

**APPENDIX B
PRINCIPAL'S ROLE
TEN STEP PLAN TO DEAL WITH CRISIS**

Following are TEN STEPS the building principal should follow in dealing with the sudden death of a student or staff member. These steps may be modified to reflect the circumstances of individual situations.

PRINCIPAL'S ROLE

STEP #1 – Prior to meeting with the entire staff, meet with the crisis management team for the purpose of identifying the agenda to be followed for the day. (Staff members may be notified if appropriate).

STEP #2 – Identify a team leader who will orchestrate the activities of all the crisis support staff and students over the next several days. This person will be the “hub” of information and, in many instances, may be a counselor.

STEP #3 – Direct a staff member and police to immediately go to the deceased student's locker or to the deceased staff member's workspace, remove the contents, and bring the belongings to the principal. This shall be completed prior to the students arriving at school to prevent theft or unauthorized removal of the property.

STEP #4 – Direct a staff member to review the deceased student's cumulative folder to determine what other schools the deceased attended. The principal should call the other school(s) and inform them of the event that has occurred.

STEP #5 – Identify a support center area in the building where students and staff may come for support and counseling. This area should be close to the guidance office and/or the main office to facilitate communications between guidance and administrative staff.

STEP #6 – Decide with the crisis management team what will be reviewed at the mandatory all staff meeting.

STEP #7 – Prepare an announcement to be read over the P.A. System to the students or be presented by the classroom teacher.

NOTE: It is important to have a central spokesperson for all announcements to students. By the time students reach school following a sudden death; many will have heard differing versions about what happened. The presence of a strong, caring, and supportive authority figure (i.e., the principal) sharing information during this stressful time is important.

Two examples of an announcement are the following:

- a. I feel saddened by the sudden death of one of our (students) (staff members) _____. On behalf of the entire faculty and student body, I wish to express our school's deepest sympathy to relatives and friends who knew and loved _____.
- b. Students, may I have your attention please? Last night, (student/staff member name) from our (_____ class died). This morning, faculty met to develop a plan to help all of us cope with this sad event. Your teacher has been given some suggestions on how to proceed with classroom activities today. Additionally, there will be special counseling available for any student who feels the need for some extra support. Counselors will be available in (give location) all day. I would like all of us to reflect for a minute in memory of (student/staff member's first name). (PAUSE) Your teachers will now spend some time with you in discussion. Thank you for your attention.

STEP #8 – Direct a staff member to gather funeral arrangement information and to prepare details for student staff attendance at the visitation and funeral. When details are final, an announcement should be made to staff and students.

NOTE: It is important to have staff members present during the entire visitation period to assist the funeral director in comforting distraught children and teens. (See APPENDIX F).

Designate one secretary who will know how to reach the principal throughout the day, so that the principal can respond to any emergency/administrative situation that may develop.

STEP #9 – Call and/or visit the family as appropriate to express condolences. Visiting the family is encouraged, and the principal should take along a staff member who has been well acquainted with the student or staff member.

STEP #10 – Following the funeral, begin to bring closure by encouraging staff to resume regular activities as quickly as is appropriate.

On the day following the funeral, the principal should make the following closure statement to all students and staff (this is done the day following because many of the deceased's closest friends may not have returned to school the day of the funeral.):

"May I have your attention please? I wish to thank each of you, students and staff, for the support you have shown each other during the past few days. The example you have shown is a positive and healthy one and provides us the opportunity to work towards strengthening our relationships with each other. Guidance staff remains available if you should wish to talk with a counselor. (Any additional comments from the family that have been passed on to the principal might be shared at this point.) Thank you for your attention."

**MANDATORY ALL STAFF MEETING
(ROLE OF PRINCIPAL AND CRISIS MANAGEMENT TEAM)
Appendix B (cont.)**

Prior to the commencement of school, the principal should have an all-staff meeting. Generally, the principal will have approximately fifteen minutes to meet with staff. In addition to the “before school” meeting, it is important to hold an “after school” meeting to discuss the day’s events and to talk about any students the faculty has concerns about.

STEP #1 – Principal will announce an immediate all staff mandatory meeting.

STEP #2 – Principal identifies crisis management team leader. This person will assist the principal in directing staff activities.

STEP#3 – Principal and the crisis management team leader informs staff what is expected of them and reviews media procedures. (See APPENDIX A). Also, all known public facts regarding the event should be shared with the staff.

If death was by suicide, emphasize this tragedy as an “error in judgment”. Suicide is a permanent solution to temporary problems. Encourage students to talk about ways to cope with stress.

STEP #4 – Entertain questions from the staff and/or requests staff may have.

STEP #5 – Inform staff what announcement will be made to the students and when the announcement will be made.

STEP #6 – Principal announces a mandatory staff meeting after school to review the day’s events. This allows an opportunity to receive feedback from faculty, to answer questions, and to review the next day’s expectations.

STEP #7 – Principal informs all staff members that any media presence or requests for information should be immediately directed to the SUPERINTENDENT. (See APPENDIX A.)