

PROCEDURE 166	
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TRAGIC EVENT AND CRISIS RESPONSE

1) PURPOSE

Hastings and Prince Edward District School Board (HPEDSB) is committed to student achievement and well-being. This procedure has been developed to support the system and school personnel when responding to a tragic and/or crisis event. It provides critical steps to follow and includes ways to identify and quickly access available resources within the school board and community, and to identify students and staff who may be vulnerable. In all cases, staff need to understand and be aware that emotional responses can be highly individualized. Within this broad umbrella of tragic and crisis events, system and school responses and supports may vary.

A tragic event or crisis event is virtually anything out of the ordinary, which includes unexpected situations that disrupt the emotional and mental well-being of students and staff members. When managing tragic and/or crisis events using a strength-based approach, students and staff develop resiliency and a strong sense of belonging within the school community.

2) DEFINITIONS

Tragic event: A tragic event is a complex event where the school does not have the necessary resources to respond to the magnitude of the event and must rely upon support within the system and/or community. This type of event includes situations where there is a death of a current student or staff member or other high-profile events such as a suicide or homicide connected with the school. Often, in a tragic event, we do not always know who will be impacted.

Crisis event: A crisis event, although still traumatic to some, is less complex. There are usually adequate resources within the school to support those impacted. Situations involving the death of a parent/guardian, graduate, or retired staff person will often be supported using the resources at the school level. System level consultation and support can be made available as needed.

School Crisis Response Team: Principals establish a School Crisis Response Team consisting of key members within the school who will assist and support the school community during a tragic and/or crisis event.

System Crisis Response Team: When a tragic and/or crisis event occurs, principals contact the System Crisis Response Team when the School Crisis Response Team has assessed and determined that the complexity and the impact of the event cannot be managed solely through the support of the team, or in cases where there is a death of a current student or staff member.

System Crisis Response Team Members include:

- Superintendent - School Group
- Superintendent - Student Services
- Superintendent – Human Resources Support Services
- System Lead – Student Services
- Mental Health Lead – Student Services
- Communications Manager – Director’s Office
- Board Lead Psychologist – Student Services

3) TRAGIC AND CRISIS EVENTS

a) **Death by suicide or homicide**

Responding to a death by suicide or a homicide is more complex and the needs of the school community may vary greatly. Grief following a suicide or homicide is more complicated than normal grief. Consult with the mental health lead, social worker, social services worker and/or child and youth worker for resources or referral information.

b) **Contagion**

Emotional contagion must be monitored carefully. There is a real danger that an emotionally vulnerable student could imitate the suicidal behaviour. This danger may persist for some time after the event. Students identified with suicidal ideation should be referred to an Applied Suicide Interventions Skills Training (ASIST) certified staff person or a community agency for screening support and safety planning.

c) **Death of a student**

In the event of the death of a student, support will be coordinated between the School Crisis Response Team and the System Crisis Response Team. In order to provide appropriate assistance, the school principal shall refer to the information contained in Section 5) – Principal and Supervisor Responsibilities.

d) **Death of a staff member (or volunteer)**

In the event of the death of a staff member or volunteer at a school, support will be coordinated between the School Crisis Response Team and the System Crisis Response Team. If the death is connected to another HPEDSB building, the System Crisis Response Team will take the lead on providing support. In order to provide appropriate assistance, the superintendent and/or principal supervisors will coordinate the steps outlined in section 6 below.

e) **Death of a parent/guardian**

In the event of the death of a parent/guardian of a student, support may be provided within the student’s class in preparation of the student’s return to school. With permission from parents/guardians (with student’s permission and/or awareness, as appropriate), the classroom teacher (with possible support from the child and youth worker/social services worker/social worker) may speak with the impacted class. The focus of this discussion should be on how to be a friend to their classmate upon their return. Conversations may include managing big emotions and should always include help-seeking behaviours. Should these discussions occur in a classroom setting, it is recommended that a letter be sent

home to parents/guardians with students in that class (Form 166-3). This letter will provide families with information about the situation so that families have the opportunity to have conversations with their child, as appropriate. System supports are available for consultation and direction as needed, which can include templates of letters to go home that will inform families of the discussions that have occurred. Outreach to others who may be impacted will occur on a case-by-case basis.

f) **Responding to local, national and global events**

The System Crisis Response Team will assess the situation and determine an appropriate response. The System Crisis Response Team will communicate information and recommendations to schools as deemed appropriate.

4) **COMMUNICATIONS**

The director of education or designate, is the official spokesperson for HPEDSB. When a tragic event and/or crisis occurs, principals/supervisors will consult with their respective school group superintendent first to establish a plan. The communications manager is the primary contact person for the board and is responsible for coordinating media and public communications through the director and other school/board officials. All social media messages will be approved through the communications manager.

School administrators and staff are responsible for maintaining school and class operations as consistent with regular routines as possible. During crisis situations, student safety is paramount and should be handled as the first priority at all times.

