



October 18, 2024

Re: Cecil Felkins and SVA

Hello to All!

With the recent passing of our beloved SVA principal, Cecil Felkins, I feel a desire to share a brief communication with everyone regarding our loss and our plans for moving forward.

I was out of the state when Cecil passed and for the week following on a preplanned trip. I want to give special thanks to those who stepped up and filled in during my absence to help manage this most difficult time. Special thanks to Michele Cleveland, Jennifer Parks, Christina Schloegl, all of our building leadership, and to Kylee Harrison and Lisa Victor of the SOESD. All of these folks worked together to form a response plan focused on supporting our students and staff through this tragedy.

A special thank you must also go out to the staff at SVA. If you haven't spent time getting to know them or the SVA family, you may not know what a special team we have at SVA serving our students. Love, high expectations, and flexibility guide their work as they seek to meet each student's specific needs. The staff at SVA loved Cecil deeply and have done an amazing job of soldering through this difficult time. I share the deepest of condolences and the utmost of thanks to them for how well they have navigated this challenge. SVA, you are a very special and resilient crew. Kudos to all of you.

While Cecil was fighting his illness this fall, I used regional connections to search for the best administrative substitute I could find to help SVA through Cecil's absence. I landed on Jennifer Parks who came in and has done an outstanding job of supporting and guiding SVA through the start of the school year. Because of her strong work, the connections she has already made with staff and students, and a desire for stability and strong leadership for this challenging time, I have named Jennifer as the interim principal of SVA through the end of this school year. Thank you, Jennifer, for taking on a new challenge and doing so with grace and strength.

I would also like to share that we are planning a moment of silence at the 10/25 home football game to honor Cecil. There will be a statement read along with a moment of silence, and we are working on other details to honor Cecil's memory.

Please remember that everyone processes grief differently and on different timelines. If your child shows signs of struggling with the grief process, please know that there continue to be supports available to them. Please reach out to your teacher, administrator, or to our behavioral health support team if you would like counseling support for your child.

Sincerely,

Patrick Lee
RRSD35 Superintendent