



AP 365 – MEMORIALS AND MEMORIAL SERVICES

BACKGROUND

Tragic events such as the loss of a member of the school community require a thoughtful and coordinated response. School division employees will support staff, students and families who experience this loss, and will assist with connections to appropriate community and school division resources. As places designed primarily to support learning, school sites should not serve as the main venue for the memorializing of students or staff. However, instances may arise in which a school site may be considered an appropriate venue for a memorial service.

PROCEDURES

Memorial Services:

All requests for memorial services in schools should come to the office of the director. The service should be a memorial event; not a funeral. Therefore, there will be no bodily remains permitted at the service. Memorial services may not be appropriate at all in certain types of situations. Each situation will be considered at the time and decisions will be made by the director in consultation with school teams and division staff. The following criteria should be considered when determining whether a facility request for a memorial service is appropriate:

1. Necessity - The potential number of people who wish to attend creates the necessity of a large gym-like space in which to hold the event. The facility booking would be treated as a special form of rental and, therefore, require reasonable attention to fire regulations.
2. Learning - There can be no interruption of student learning. Memorial events must take place on non-student contact days, weekends, or well outside of school dismissal.
3. Celebration of Life - The nature of a memorial service that occurs in a division facility should be that of a Celebration of Life. Symbols of the person's life and positive messages of hope should be major components of such services. Careful consideration should be given to the cultural practices and worldview of the family. Student participation or involvement in such services should remain limited and carefully monitored by school/division representatives.
4. The Individual - The person being memorialized must have been a member of the school community – a student, staff member, or member of the learning community directly related in some manner to the school.



Permanent and Temporary Memorials:

The National Institute for Trauma and Loss in Children encourages that memorials should be in the community where they can either be easily accessed by those who need their comfort and benefits or easily be avoided by those who are activated by the 'reminders'. Community memorials provide comfort while avoiding challenges created when memorials are erected in closed environments such as schools. Memorials should be an opportunity of choice.

1. Schools should not initiate permanent memorials such as pictures, benches, plaques, or trees.
2. During the traumatic response process if students identify a need to express their feelings of loss, school and division staff will work with them to create a temporary memorial that fits student needs. These memorials should include a well communicated plan for movement, such that they do not remain at the school. A temporary memorial may be given to the family of the school community member as a tribute.
3. Events such as graduation ceremonies and documents such as yearbooks may make mention of deceased school community members, but the deceased should receive equal mention in comparison to other students/staff.
4. If the family of a deceased student or staff member approaches a school regarding a memorial scholarship or bursary, the school may consult with the Safe, Caring, and Accepting Schools team.
5. Schools that have permanent memorials that require removal from their school property may consult with the Safe, Caring, and Accepting Schools team.

Reference: The Education Act

Date Last Revised: June 2022