Administrators are to prepare students for the possibility of reporters contacting them and advise them that:

- they are not allowed to speak with reporters while on school property;
- if they agree to be interviewed off property, they should be respectful in their comments and reflections about the individual(s) involved, the situation itself, and their personal feelings;
- if they are interviewed, they should let their parent(s)/guardian(s) know right away;
- they should be reminded that their comments will be public and will last forever.

5) **PRINCIPAL AND SUPERVISOR RESPONSIBILITIES**

- a) The principal and/or supervisor shall, at the beginning of each school year:
- i) review Procedure 166: Tragic Event and Crisis Response.
 - (1) Identify the School and System Crisis Response Teams and complete the Tragic Event Response Team and Contact Information form (Appendix A – Principal’s Response Plan) and return it to the school group superintendent.

b) In the event of a student death:

- i) the principal shall clarify and confirm tragic event information received with a reliable source (e.g., police, family member).
 - ii) the principal shall obtain permission to release the name of the deceased from the parent/guardian or next of kin.
 - iii) principals should refer to the following appendices and forms:
 - Appendix A - Principal Action and Response Plan
 - Appendix B - Principal's Notification and Stand-Up Staff Meeting Action Plan
 - Appendix C - School Crisis Response Team Action Plan
 - Appendix D - System Crisis Response Team Action Plan
 - Appendix E - Tragic and Crisis Event Communications Flowchart for Schools
 - Appendix F - Voluntary Staff Debrief
 - Appendix G - Sample Script #1 – Death of a Student or Staff Member/Volunteer
 - Appendix H - Sample Script #2 – Death of a Student or Staff Member Modified for Kindergarten and Early Primary Students Who are Not Directly Involved
 - Appendix I - Sample Script #3 – For Office Staff (Optional) regarding Response to Community Inquiries (Excluding Requests from the Media)
 - Appendix J - Talking to Students about Death: Do's and Don'ts
 - Appendix J-1 - Resources, Help and Crisis Lines
 - Appendix J-2 – Resources Adapted from School Mental Health Ontario
 - Appendix K – Responding to Tragic Events for Parents/Guardians
 - Form 166-1 - Sample Letter #1 – Death of a Student
- c) The principal will assess the possible impact and determine whether the tragic and/or crisis event can be managed and supported at the school level, in collaboration with the School Crisis Response Team.

The principal is to:

- i) follow the Principal's Action and Response Plan (Appendix A);
- ii) follow the Principal's Notification and Stand Up Staff Meeting Action Plan (Appendix B);
- iii) follow the School Crisis Response Team Action Plan (Appendix C).

- d) The principal shall consult with the System Crisis Response Team in cases where there is a death of a current student or staff member and/or when the possible impact of the event is complex.
 - i) The principal will notify the System Crisis Response Team when it is determined by the School Crisis Response Team that the needs of the school community cannot be met solely through the support of the team.
 - ii) The principal will maintain close communication with the school group superintendent, superintendent of Student Services and/or mental health lead.
- e) The School Crisis Response Team will follow the recommendations of the System Crisis Response Team, once contact with the System Team has been initiated.

6) DEATH OF A STAFF MEMBER OR VOLUNTEER

- a) When a staff member dies, some additional steps are necessary.
 - i) The HPEDSB [TELUS Health Employee Assistance Program](#) should be accessed for support. The EAP Critical Team or support may be available to attend the school to support staff. The principal may speak with the school group superintendent, superintendent of Student Services and/or mental health lead to make arrangements.
 - ii) The superintendent or principal/supervisor will:
 - (1) contact Human Resources Support Services with information relating to immediate family members to contact;
 - (2) identify support needs of school community and/or central locations;
 - (3) consult with the school group superintendent or mental health lead about temporary tributes such as cards, family supports etc. Tributes and memorials – permanent memorials in schools and HPEDSB buildings will not be established.
- b) When the deceased is an employee within the Education Centre or other board owned property other than a school, the superintendent will assume the roles and responsibilities listed under the principal.
- c) When the deceased is an active volunteer in the school, the principal may follow the procedure as it pertains to the death of a staff member.

7) SCHOOL CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) The School Crisis Response Team shall, at the start of each school year, review Procedure 166: Tragic Event and Crisis Response.
- b) The School Crisis Response Team will assist the principal in assessing the possible impact and determine whether the tragic or crisis event can be managed and supported at the school level.
 - i) follow the School Crisis Response Team Action Plan (Appendix C).
- c) The School Crisis Response Team will follow the direction of the principal and the System Crisis Response Team, in cases where there is a death of a current student or staff member or where the impact of the event is complex and it is determined that the needs of the school community cannot be met solely through the support of the School Team.
- d) The School Crisis Response Team will follow the recommendations of the System Crisis Response Team once contact with the System Team has been initiated.

