

MEMORIALS

The Evansville Community School District Board of Education recognizes that in the event of the death of a student or staff member, it is important to the school community and to those who are personally affected by the death to acknowledge the event. Additionally, certain traumatic events occurring on a local, state or national level may also give rise to the need for district acknowledgment through appropriate activities. Requests from students, staff, parents or others for remembering or memorializing a person or event shall be submitted in writing to the Building Principal and must be approved by the District Administrator, subject to the provisions of this policy.

In considering memorial activity requests, the administration will balance memorializing or commemorating the individual or event on the one hand, while not creating an atmosphere that glamorizes a traumatic event or self-destructive behavior on the other. This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it continues to further the stated purpose.

DEFINITIONS:

- Memorials: Objects or activities to remember an event or deceased person(s).
- Living Memorials: A non-tangible memorial intended to be sustained over time.
- Postvention Team (PVT): An appointed group of staff members who develop and execute district-wide procedures for the handling of mental health needs and grief support in the recovery phase of a crisis.
- 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.
- Impact: The magnitude of the potential loss or seriousness of the crisis.

TYPICAL MEMORIALS

Recognizing 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 must be coordinated and approved through the Postvention Team (PVT), as well as building administration. The SST will also 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 District Administrator and PVT--to best meet the overall needs of students, staff, parents and community.

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:

- Yearbooks: A student who has died may be acknowledged in the current yearbook and in with what would have been their graduating class 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.
- Commemorative Events: A commemorative event may be established and held in the name of the deceased student or staff member. Activities shall not 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.)
- Graduation Recognition: One symbol representing all deceased members of a graduating class, such as a plant or bouquet of flowers, may be present on stage. A member of the school administration may also direct the audience in a moment of silence to collectively recognize deceased members of the graduating class.
- Moment of Silence Recognition: Upon request or permission of the family of a deceased student or staff member, a 'moment of silence' may be used to honor their memory. School-wide moments of silence should occur within two (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.

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.

PROHIBITED MEMORIAL ACTIVITIES

The following memorial activities are prohibited:

- Selling and/or fundraising of memorial items during the school day.
- Using district student activity accounts to support, finance, or fundraise for memorialization.
- Donating proceeds from district co-curricular events or contests 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.
- Promoting commemorative items or events sponsored by community-based agencies during the school day. Items and events may be promoted outside the school day.
- Formal, school-wide recognition of anniversary dates.

The District Administrator, in consultation with the PVT, 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.

District staff will not provide memorial monitoring if the death of a student or staff member occurred in a public location accessible by community members, such as a crash site.

Legal Ref.: Section 118.27 Wisconsin Statutes (Gifts and Grants)
PI 9.03(1) Wisconsin Administrative Code

Local Ref.: Policy #840 –Public Gifts to the Schools