

SD42 PROCEDURE 5500

MEMORIALS IN SCHOOLS

PURPOSE

This procedure establishes consistent, equitable, and trauma-informed guidance for memorialization following the death of a student or staff member associated with the School District ("District"). The procedure supports healthy grieving while maintaining schools as emotionally safe learning environments.

The District recognizes that the loss of a member of the school community is deeply felt by students, staff, and families. The primary focus of schools and the District is to support those affected and to assist them in accessing appropriate school-based and community supports.

In the immediate aftermath of a death or critical incident, requests for memorials may arise during periods of heightened emotion. Research indicates that how remembrance occurs is often more important than the specific form it takes. Allowing time, ensuring voluntary participation, and prioritizing student well-being are essential. This procedure provides District parameters to guide decision-making related to school-based memorials.

DEFINITIONS

Memorial

An object, activity, or dedication intended to remember a deceased person or an event resulting in death.

Critical Incident

Any unexpected event that significantly disrupts a school community and may involve serious emotional, psychological, or physical injury or death.

Impact

The extent or severity of the loss or critical incident.

District Critical Incident Response Team (DCIRT)

A designated group of trained District staff who provide coordinated guidance and support following critical incidents, with a commitment to do no harm.

PROCEDURES

The District will be guided by the following principles when responding to memorial requests:

- Support healthy expressions of grief while preserving the routine and purpose of schools.
- Ensure participation in any memorial activity is voluntary for students and staff.
- Favour temporary, inclusive, and compassionate forms of memorialization.
- Apply consistent and equitable practices to all losses, regardless of circumstance or visibility.
- Respect family wishes and cultural considerations, within District protocols.

Avoid practices that may re-traumatize individuals or the wider school community.

Approval and Coordination

All memorial activities that take place at a school must be approved and coordinated through the Principal. In consultation with the Superintendent of Schools or designate, and where appropriate, the District Critical Incident Response Team, the Principal will assist families and students in identifying appropriate memorial activities for the school community that support healthy bereavement.

Schools as Places of Learning

Schools are designed primarily to support learning and should not serve as the primary venue for the memorialization of students or staff.

Temporary Memorials

Temporary memorials, as approved by the Principal, may be displayed until the day of the funeral or up to one week following the death. After this period, items will be respectfully removed and returned to the family or donated, as determined by the family and designated District officials.

Allowable temporary memorials may include cards, notes, artwork, photographs, flowers, banners, and locker or desk displays.

The creation or distribution of memorial items using School or District names, logos, branding, or spirit wear is not permitted. The District does not support the sale of memorial items.

Permanent Memorials

The District reserves the right to accept or decline requests for permanent memorials. Permanent memorials are limited to scholarships, bursaries, endowments, or items of educational significance. The District will avoid permanent physical memorials such as plaques or tree plantings, as these practices cannot be applied consistently in future circumstances.

Publications and Dedications

Dedications in school publications, including yearbooks or graduation materials, require approval from the Principal and the Superintendent of Schools or designate.

Deaths Involving Suicide or Substance-Related Causes

Memorials following a death involving suicide or accidental drug poisoning must not romanticize, glorify, or stigmatize the death, and must align with evidence-informed suicide prevention and trauma-informed practices.

Use of District Facilities

District facilities will not be used for funerals or memorial services. Exceptions may be considered for the rental of school facilities by private parties on non-instructional days, subject to approval by the Superintendent of Schools or designate.

In rare and exceptional circumstances, the Superintendent of Schools or designate, in consultation with the District Critical Incident Response Team, may approve school-wide memorial activities. Participation by students and staff is voluntary.

Anniversaries and Ongoing Support

School staff may monitor anniversary dates and provide individual or small group counselling or other supportive activities as needed. School-wide recognition of anniversary dates will not occur.

Existing Memorials

Memorials established before the adoption of this Administrative Procedure are not affected.

Fundraising and Crowdfunding

School staff and the District will not create or manage crowdfunding initiatives (e.g., GoFundMe) in response to a death. Where individuals choose to contribute they do so in a personal capacity. All actions must comply with Canada Revenue Agency requirements and District expectations.

The use of School or District names, logos, branding, or spirit wear in connection with fundraising or memorial initiatives is not permitted.

DATED: September 1, 2026