8) SYSTEM CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM RESPONSIBILITIES

- a) The superintendent of Student Services shall confirm the individual identity of the System Crisis Response Team members.
- b) The System Crisis Response Team shall, at the start of each school year, review Procedure 166: Tragic Events and Crisis Response.
- c) The System Crisis Response Team will support the School Crisis Response Team, when contact has been initiated.
 - i) follow the System Crisis Response Team Action Plan (Appendix D) for individual team members.

Legal references

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District references

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Resources

- School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO)
- TELUS Health

APPENDIX A**Principal's Action and Response Plan**

- 1) Clarify facts from reliable sources (e.g., police, family, if appropriate). Refer to and complete Tragic Event Response Team and Contact Information template, included at the end of Appendix A.
- 2) Contact the school group superintendent to notify of the tragic event.
- 3) Extend condolences to the family.
- 4) Obtain permission from the family or next of kin to release the name of the deceased.
- 5) Establish the wishes of the family or next of kin concerning school communication.
- 6) Establish alternate contact if parent/guardian or next of kin will not be available.
- 7) **Special considerations in the event of a death by suicide**
 - a) Clearly establish the wishes of the family or next of kin concerning the school's involvement regarding the sharing of information.
 - b) Questions of confidentiality and families' wishes present special challenges. Parents/guardians/next of kin of the deceased are sometimes unprepared to acknowledge the death as a suicide. Their response to the question, "What information may we share?" may provide guidance to subsequent steps in the communication process with the school.
- 8) **Special considerations in the event of a death of a staff member**

The principal will, in addition to steps 1 to 5 above:

 - a) Contact Human Resource Support Services with information relating to immediate family member(s) to contact.
 - b) Identify support needs for the school community.
 - c) Tributes and Memorials reminder - permanent memorials in schools will not be established;
- 9) Inform School Crisis Response Team members through conversation in a timely manner (either by phone/phone tree or, when time is restricted, in a stand-up staff meeting). Refer to School Crisis Response Team Action Plan (Appendix C).
- 10) Determine involvement, if any, with the System Crisis Response Team and contact the mental health lead.

- 11) Determine possible impact at other schools (siblings etc.) and notify the System Crisis Response Team.
- 12) Inform all staff members through conversation in a timely manner (either by phone/phone tree or, when time is restricted, in a stand-up staff meeting).
- 13) Schedule a notification and stand-up staff meeting as soon as possible. A request may be made to have the mental health lead, school group superintendent or a member of the System Crisis Response Team be present at the stand-up meeting.
 - a) Follow the Principal's Notification and Stand-up Staff Meeting Action Plan (Appendix B).
 - b) Prepare script for staff to share with students (Appendices G, H, I).
- 14) Consider arranging for additional supply staff to support as needed.
- 15) Consider access to the [TELUS Health Employee Assistance Program](#) for staff.
- 16) Arrange for a quiet place for those supporting staff and/or students.
- 17) Consider supplying food or snacks for staff in the staff room.
 - a) Set up a system to notify those who are not present in the building that day, such as absent staff and students, bus drivers, volunteers, occasional or part-time staff, in-school Youthab worker, Supervised Alternative Learning or Co-op students etc.;
- 18) Follow Procedure 591: Use and Display of Flags – Section 5 Half-mast
 - a) A flag is flown at half-mast by raising it to the top of the mast and immediately lowering it slowly to half-mast. When one flag is flown at half-mast, all flags flown together shall also be at half-mast.
 - b) The flag may be flown at half-mast for the following reasons:
 - i) the death of a child enrolled in the school;
 - ii) the death of a staff member employed at the school or Education Centre;
 - iii) the death of a prominent public figure, prominent community member or trustee.
 - c) It is recommended that the flag fly at half-mast once staff and student notification has occurred. Continue until funeral or other arrangements have occurred.

- 19) Be prepared to respect cultural and religious differences (Innovation and Inclusion Services department can assist when necessary).
- 20) Create a letter to parents/guardians. A clear message to the parent(s)/guardian(s) is needed to alert them that there has been a death and that students have been informed in a supportive manner. The letter needs to provide accurate information, dispel rumours, and, where warranted, give direction for future action as quickly as possible. Refer to and consider including Appendix K – Responding to Tragic Events for Parents/Guardians.

Refer to sample letter forms (Form 166-1 Death of a Student, Form 166-2 Death of a Staff Member (Or Volunteer), or Form 166-3 Death of a Parent/Guardian.

