Dear Families,

It is with profound sadness that I write this letter to you, know that one of our students unexpectedly passed away.  Our condolences and thoughts go out to the family and friends of our student. During this time, as the school community processes the tragic news and copes with grief, we will offer counseling and bereavement support services to all of our students and staff.

A student death is a difficult and challenging situation that can generate a high level of anxiety and distress in some students. This might not only constitute the loss of a classmate but also may point out the reality of a child’s own mortality. In addition, children may have had no experience in coping with a loss like this and may be confused as to how to handle grief.

When a school community experiences the death of a student, there is often the very human tendency to want to do something in memory of the deceased student. The circumstances surrounding a death by suicide is a special situation and needs to be carried out in a respectful yet graceful way. Traditionally, memorials range from tributes at lockers, T-shirts, plaques in halls or planting trees in the student’s name. However, vulnerable students who are at-risk for suicide may be affected by these memorial tributes. Students who were close friends of the deceased or even faculty who knew the student may be retraumatized by reminders of the death.

Many students do need that opportunity to express themselves, feel connected to others, and to let others know the value their friend brought to their lives. In an effort to give our school community a way to actively grieve we will have a, “Memory Book”, in the Counselor's office that will be gifted to the family.  Come add stories and memories for the family to cherish. Other more appropriate memorials would be to making donations to a local crisis center or organization, participating in an event that raises awareness about suicide prevention, buying books for the school library on suicide prevention or healthy ways to deal with emotions, along with service projects that emphasize the importance of students taking care of each other. These memorials are meaningful to family survivors and life-affirming that encourages coping skills and resilience.

The entire district embraces its mission to contribute to our student’s social/emotional development.  If you feel that your children are having difficulty, we encourage you to discuss their thoughts and feelings to help them work through their grief or concerns. Please also consider monitoring and discussing your children’s communications (social media, phone, e-mail, snaps, tweets etc) to further assess their potential needs. Also, the option to speak to a counselor or other school staff.  Please contact the schools’ counseling office ( phone number) for guidance on how to handle and talk about any grief or concerns that your children may be experiencing. This is a difficult time for everyone, but I know our students and staff will be able to lean on each other as they remember their classmate.

Sincerely,

Principal & Staff