

# APPENDIX B

## ADMINISTRATION SAMPLES

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## Sample Memo to Staff

### Memorandum

<b>To:</b> All Staff Members
<b>From:</b> The Principal
<b>Re:</b> Recent tragedy

The recent passing of (*student or staff member's name*) will place considerable stress on our school over the next few days and weeks. The intent of this memo is to make you aware of a number of supportive ideas and resources that can assist you in managing this tragedy.

#### 1. Notification of Classes

Although many teachers may wish to handle this event with their class in their own way, I want you to be aware that Response Team Personnel are available to assist or support you in this endeavor. They are prepared to present the initial information to your class, to assist you in responding to questions and to facilitate helpful classroom activities. **Please be aware that we are not planning to have a large group assembly to present this matter.** We have been informed that these situations are better handled in class size or smaller groupings.

#### 2. Teachers On Call

In most situations we rely on you to determine your readiness to work with your class. However, the extra stress this situation can cause may make it difficult for you to continue even once the day has started. We will have a number of Teachers On Call available "on site" to relieve teachers encountering such stress. In addition, the Response Team will be available to provide short term relief if necessary. **Please do not hesitate to seek help when the going gets tough.**

#### 3. Support for Students and Staff

We will be setting up a Drop-In Centre for students encountering significant difficulty today and for as many days as we require it. It will be set up to provide a number of semi-private areas. We will attempt to keep the staff room available for staff members needing a quiet meditation or discussion centre.

## *Sample Statement (Death)*

The following statement may be used as is, modified, or used as a basis for a statement to notify students about an **anticipated death**:

I deeply regret to inform you that after a long struggle (*student's or staff member's name*) passed away (*when*). (*Student or staff member's name*) was someone who meant a lot to many if not all of us. We will miss him/her a great deal.

This news may be very hard for you to accept. You will probably experience many feelings over the next few days. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, depressed, or you may tell yourself that it has not happened.

We have set up a drop-in centre in (*location*) for those who may need assistance in dealing with this tragedy. There are people at the drop-in centre who are trained to help you. Please let your teacher know if you wish to go to the drop-in centre so she/he may describe the procedure you must follow.

## *Sample Statement (Suicide)*

The following statement may be used as is, modified, or used as a basis for a statement to notify students about a **suicide**:

A tragedy has happened. (*Student's name*), a (*student's grade*) grade student in our school has committed suicide. Details of (*student's name*)'s premature death will not be released to protect the privacy of his/her family. You will be given information about funeral arrangements later.

This kind of tragedy does not need to happen. Lots of people think about hurting themselves, but there are many better options. There are people who want to help you. It is unfortunate we were not able to help (*student's name*).

This news is very hard to accept. You will probably experience many feelings over the next few days. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, and/or depressed. In fact, you may even think about hurting yourself.

We have set up a drop-in centre (*location*) for those who may need assistance in dealing with this tragedy. There are people at the drop-in centre who are trained to help you. Please let your teacher know if you wish to use the drop-in centre so she/he may assist you in accessing it.

This kind of tragedy never needs to happen again in this school. We need to communicate with one another and help one another to make sure this does not happen again.

## *Sample Statement (Homicide)*

The following statement may be used as is, modified, or used as a basis for a statement to notify students about a **homicide**:

A tragedy has happened. (*Student's name[s]*) has/have been killed. Details of (*student's name[s]*)'s premature death(s) are not available to us. The police are investigating this crime.

This news is very hard to accept. You will probably experience many feelings over the next few days. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, depressed, and you may not believe it has happened.

We have set up a drop-in centre in (*location*) for those who may need assistance in dealing with this tragedy. There are people at the drop-in centre who are trained to help you. Please let your teacher know if you wish to go to the drop-in centre so she/he may describe the procedure you must follow.

## *Sample Statement (Fatality)*

The following statement may be used as is, modified, or used as a basis for a statement to notify students after a **fatality**:

A tragedy has happened. (*Student's name*), a (*student's grade*) grade student in our school was killed as a result of (*short description of cause*). You will be given information about funeral arrangements later.

This tragic news is very hard to accept. You will probably experience many feelings over the next few days. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, and/or depressed.

We have set up a drop-in centre in the (*location*) for those who may need assistance in dealing with this tragedy. There are people at the drop-in centre who are trained to help you. Please let your teacher know if you wish to go to the drop-in centre so she/he may describe the procedure you must follow.