A letter home should be brief and should include:

- a) condolences to the family of the deceased;
 - b) some details on how students have and will be supported – child and youth worker/social service worker/social worker support etc.;
 - c) concluding comments, which outline how parents may access additional supports if needed.
- 21) All media contact should be managed by the communications team.
- 22) Consult with the communications manager, or another member of the System Crisis Response Team, to determine the communication including social media messaging, if any, that will go to families.
- 23) Bring social media posts/concerns to the attention of the communications team.
- 24) Be aware that impromptu memorials may be set up at various locations (desks, lockers). These are difficult to remove once established; therefore, ongoing monitoring may be required as prevention is preferred.
- 25) Support the voluntary staff debrief at the end of the day. Request support from the mental health lead or member of the System Crisis Response Team as needed (refer to Appendix E).

26) FOLLOW-UP

- a) Consult with the school group superintendent, superintendent of Student Services and/or mental health lead to determine a plan for the coming days, including additional supports for students, as needed.
- b) Consult with the superintendent of Human Resources Support Services or the mental health lead to determine additional support for staff, as needed.

- c) Follow-up with the family of the deceased regarding arrangements and permission to share with staff and/or students.
 - i) Advise students and staff of arrangements and the best way to express condolences as per family wishes.
 - ii) Accommodate staff and student requests to attend services.
 - iii) Express the school's condolences to the family of the deceased (flowers, letters, cards etc.).
- d) Support the family with the gathering of personal belongings. Confer with the family as they may choose to be involved in this process.
- e) Provide on-going monitoring and support to students and staff, especially those thought to be greatly impacted by the tragic or crisis event.
- f) Permanent memorials in schools will not be established.
- g) Track anniversary dates and be prepared to initiate support as needed.
- h) Share anniversary dates with incoming administrators to allow for any needed support through the following year.
- i) Reach out to the school group superintendent and/or mental health lead as needed.

PRINCIPAL’S RESPONSE PLAN

TRAGIC EVENT RESPONSE TEAM AND CONTACT INFORMATION

In September of each year, the principal shall review all emergency procedures. As part of this review, the identification of the Tragic Event Response Team members should be recorded in the table below. A copy is sent to the school group Superintendent in early September.

School: _____ Date: _____

	Name	Office #	Cell #
Superintendent- School Superintendent			
Executive Assistant - School Superintendent			
Mental Health Lead			
System Lead – Student Services			
Communications Manager – Director’s Office			
Board Lead Psychologist – Student Services			
School Team Members			
Principal			
Vice-principal(s)			
Secretary			
Social Worker (SW)			
Social Service Worker (SSW)			
Child and Youth Worker (CYW)			

APPENDIX B**Principal's Notification and Stand-Up Staff Meeting Action Plan**

- 1) Clarify the facts of the event to all present. In cases of a death, consider having a picture of the deceased available.
 - a) Include accurate information that we have been given permission to share, with reminders that we respect individual's privacy by maintaining confidentiality while, at the same time, providing advice about managing rumours and speculation.
- 2) Introduce members of the System Crisis Response Team/Student Services Team who may be present to support.
- 3) Allow time for staff to discuss and internalize this information.
- 4) Explain how students should be informed.
- 5) It is recommended that classroom teachers or designated staff read the prepared script directly to students. Refer to Appendices G, H, and I containing Sample Scripts.
 - a) **Do not announce via an assembly.**
 - b) P.A. announcements are **NOT** recommended.
- 6) Provide teaching and support staff with information regarding ways to support students (Appendix J – Talking to Students about Death: Do's and Don'ts)
- 7) Some staff may not feel emotionally able to share information with their class. Administration may need to identify available staff (e.g., in school team) to go into the classroom for support and/or to read the script on behalf of the teacher.
- 8) Assess the needs of students and staff. Identify students who may need additional support (consider those students who may have a connection, as well as students who may have their own personal history).
- 9) Inform staff of additional supports/resources available to them (e.g., child and youth worker/social services worker/social worker team, [HPEDSB Telus Employee Assistance Program](#), CMHS/Youthab worker if present).
- 10) Decide if scheduled events need to be cancelled or postponed, keeping in mind that routine with flexibility is often the best course of action.
- 11) Inform staff of location of support services within the school.

- 12) Request that staff check e-mail regularly throughout the day for any new information.
- 13) Include a link to the [TELUS Health Employee Assistance Program](#) in an e-mail to staff so that they may access support confidentially and on their own.
- 14) Notify staff of a voluntary debrief meeting for the end of the day to be facilitated by the principal and School Crisis Response Team.

APPENDIX C**School Crisis Response Team Action Plan****1) All Members of Team**

- a) Stay connected and support staff and students as needed.

2) Secretary

- a) Use script provided to handle telephone inquiries from parents/guardians and/or community members and indicate appropriate responses (Appendix H).
- b) Avoid automated attendance calls home for all students on the first day of the crisis or tragic event.
- c) Make changes to computer data, group e-mail lists, mailing lists, attendance tracking, Messenger etc.
- d) Advise Student Services, if applicable, so records can be amended.
- e) The Ontario Student Record (OSR) is to be maintained separately and in the possession of the principal until advised otherwise.
- f) Contact the school photography company to inquire about current year school pictures that can be made available to the family, free of charge.
- g) Provide reimbursement to the child and youth worker, social service worker or social worker when presented with receipts for snacks/juice for support rooms.

