

TURTLE MOUNTAIN SCHOOL DIVISION



Crisis Plan

Section 3

Sample Letters

Date

Dear Parents:

In response to the tragic events of last evening, we want to ensure that both you and your child are aware of the services available to you, if you require them.

Guidance Counsellors:	Killarney Collegiate	David Riley	204-523-4696
	Boissevain Collegiate	Holly Laing	204-534-2494
Psychologist		Jessica Boutilier	204-523-7531
Child and Adolescent Mental Health Worker		Stephanie Hutchings-Murphy	204-483-6224
Adult Mental Health Worker		Heather Kirkham	204-523-3204
Child and Family Services		Killarney	204-523-5210
		Boissevain	204-523-5210
Brockie Donavon Lending Library			1-204-727-0694
Your local Clergy or Ministerial Association			
Private Counseling:			
Foster Counseling		204-728-3758	
Choice Counseling Associates		204-725-6940	
Ron Richert		204-726-1133	
Westman Interfaith Counseling		204-726-8706	

Please find attached, a brief information handout which may help you with regards to discussing the incident with your children as well as what kind of reactions you may need to be aware of.

Please contact the school if you require assistance to contact or obtain any supports or resources.

For your information, the following supports have been established for the family:

Examples:

- * Trust Fund at _____ Bank
- * Donations of clothing or other items may be dropped off to _____
- * Bake sale proceeds from the _____ fund-raising event.

Date

Dear Parents:

I regret to inform you of the death of a child who attended our school.

Jane Doe, a sixth grader, was suddenly killed by a car as she stepped off the school bus. Cards and notes may be sent to her family at:

(Name and address of family)

Funeral arrangements are as follows:

(Information on viewing and the funeral)

When we learned of Jane Doe's death, we decided to share this information with the children. It was important for all the children to have the same information to avoid rumors, which start so quickly. The facts were written down for each teacher to read to the class. Counselors and crisis response teams were on hand to visit each class, offering the children a time to talk and to share feelings. Children who were most upset were taken aside for individual discussion and will be closely monitored. Special groups will be formed to give some of the children more time to adjust to this tragedy. Our plans for a school memorial are:

(Add information on school memorial)

Your child may experience grief and you may see some of the following emotions:

- Tearfulness
- Dreams – some of them scary
- Irritability
- Clinging to you
- Whiny moods
- Physical complaints – stomachaches, headaches, etc.
- Inability to concentrate
- A temporary dip in grades
- More pronounced fears of dying, of the dark, of you dying, of walking home alone, etc.
- Regressive behaviors such as reverting to thumb sucking, bed-wetting, etc.

Listed below are some ideas that can help your child with grieving:

Acquaint yourself with the grief process by reading a book on the subject. Among many fine books on the subject are *The Grieving Child*, by Helen Fitzgerald, *Talking About Death to Children*, by Earl Grollman, or *The Grieving Teen*, by Helen Fitzgerald. Visit the articles section of the American Hospice Foundation web site at www.americanhospice.org.

- Let your child talk about the death or draw pictures of what he or she felt happened.
- Use the deceased's proper name.
- Use the correct language when talking about the death – say “dead” instead of he’s “passed on” or, “We’ve lost him.”
- Let them express their feelings.
- Offer them loving, touching support.
- Allow them to be sad and to cry.
- Let your child ask questions and answer them as simply as you can. If you need to, it’s okay to say, “I don’t know how to answer that. Perhaps we can find someone who can help us.”
- Talk about dreams as they happen. If you wait until morning, they are usually forgotten.
- Reassure your child you are healthy, you are careful when you drive, and you will be around for a long time.
- Explain the ritual of funerals and allow their participation.
- Offer support and structure in completing homework.

If there are any question or concerns about your child’s behavior, please call one of the following:

(List of contact information)

Sincerely,

Principal

Date

Dear Parent/Guradian:

I regret to inform you of the death of _____ *Name of deceased* _____.
 _____ *Name of deceased* _____ was a (student/teacher) at _____ *School* _____.
 (He/she) was a student in grade _____. (He/she) taught _____ *Subject* _____
 and has been on staff at _____ *School* _____ for _____?_____ years. The cause of death
 is reported to be _____?_____.

Funeral arrangements are pending but will be shared with your son/daughter as they become available.

Each person responds to death in his/her own way. If your son/daughter is showing signs of particular distress please contact his/her teacher. Resource personnel are available at the school to help students deal with the death.

I trust this information is useful in helping you support your son/daughter at this difficult time.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Date

Dear Parent/Guardian:

Today, we have been able to confirm that (name of student or teacher), a grade (list grade and identify student or teacher status) has died suddenly. The reported cause of death was (describe cause). While we are shocked and saddened by the news of this tragedy, we wanted to share how we have handled this situation at school.

Since many students and staff were affected by the death, the School Crisis Response Team was activated and an overall school plan was developed. Directed by myself as the school principal, the team consists of several specifically trained school staff including our Child Guidance Clinic team. The classroom teachers were asked to share the news concerning the death and acknowledge student feelings in a supportive manner, according to the age of your child. In addition, a counselling centre was set up in the (list place), where those students most affected could receive further supports. It is hoped that by providing a supportive place for expressions of grief, the students and staff will be able to understand and cope with the loss.

Just as we have encouraged students to express their feelings here at school, we also encourage you to discuss the death at home. Listening to your child and acknowledging their feelings will be helpful. As each child and their experiences are different, the need for discussion and support will also vary.

Should you have any questions about your child's response or need any assistance, please feel free to call the school. If a member of the Crisis Response Team is not available to take your call, please leave your name and number, and your call will be returned as soon as possible.

Yours sincerely,

Principal

Date

Dear Parents:

I am writing to inform you of an unfortunate event which occurred at the school of your son/daughter today.

(Basic details of incident)

We have provided some debriefing to the students around the incident, and tried to reinforce that school is a safe place and that many people are here to make sure they are kept safe. We have also tried to let the students know that the perpetrator is being dealt with on this manner.

If you have any questions or concerns regarding your son/daughter's response to this matter, please give me a call at _____.

Sincerely,

Principal