

## **Memorials for Deceased Students and Staff**

Recognizing that loss of a member of the school community is deeply felt, schools will support staff, students and families who feel the loss and will assist them in making connections to appropriate community resources.

The Board recognizes that from time to time there may be a desire to honor a student, employee or community member of the district. The Board also recognizes that there are a finite number of facilities and grounds that can be utilized for memorials and dedications and will exercise discretion in limiting the uses of memorials and dedications to appropriate opportunities. As places designed primarily to support learning, school sites should not serve as the main venue for the memorializing of students or staff. All memorials require initial principal or director level employee approval.

Memorials are strongly discouraged in the instance of suicide. The American Association of Suicidology has documented tremendous research that states that memorials contribute negatively to the contagion effect. Memorials following suicide may glamorize death and may communicate that suicide is an appropriate or desired response to stress. Instead, projects that are life affirming and help the living are encouraged. Examples that include volunteering, tutoring, fundraising for a charity, or community service would be more appropriate.

### **Memorial services**

Memorial services for individuals shall not, as a standard practice, be held at school facilities or on school grounds. The lasting memory of a school's use for the purpose of a memorial may detract from the educational mission of the district and could also prompt unforeseen reactions in students and staff. If there are extraordinary circumstances for a memorial service to take place on district property, special approval must be obtained from the superintendent.

### **Types of memorials**

Quasi Permanent ("Permanent") memorials: Permanent memorials shall be limited in form to awards, scholarships, plantings, collections of books, moveable furniture/benches or items of historical or educational significance. Permanent memorials shall first be approved by the superintendent. If approved, the superintendent shall then present the memorial to the Board for approval. Any physical, permanent memorial (i.e. furniture/bench) must conform to district standards and to the interior or exterior finishes of the desired location within the school or grounds. The Board may alter a memorial request and/or provide substantial approval of a memorial request and then direct the superintendent to work with the requester(s) to ensure the memorial conforms to district standards and the Board's decision. Permanent memorials may be relocated, discontinued or "retired" at the discretion of district administration.

Temporary memorials: Temporary memorials may include plaques or other items that are not intended for long-term display. If the temporary memorial is for a student, the memorial shall be date stamped and displayed for no less than one

calendar year or for the remainder of time in which the student would have attended the school where the memorial is placed. There shall be no expectation of ongoing maintenance for temporary memorials. Plaques shall be no more than 12" by 15."

Efforts should be focused on one memorial project when a significant loss occurs. Memorials shall only contain the following words without symbols: "In Memory of [the individual's name] and, if requested, dates such as year of graduation or years of service. Dates of birth and death shall not be included on memorials. Additional words or phrases, if requested, shall be approved by the superintendent. Exceptions may be granted on a case by case basis.

All requests for a memorial or dedication may be authorized after a formal request is presented. Individuals or groups may submit a request to the superintendent to establish a memorial or dedication in accordance with this policy. A complete request must include:

1. A complete physical description (and drawings or photos if appropriate) of the proposed memorial or dedication
2. A detailed description of all initial costs and anticipated future maintenance costs of the proposed memorial or dedication
3. A narrative detailing the purpose and rationale for the proposed memorial or dedication

It is the Board's intention for the individual or group requesting the installation of a memorial or dedication to assume the cost of the request and not cause undue financial burden on the district. In considering requests for any permanent memorial or dedication, the Board will take into account the recommendations of the superintendent or designee regarding the cost to the district for future maintenance and upkeep of the memorial or dedication.

The district will not allow:

- Memorial services that may alter the routine of a regular school instructional day
- Memorials that require the altering of school property
- Memorials that require the altering of school activities or the activity schedule
- Memorials that infringe on the separation of church and state
- Memorials that require the use of public funds to purchase, develop or maintain
- Memorials that draw attention or have the potential to glamorize the death
- Memorials in the yearbook, except that families may purchase typical student celebration advertisements

In all instances, the Board reserves the right to remove, relocate or discard any memorial or dedication if a facility or the grounds are experiencing maintenance, modification or demolition or for any other reason deemed necessary by the Board. The thoughtful removal of any temporary memorial shall occur when no students are in session.

Adopted by the Board: August 23, 2017  
Revised and recoded by the Board: July 17, 2019

CROSS REFS.:

*Board policies:*

EL-3, Development of Administrative Procedure

EL-9, Treatment of Students, Parents and Community