3) School Based Child and Youth Worker, Social Service Worker or Social Worker

- a) Stay connected with administration, the In-school Team and mental health lead.
- b) Prepare rooms for support - ideally a minimum of one individual support room, a minimum of two group support rooms and one staff counselling room for [TELUS Health Employee Assistance Program](#) (EAP Critical Team or support). It is recommended that group support rooms are separate from Guidance or other similar offices. Consider a variety of materials that may be made available, such as:
 - i) tissues in all rooms, bristol board, construction paper, markers, pens etc. (in group and individual rooms);

- ii) student tracking sheets (in group and individual rooms);
 - iii) comfort food in group and individual rooms;
 - iv) stress reducers in group and individual rooms (e.g., stress balls, mandalas, pencil crayons);
- c) Designate one room as the child and youth worker/social service worker/social worker home base if possible (not a support room).
- d) Communicate with school library tech to ensure access to books that support classroom discussions (refer to Appendix J-1– Resources, Help and Crisis Lines and Appendix J-2 – Resources Adapted from School Mental Health Ontario).
- e) Lead or assist with brainstorming at stand-up staff meeting and note:
- i) the names of students who may need support;
 - ii) the names of friends, teammates, girl/boyfriend, ex-girl/boyfriend;
 - iii) the names of others who may be vulnerable and/or have their own personal history.
- f) Maintain contact with administration and mental health lead throughout the day.
- g) Be prepared to assist staff who may need help reading the script to their classes.
- h) Be prepared to assist staff dealing with impromptu memorials (prevention is key).
- i) Monitor halls, washrooms, yard/smoking area regularly to support and redirect students.
- j) Lead or assist with child and youth worker/social service worker/social worker self-debriefing.
- k) Provide support at the end of the day staff de-brief. Advise administration of any follow up required from staff de-brief.
- l) Confer and plan for additional response as needed.
- m) Follow-up, in days to come, with students in need of support (reference names listed on the student tracking forms), consult with student success team/in-school team, refer students to community agencies for additional support as needed.

APPENDIX D**System Crisis Response Team Action Plan**

- 1) **All Members of Team**
 - a) Stay connected and support staff and students as needed.
- 2) **School group superintendent, superintendent of Student Services and/or mental health lead** (with possible support from Crisis Response Team Member.)
 - a) Communicate directly with the principal to gather additional information, clarify facts, and if relevant, ensure permission is obtained from family to share information.
 - b) Consult with principal and offer direct support in fulfilling the obligations listed within the Principal's and/or the School Crisis Response Team's Action and Response Plans (Appendices and C).
 - c) Notify and consult with the members of the System Crisis Response Team.
 - d) Notify and consult with the mental health lead and school based child and youth worker/social service worker/social worker.
 - e) Mobilize additional staff and services as needed.
 - f) Inform administrators of the supporting child and youth workers/social service workers/social workers that they will be supporting a tragic event.
 - g) Determine with the principal, if EAP support is needed, arrange for EAP support at the school with possible debrief the following week.
 - h) Be present and prepared to support at stand-up staff meeting.
 - i) Follow Principal's Notification and Stand-up Staff Meeting Action Plan (Appendix B);
 - ii) include accurate information that we have been given permission to share with reminders that we respect individual's privacy by maintaining confidentiality while, at the same time, providing advice about managing rumours and speculation.
 - iii) Work with the communications manager and mental health lead regarding messages to families.
 - i) Summarize and share information with System Crisis Response Team.

- j) Provide child and youth workers/social service workers/social workers with debrief opportunity.
- k) If requested, be present to support the principal at the voluntary staff debrief at end of day (refer to Appendix F).
- l) Develop ongoing plan for support in the coming days.
- m) Maintain communication with school and administration regarding supports for as long as is needed

3) Supporting children and youth workers, social services workers or social workers:

- a) If directed by the principal or mental health lead, purchase comfort food for individual and group support rooms and submit receipt to school office for reimbursement.
- b) Attend stand-up staff meeting.
- c) Be prepared to assist staff who may need help reading the script to their classes.
- d) Be prepared to assist staff dealing with impromptu memorials (prevention is key).
- e) Facilitate group and/or individual support for students.
- f) Ensure students' names and grade/homeroom are tracked and provided to the home school child and youth worker/social service worker/social worker for possible follow-up.
- g) Ensure home school child and youth worker/social service worker/social worker is aware of any issues that may carry over.
- h) Join child and youth worker/social service worker/social worker debriefing session at end of day or ensure self-debrief occurs.

4) Communications team

- a) Communicate with police as needed.
- b) Consult with the superintendent of Student Services and/or mental health lead to ensure timely and appropriate communications are delivered through the system and to families.
- c) Notify school administrators that a tragic event has occurred at a school.

