Adopted: 10/26/26
Revision: _____

808 MEMORIAL POLICY

I. PURPOSE

It is recognized that the loss of a member of the school community is deeply felt by students, staff, and families. The purpose of this policy is to provide the South St. Paul Schools community with guidance as they navigate through making appropriate memorial decisions.
In the immediate aftermath of a crisis or death it can be difficult to take into consideration the potential implications for students, staff, families and the community, this policy will help connect people to appropriate school and community resources and provide a process for memorial decision-making that has been Board-approved.

II. GENERAL STATEMENT

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. When responding to a student or staff death, South St. Paul Public Schools will:

1) ensure that school operations function as they normally would,
2) protect the family's preferences as much as possible,
3) consider the developmental age of students and potential impact,
4) create space for all grief responses (normalcy, individual support, and community support), and
5) minimize secondary trauma or re-traumatization to students and/or staff who have low risk of a grief reaction.

III. DEFINITIONS

A. “Memorials” are objects, activities, or donations to remember an event or deceased person(s).

B. “Temporary Memorials” are short term objects or activities to remember an event or deceased person(s).

C. “Living Memorials” for deceased students and staff are gifts to the district and will be limited to endowments, scholarships, or items with educational significance such as books, artwork, and instructional equipment.

D. “Permanent Memorials” are long term objects, structures, or locations to remember an event or deceased person(s).

E. “Trauma” is a psychological, emotional response to a deeply distressing or disturbing event that overwhelms an individual’s ability to cope, causes feelings of helplessness, diminishes their sense of self and their ability to feel a full range of emotions and experiences.

IV. MEMORIALS GUIDELINES

A. Memorial activities expressed at school need to be coordinated and approved by building and district administration as overseen by the Superintendent to best meet the overall needs of students, staff, parents and the community as a whole.
   a. Administrators will assist families and students in selecting memorial activities that are appropriate for school and assist students and staff in healthy bereavement. By whenever possible, communicating with the student's friends and coordinating memorialization with

the family in the interest of identifying a meaningful, safe approach to acknowledging the loss. Making sure to be sensitive to the cultural needs of the deceased and family.

B. "Temporary memorials" as approved, may be displayed within the school building or on school grounds until the day of the funeral, or within one week following the death, after which time they will be offered to the family by designated district officials.
   a. Memorials displayed by individual students of staff in school ground (outside of the school building) are also limited to one week following the death
   b. Allowable temporary memorials include: notes, cards, flowers, pictures, and banners only allowed in locations designated and monitored by school officials.
   c. Memorials that spontaneously arise should be transferred to the designated area.
   d. Temporary memorials cannot alter district owned property.
   e. It is further recognized that building administration does have a certain amount of discretion in these situations to make professional judgements, in consultation with the superintendent, to best meet the overall needs of students, staff, parents and the community as a whole.

C. "Permanent Memorials" or "Living Memorials" for deceased students and staff will be limited to endowments, scholarships, gifts, donations, or items with educational significance.
   a. Schools and district departments will not approve physical memorials for staff persons, students or community members at schools or district sites. An appeal can be made to the School Board.
   b. Scholarship and endowment memorials may be established one time, or in the form of a perpetual gift, with a description of the purpose of the endowment or scholarship.
   c. Memorials may not include the retirement, alteration, or discontinued use of school property.
   d. Examples of acceptable gifts include donation (tangible or financial) to a program, school, activity, or the South St. Paul Educational Foundation.
   e. Examples of unacceptable gifts include: a picture of the deceased to be displayed in the school, a permanent marker memorializing the deceased person, artwork, benches, trees, plants.
   f. Permanent or Living Memorials may be removed or altered at the discretion of the School Board.

D. Other possible memorial activities include:
   a. Yearbook. A student who has died may be acknowledged in the yearbook the year the death occurred with parent/guardian approval. Information shall be limited to the student's name, photo, dates of birth and death, and school activities in which the student participated.
      i. In the event a student passes away in the summer between school years, the student's picture may be included, with permission of the family, in the next school year's yearbook provided the student was enrolled at that school location at the conclusion of the previous year.
      ii. If a current school photo is not available, a picture of similar size will be requested from the family by the school principal.
      iii. The picture may be placed in the yearbook where it normally would have been or a memorial page may be considered in consultation with the building and district administration.
   b. Commemorative Events. A commemorative event may be established and held in the name of the deceased student or staff member.

i. 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.
ii. Advertisement or promotion of commemorative events must occur outside the school day.

c. Graduation Recognition.
i. One symbol representing deceased members of a graduation class, such as a plant or a bouquet of flowers, may be present at commencement and an acknowledgement will be placed in the graduation program indicating the arrangement is in honor of those who may have previously died.
ii. An honorary diploma for deceased members of a graduating class may be presented to a family member if coordinated with the family.

V. PROHIBITED MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES

A. South St. Paul Public Schools prohibits public memorial activities during the school day or during school-sponsored activities.

B. No school district funds may be spent on memorials or for the maintenance of existing memorials.

C. Selling and/or fundraising of memorial items during the school day is prohibited.

D. Proceeds from district events or contests cannot be donated to agencies for memorialization.

E. School district facilities will not be used for formal memorial services or funerals. However, district administration has the discretion to consider events that utilize district facilities when the traumatic event has a significant impact on a majority of students, staff, and community (natural disaster, 9/11, etc.)

F. Formal, school-wide recognition of anniversary dates will not occur.

G. If the death of a student or staff member occured in a public location accessible by community members, such as a crash site, district staff will not provide memorial monitoring.

VI. MEMORIALS AFTER SUICIDE

A. South St. Paul Public Schools strives to respond to all student deaths in the same way adn acknowledges that having a different approach for a student who dies by suicide may reinforce predjudice associated with suicide and may be deeply painful to the student’s family and friends.

B. However, South St. Paul Pulbic Schools recognizes that memorials after suicide may glamorize death and communicate suicide as an appropriate or desired response to stress. Schools can play an important role in channeling the energy and passion of the students (and greater community) in a positive direction, balancing the community's need to grieve with the impact that the proposed activity will likely have on students, particularly on those who might be vulnerable to suicide contagion. Therefore, careful and deliberate consideration will be given when determining approved memorial activities.

VII. EXISTING MEMORIALS

A. Existing memorials established prior to the implementation of this policy will remain intact.

B. 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.

C. The School Board must be notified prior to an existing memorial being reconfigured, relocated, or removed.

VIII. POLICY DISSEMINATION AND RELATED MATERIALS

A. This policy will be available to the public on the district website.
B. This policy will be reviewed every three years by the school board, district and building administration, to ensure it continues to further the stated purpose.
C. Persons who have questions, comments or concerns should contact the District Office.

Cross References:

Policy 706 (Acceptance of Gifts)
Policy 801 (Equal Access to School Facilities of Secondary Schools)
Policy 806 (Crisis Management Policy)
Policy 801.1 (Naming of Facilities)