

POLICY 534 - MEMORIAL POLICY

I. PURPOSE

MACCRAY Public Schools 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 the district support staff, students and families impacted from a death by assisting them with connections to appropriate school and community resources. Because 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, MACCRAY Public Schools will provide a process for memorial decision-making, as well as this Board approved policy regarding memorial activities. This policy also recognizes that after suicide may glamorize death and communicate suicide as an appropriate or desired response to stress; therefore, careful and deliberate consideration was given in determining approved memorial activities. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis by district and building administration to ensure it continues to further the stated purpose.

II. DEFINITIONS

1. Memorials: Objects or activities to remember an event or deceased person(s).
2. Living Memorials: A non-tangible memorial intended to be sustained over time.
3. 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.
4. 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 the memorializing of students or staff. Memorial activities expressed at school need to be coordinated and approved through building administration. The administration 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 to best meet the overall needs of students, staff, parents and community as a whole.

IV. MEMORIAL POLICY

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:

1. **Yearbooks:** A student who has died may be acknowledged in the yearbook their senior year of high school with parent/guardian input and/or approval. Information about the student will be included on a memorial page representing all students in the graduation year. Information shall be limited to the student's name, photo, dates of birth and death, and school activities in which the student participated.
2. **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 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.)
3. **Graduation Recognition:** One symbol representing all deceased members of a graduating class, such as a plant or bouquet or flowers, may be present on stage. A member of the school administration can also direct the audience in a moment of silence to collectively recognize deceased members of the graduating class.
4. **Moment of Silence Recognition:** Upon request or permission of the deceased student's or staff member's family, 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 School Board meetings, co-curricular events in which the deceased participated, and community based events.
5. **Existing memorials established prior to the implementation of this policy will remain intact.** 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.

V. GRADUATION

In the event of a student from the graduating class has passed away during their *senior year*, the following guidelines will be used for the graduation ceremony:

1. If the student's death occurs during the *senior year*, the family of the deceased student will receive an honorary diploma for their son/daughter.
2. The names of all students who have completed the requirements for graduation will be listed in the program.
3. Chairs will be set for students participating in the graduation ceremony.
4. Only the names of students participating in the graduation ceremony will be read during the distribution of diplomas.
5. Reference to the deceased student will be made during the principal's remarks, at the principals discretion.

VI. 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.

1. Temporary school memorials, as approved by the school principal, may be displayed until the day of the funeral and will then be given to the family. Allowable temporary memorials are flower arrangements, banners, pictures, notes, and locker and student desk displays. Any plans to sell memorial items must receive prior approval from administration. Memorial symbols displayed by individual students or staff on school grounds will be limited in duration to one month past the funeral and must have prior approval of the school principal.
2. Permanent memorials for deceased students and staff are limited to endowments, scholarships, or items with educational significance. Scholarship and endowment memorials may be established either as one-time or perpetual awards, with a description of the purpose of the endowment or scholarship. The school district reserves the right to accept or decline permanent memorials.

The Superintendent has the discretion to consider memorial events that utilize district facilities when the death of a student, staff member, or community 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.

Adopted: May 9, 2022