- d) Monitor social media.

5) Mental health lead

- a) Provide ongoing consultation with the superintendent of Student Services, school principal and school-based mental health workers.
- b) When appropriate, notify and consult with mental health leads in neighbouring school boards.
- c) When appropriate, notify and consult with local agencies to ensure mental health supports and services are available.
- d) Provide resources, including evidence-based practices and those endorsed through School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO).

6) Superintendent of Student Services/system lead of Student Services

- a) Monitor communications provided through the System Crisis Response Team.
- b) Provide any follow-up measures to support system and/or school personnel.

7) Superintendent of Human Resources Support Services or designate

- a) In the event of the death of a staff member, the superintendent of Human Resources Support Services or designate will:
 - i) notify others as needed (e.g., administrators and employee group representatives, benefit providers).
 - ii) arrange EAP support for staff as needed.

APPENDIX E

Tragic and Crisis Event Communications Flowchart for Schools



APPENDIX F**Voluntary Staff Debrief****The purpose of the staff debrief is to identify:**

- current concerns and worries;
- additional interventions still needed;
- additional resources or assistance needed to support in the next several days;
- inform staff that the feedback they provide may be followed up if requested.

Questions

1. What has been the most difficult part for you?
2. Is there anything we could have done differently?
3. What still needs to happen, either immediately or over the next several days, to help you out?
4. Are there any unanswered questions or additional information that you need?

Trauma reactions and self-care

- Educate staff about trauma reactions, what they might experience in the following days and ways to care for themselves.
- Normalize staff and student reactions and system response.
- Remind staff to inform admin of concerns about individual students.
- Thank staff, provide encouragement and affirmations for their care and concern for students.
- End debrief with a reminder of the need to do something positive for themselves - self-care is critical!

APPENDIX G**Sample Script #1 – Death of a Student or Staff Member/Volunteer**

The following, is a sample script for classroom information regarding the death of a student or staff member (or volunteer).

To: All Staff

Please read this script to all students following morning announcements.

Should you require assistance in delivering this message, please ask an administrator or a member of the School Crisis Response Team.

Please shred this document after reading it to the class.

I have some sad news to share with you.

On (date), (name of student), a grade (gr. #) student / a staff member at our school died. *(Possible additional sentence addressing the circumstances or facts of the accident or illness e.g., as a result of a car accident.)*

Our condolences and thoughts are with the (surname) family.

We know this may be very upsetting news. Support is available at school in (room name or #) room to go and speak with someone.

- Tell students how important it is not to speculate or share private and personal information about this individual or their family.
- Rumours and information sharing, even when shared out of empathy or concern, can be hurtful to family members and friends.
- Always connect with the emotion (e.g., “I’m feeling very sad too”) and then bring it back to help seeking behaviours, how can we help ourselves and support those who are grieving?

If you have individual students who are in need of additional support, please refer them to a member of the Crisis Response Team in the (room name or #) room.

APPENDIX H**Sample Script #2 – Death of a Student or Staff Member
Modified for Kindergarten and Early Primary Students
Who are Not Directly Involved**

The following is a sample script for classroom information, regarding the death of a student or staff member, modified to support Kindergarten and early primary students who are not directly involved.

To: Kindergarten and Early Primary Staff

Please read this script to all students following morning announcements.

Should you require assistance in delivering this message, please ask an administrator or a member of the School Crisis Response Team.

Please shred this document after reading it to the class.

I have some sad news to share with you.

You may see some students and adults in the halls or outside, who are sad or upset.

(Student or staff name), a student/staff member at our school died. (Possible additional simple sentence addressing the circumstances or facts of the accident or illness e.g., He/she had been very sick for a long time).

Many of you may have known (Student or staff name) or seen him/her outside or in the halls.

(Student name) was in (Teacher's name), Grade (Gr. #) class.

- Tell students how important it is not to speculate or share private and personal information about this individual or their family.
- Rumours and information sharing, even when shared out of empathy or concern, can be hurtful to family members and friends.
- Always connect with the emotion (e.g., "I'm feeling very sad too") and then bring it back to help seeking behaviours, how can we help ourselves and support those who are grieving?

**If you have individual students who are in need of additional support,
please refer them to a member of the Crisis Response Team
in the (room name or #) room.**

APPENDIX I**Sample Script #3– For Office Staff (Optional) regarding Response to Community Inquiries (Excluding Requests from the Media)**

All media inquiries are channeled through the Communications Department at the Education Centre.

School name administration has been informed of the death of deceased's name.

Students have been told about (deceased's name's) death. Child and youth workers/social service workers/social workers are available for those who wish to speak with someone about their feelings.