## Sample Take-Home Letter 1

(Date)

Dear Parents:

We have suffered a tragedy at our school. On *(date)*, one of our students died suddenly and unexpectedly. In addition to our grief over the loss of this member of our school community, we are sensitive to the fact that such an event has an impact on the other students.

In response, the school has implemented a plan that allows students an opportunity to talk about their thoughts and feelings with trained professional staff. We expect that some will seek out this help, while others may not. Those who do will be provided an opportunity to express their feelings and grief. This is not intended to take the place of outside professional counselling or pastoral care.

Anticipating that your child may have a reaction to this event, we have some information available to you at your request that could be helpful as you respond to your child's concerns. If you should determine that your child needs further professional counselling, please feel free to contact the school for phone numbers of local agencies that are available to assist you.

If it seems advisable, we will offer all concerned parents an opportunity to meet with professionals to discuss this recent crisis. Please do not hesitate to contact the school regarding your requests or concerns at *(telephone number)*.

Yours truly,

Principal

## Sample Take-Home Letter 2

(Date)

Dear Parents:

It is with profound sadness that we inform you today of the passing of one of our students (*student's name*), a member of (*teacher's name*) class. (*Student's name*) was in (*teacher's name*) class last year, and in (*teacher's name*) class the year previously. In the years that (*student's name*) has been at (*school's name*), she/he has touched the lives of many of our students, staff and parents. His/her continued positive spirit and cheery nature have helped us all develop a better understanding and greater empathy with all people who experience a long illness.

During the day, our staff has spent some time talking with their students, helping them deal with their feelings. The response team has been available throughout the day to help students deal with this situation. (*Counsellor's name*), our current counsellor, is available to provide further support for children and adults in our school community.

We are sure many of the children will have questions and comments when they get home. We encourage parents to let them explore their feelings. We are sure that you will, within the context of your own beliefs and values, help them understand what has happened.

Funeral services have been scheduled at (*location, (date), (time)*). There are no plans for specific groups of students to attend. However, students are welcome to attend with their parents.

(*Family member's names*) wish to thank students, staff and parents who have given loving support to (*student's name*) and to them during these difficult years.

Yours truly,

Principal



### Sample Take-Home Letter 3

(Date)

Dear Parents:

It is with profound sadness that we inform you today of the passing of one of our students (*student's name*), a member of (*teacher's name*) class. In the (*no. of years*) (*student's name*) has been at our school, she/he has touched the lives of many of our students and staff. His/her indomitable spirit and cheery nature have helped us all develop a better understanding and greater empathy with all people who have special needs.

During the day, our staff has spent some time talking with their students, helping them deal with their feelings. (*School counsellor's name*), our counsellor, has been available to talk to students who have felt the need for further support, and he has visited a number of classrooms as well. Over the next few days, we will endeavor to continue to provide this support for children and adults in our school community.

We are sure many of the children will have questions and comments when they get home. We encourage parents to let them explore their feelings. We are sure that you will, within the context of your own beliefs and values, help them understand what has happened.

Funeral services have been scheduled for (*date and time*) at (*location*). There are no plans for specific groups of students to attend. However, children are welcome to attend with their parents.

Thank you for your support. (*Student's name*) will be greatly missed by all of us at (*school's name*).

Yours truly,

Principal

## Sample Take-Home Letter 4

(Date)

Dear Parents:

It is with great sadness that we confirm today the tragic loss of one of our students. (*Student's name*) was in (*specify*) class. As you have no doubt heard through television and newspaper, (*student*) was the victim of a homicide last (*day*). The distressing news has touched many in our school community. The R.C.M.P. have laid charges and they are continuing their investigation. The judge has ordered a ban on publication of details about the case. The school has not been given any additional information.

During the past 2 days, staff members have assisted students and parents deal with their complicated feelings. Crisis Response Team members have been available to provide support for our staff, students and families. They will continue to be available to meet our needs. If you or your family members are in need of support, please contact the school (*telephone number*), R.C.M.P. Victim's Assistance Program (*telephone number*) or the Crisis Line (*telephone number*).

I'm sure some students will ask questions and make comments to you at home. I encourage you to allow them to talk about their feelings. In the context of your own beliefs and values, please assist them in understanding what has occurred and allow them to grieve. A list of "read aloud" books is attached to this letter. These are available in our school and at the public library.

Private memorial services for (*student's name*) will be held on (*date*). There are no plans to conduct a memorial assembly at school.

Yours truly,

Principal