or bouquet of flowers, may be present on stage. A member of the school administration can direct the audience in a moment of silence to collectively recognize deceased members of the graduating class.

Moment of Silence Recognition: A “moment of silence” may be used following the death of a student or staff member to honor their memory. School-wide moments of silence should occur within 2 school days, following notification of the death. Moments of silence are also approved for use at ISD 833 School Board meetings, co-curricular events in which the deceased participated, and community based events.

Existing memorials are generally the sole responsibility of the entity providing the memorial; 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 a memorial if it is not or cannot be maintained or is contrary to the overall educational needs of students. Existing memorials established prior to the implementation of this policy will remain intact, with the exception of school spaces being named in memory of a student or staff member. Those types of memorials will remain for a period of 10 years and then be removed. The future naming of school spaces, such as classrooms, hallways, and libraries is prohibited unless approved by the School Board.

## **V. PROHIBITED MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES**

Selling and/or fundraising of memorial items during the school day is prohibited. District student activity accounts cannot be used to support, finance, or fundraise for memorialization. Proceeds from district co-curricular events or contests cannot be donated to agencies for memorialization. Utilizing formal all-school or school-wide events, including Commencement, Homecoming festivities, Prom, and other thematic events or weeks to memorialize deceased students or staff is prohibited. Commemorative items or events can be sponsored by community-based agencies and promoted outside the school day.

School district facilities will not be used for formal memorial services or funerals. However, the Superintendent, in consultation with district leadership, has the discretion to consider memorial events that utilize district facilities when the death of a student or staff member has a significant impact on a majority of students, staff and community.

Formal, school-wide recognition of anniversary dates will not occur. 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.

**POLICY ADOPTED:** August 20, 2015