APPENDIX J
Talking to Students about Death: Do's and Don'ts

DO	DON'T
Ask for help from the school social worker, social service worker or child and youth worker.	Don't feel you must handle this alone. Ask for help.
Recognize that classroom routines and management may be disrupted. This is natural – focus on routine with flexibility .	Don't force a "regular day" upon grieving students; but at the same time don't allow the class to be totally unstructured.
Listen, empathize, co-regulate and support with calming strategies.	Never force a child to participate in a discussion about death.
Always connect to the emotion "I'm feeling sad too" then move away from the details of the event to help-seeking-behaviours: "How do we help each other when we feel sad?" "What can you do to help yourself feel better?"	Don't be judgmental; don't lecture. It's all too tempting to make a point or moralize. This is not the time to discuss issues such as alcohol/drugs or the importance of helmets.
Develop an environment in which students feel safe, cared for and able to ask questions. Children need reassurances.	Never link suffering and death with guilt or punishment.
Use correct terminology related to death. Say, "I don't know" if you don't know. Say, "All we know is ..."	Don't say "I know how you feel" unless you truly do.
Maintain a sympathetic attitude toward the student's age-appropriate responses.	Don't expect "adult responses" from children and teenagers. Their grief responses may appear inappropriate – giggling, laughing, inappropriate comments
Let students know that it is important to not speculate about or to share information about the events that have occurred. Explain that this can be hurtful to friends and family.	Don't force others to look for something positive in the situation.
Allow students the opportunity to reach out to the supports provided; tragic events can often activate a trauma response even though the individual may not be connected to the current situation.	
Encourage activities that will allow students to tangibly express their emotions - cards, drawing, or select an activity from the Everyday Mental Health Classroom Resource	

APPENDIX J-1
Resources, Help and Crisis Lines

Kids Help Phone	1- 888-668-6868	https://kidshelpphone.ca/
	Text CONNECT to 686868	
Children’s Mental Health 24 hour Crisis Line (under 16 years)	613-966-3100	or 1-844-462-2647
Crisis Line (age 16 and up)	613-969-7400 – say “crisis centre” 1-888-757-7766 – say “crisis centre”	
LGBTQ Youth Line	1-800-268-9688	http://www.youthline.ca/

Resources

School Mental Health Ontario (SMHO)

- How to Help Students After Tragic Events
- www.smho-smsso.ca

School Libraries may contain:

Primary Books:

- Sidewalk Flowers - by Jon Arno Lawson and Sydney Smith
- My Heart – by Corinna Luyken
- Whimsy’s Heavy Things – by Julie Kraulis
- The Rabbit Listened – by Cori Doerrfeld
- The Goodbye Book – by Todd Parr

APPENDIX J-2
Resource Adapted from School Mental Health Ontario

INFO-SHEET
Mental Health Literacy for Educators
Helping Children and Youth after Tragic Events

After a tragic incident, it can be difficult to know what to do to support children and youth who have been affected or influenced by these events. You may observe that students appear upset, sad, anxious or tired, and/or you may notice a range of physical complaints. Reactions will vary according to students’ development stage, physical or emotional proximity to the event, and prior experience with traumatic circumstances.

In the days, and sometimes weeks, following a tragic event, these reactions are not uncommon, and typically will subside over time as students have an opportunity to talk through feelings, to be reassured that they are safe and protected, and to gain perspective.



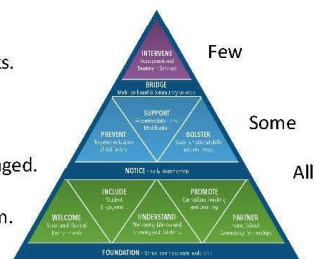
As a caring adult in students’ lives, there are many ways you can provide support:

1. Maintain a calm classroom environment
2. Support students as they work through strong feelings after a tragic event, in the course of daily school life
3. Notice when a student is struggling and may require additional support
4. Offer classroom accommodations to students struggling with social emotional concerns after a tragic event
5. Assist struggling students and their families to access more intensive support, as needed.

Note - To provide needed support for your students, remember that you need to engage in your own self-care. Tragic events affect individuals in different ways, and you are not immune to the impact of these circumstances. Take time to process your thoughts and emotions with colleagues, friends, family, or using professional mental health assistance as needed, so that you are able to be present and helpful to students.

1. SUPPORT FOR ALL – Maintain a calm classroom environment

- During times of tragedy, the reactions of adults will set the tone for students.
- Set a calm pace for learning, relaxing deadlines as needed.
- Maintain normal, predictable routines.
- Reduce the emphasis on and/or duration of formal lessons.
- Consider if any sensitive curriculum content might need to be delayed/changed.
- Use learning activities that allow you to float and check-in with students.
- Create quiet spaces for student reflection and dialogue within the classroom.
- Encourage students to take breaks from news and social media.



2. SUPPORT FOR ALL – Support students as they work through strong feelings after a tragic event

- Rather than raising this at a class level, invite students to initiate conversations when the time is right for them.
- Listen well, and notice how your students are viewing the situation.
- Keep explanations of events age-appropriate and factual.
- Calm worries, re-affirm safety procedures, and reassure students that they are safe.
- Validate feelings of sadness, anger, anxiety, etc. and note that it may take time to work through these emotions.
- Encourage students to draw on their faith, natural supports, self-care skills, and other sources of strength.
- Model compassion, positive coping and self-care skills.
- Help students to notice blessings, quiet heroes, and signs of hope.

3. SUPPORT FOR SOME – Notice when a student is struggling and may require additional support

- Make a list of students who may be at risk given proximity to the tragic event, prior trauma, etc.
- Monitor these students more closely, checking in with them each day.
- Be mindful that there may be students without an obvious link or vulnerability who may experience difficulty.
- Watch for changes in student behavior and/or emotions that are excessive in duration and intensity.
- Watch for signs that student behavior and/or emotions is interfering with day to day functioning at school.
- If you have concerns, record your observations and consult with appropriate staff (e.g., principal, social worker).
- Discuss your concerns with the student in a compassionate and age-appropriate manner.
- Use regular school/class protocols to connect with parents/guardians to discuss your observations and concerns.

4. SUPPORT FOR SOME - Offer classroom accommodations to students struggling after a tragic event

- Welcome students who may be more at risk, in a calm, caring, and intentional way each day.
- Let these students know about available school supports and how to access them.
- Create opportunities for quiet check-ins and dialogue.
- Maintain academic expectations, but soften these if a student seems overwhelmed.
- Help students to complete school tasks by chunking assignments, pairing them with another student, etc.
- Offer more time for test and assignment completion, as needed.
- Allow students to cue you if they are struggling and want to talk, or need to step back from a task for a time
- Help these students to engage in activities that may assist with healing (e.g., write a card, make a donation, etc.)

5. SUPPORT FOR FEW – Assist struggling students and their families to access support

- Know about available supports at the school, board, and community level.
- Know your local pathway to accessing services.
- Work with the school team to describe available supports to the parent/guardian and/or student.
- With parent/guardian consent, share your observations to assist with referrals and treatment planning.
- Continue to provide classroom accommodations to students struggling after a tragic event.
- Use classroom strategies recommended by the service provider.

Personal Resiliency and Self-Care

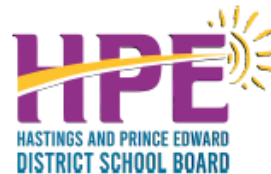
As noted above, tragic events can be emotionally challenging for us as educators. It is not uncommon for grief reactions in ourselves, and in our students, to last many days or weeks. The following strategies can be helpful to encourage personal resiliency during difficult times.

- Take the opportunity to process the situation and your feelings with your friends, family and colleagues.
- Keep regular schedules and routines.
- Remember to eat, sleep, play, exercise, and laugh.
- Practice positive ways of coping with sadness, fear, anger, and worry.
- Ask for help. This is not an experience that you have to face alone.

Sources: Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board; Ottawa-Carleton District School Board; Peel District School Board; Simcoe-Muskoka Catholic District School Board; Toronto Catholic District School Board; Toronto District School Board; The Fred Rogers Company; the Child Mind Institute; PBS Parents; National Association of School Psychologists (NASP).

APPENDIX K Responding to Tragic Events for Parents/Guardians

Responding to Tragic Events for Parents/Guardians



Tragic and traumatic events that are racially motivated, hate crimes or involve death may be upsetting for children as they learn about them. When responding to a tragic or traumatic event in the news or in our community, parents/guardians can reinforce their children's sense of safety and well-being by considering the following points:



Take time to learn about and understand the issues surrounding the event prior to engaging in conversation.



If your children ask about the event, provide an age-appropriate, clear and factual explanation, without sharing an opinion or unnecessary graphic details.



Validate your children's feelings; let your children know that it is okay to feel frightened, upset or angry about the event.



Though they may not know the people involved, children who have previously experienced discrimination or loss trauma may be re-traumatized by the event when reflecting on their experiences.



Maintain calm and be open to your children's emotions. Follow their lead in discussing the event, e.g., "I am here to listen and support you, if and when you are ready to talk."



Focus on growing awareness and empathy about the situation and those impacted by it.



Watch for, and respond to, children who may be struggling with the situation (e.g. emotional outbursts, withdrawal, stress behaviour, etc). If you are concerned, reach out for support to the school mental health team.

How to maximize your learning and response to tragic and traumatic events:



Understand the difference between opinions and informed knowledge.



Let go of personal anecdotal evidence and look at broader societal patterns.



Recognize how your background and opinions inform your perspective and reaction to the event.



Notice your own defensive reactions and use these reactions as entry points for gaining deeper self-knowledge.

Families seeking additional support to deal with a tragic or traumatic event are encouraged to connect with a teacher, school administrator or the school mental health team.