

Notification:

1. Verify the death with police or family.
2. Notify the ESU PFA team leader who will activate the team. If initial notification occurs outside of school hours, this may require initiating the phone tree or email to notify the school staff and to invite them to meet before school to organize a unified plan and to brief school staff. If notification occurs during school hours, this may require the distribution of a written statement or a staff meeting.
3. **Notify Teachers and Other Staff First:** Meet before school with school teachers and other staff to discuss what is known about the death. This gives teachers an opportunity to ask any questions they wish and to prepare themselves before they see their students in class. If a teacher does not feel able to talk to his/her students about the death, a member of the crisis team should be available to step in or assist with the notification.
4. The PFA team prepares a Statement for Students. Adults often struggle with what to say. With a prepared statement, teachers can give the same information to all students simultaneously. This should be done in small, naturally occurring groups such as homeroom or first period classes; every effort should be made to ensure that all students are present at the time this information is shared. Include information about the availability of mental health and support services and how students may access those services. Avoid use of public address systems or large assemblies to make such announcements.
5. **Notify Students Face-to-Face with Familiar Staff:** If a teacher has died, consider having a teacher from the same or a lower grade who is familiar with the deceased teacher's students, or a teacher from the school crisis team who is more comfortable, notify that class. Consider having this teacher remain with the class over the next couple days and have a substitute cover for the less directly impacted class.
6. **Prepare a Statement for Parents.** Draft a letter for parents to notify them about the death and what services are being offered to students and families. Assure parents that crisis teams have been mobilized and support services are available. (Template letters, that schools can have in advance of a crisis so that notification statements can be quickly and easily prepared, are available at schoolcrisiscenter.org/resources/samples-templates.)

This information should be given to teachers and other staff to read to students at a designated time to share with the entire student body (i.e. homeroom or first/second period).

1. Announcement for Elementary Staff Member: Today we are very sad to share some news with you. Over the weekend, 2nd grade teacher and volleyball coach, Mrs. _____, died as the result of a car accident. Our thoughts are with Mrs. _____'s family, friends, and

students at this difficult time. It is sometimes very hard to deal with feelings, and if you need to talk with someone, please let an adult know.

2. High School Student: We are saddened to announce that _____, a junior at _____, who was battling cancer, passed away last night. Our condolences go out to his family at this time. Counselors will be available today for students in the counselor's office.
3. High School Student: Our school has been saddened by the death of freshman, _____. Our condolences to the family during this difficult time. When we experience the loss of someone, it is sometimes difficult to know how to react and people grieve in different ways. If you need assistance in expressing or dealing with your feelings, please let a teacher, counselor, or adult know. Counselors will be available all day in the counseling office.
4. Middle/High School Student: This morning we heard the extremely sad news that _____ died last night. This is the only information we have officially received. We are all saddened by _____'s death and send our condolences to his family and friends. Support rooms will be located throughout the school today for students who wish to talk to a counselor.
5. Student: It is with sadness that I tell you about a loss to our school family. On [DATE], [NAME of Deceased] [insert facts about death]. I understand that many of you may have upsetting feelings and questions about [NAME of Deceased]'s death. I will try to answer any questions that I can. If you would like, we will take the remainder of this class period to talk about what has happened. At times like this it is okay to have many different feelings including sadness, anger, and disbelief. It is okay to cry. Together, we can talk about whatever you are feeling or want to talk about. If you would like to talk to someone privately, there are support rooms now available [LOCATION of support rooms].
6. Sample Announcement Primary or Middle School:
"We want to take some time this morning to talk about something very sad. (Name) _____, an eighth grader, died unexpectedly last night. At this point, we do not officially know the cause of (his/her) _____ death. Death is a difficult issue for anyone to deal with. Even if you didn't know _____, you might still have some emotional reactions to hearing about this. It is very important to be able to express our feelings about _____'s death, especially our loss and sadness. We want you to know that there are teachers and counselors available in the library all through the day to talk with you. If you want to talk with somebody, you will be given a pass to go to the library where we have people who will help us through this difficult time."
7. Last night (student's name) from our (junior class) died. This morning the faculty met to develop a plan to help all of us cope with this sad event. There will be special support assistance available for any student who feels they need this service. Today, counselors will be available in (given location) all day.

8. It is with sadness that I tell you about a **loss** to our school family. On (INSERT date) (INSERT name of deceased) (INSERT fact about the **death**). I understand that many of you may have upsetting feelings and questions about (INSERT name of deceased)'s **death**. I will try to answer any questions that I can. If you would like to talk to someone privately, there are support rooms now available [LOCATION of support rooms].

9. Suicide: Messages for Students

Option 1 – When the Death Has Been Ruled a Suicide

I am so sorry to tell you all that one of our students, [NAME], has died. I'm also very sad to tell you that the cause of death was suicide.

Many of you may also feel very sad. Others may feel other emotions such as anger or confusion. It's okay to feel whatever emotions you might be feeling. When someone takes their own life, it leads to a lot of questions, some of which may never be completely answered.

While we may never know why [NAME] ended [HIS/HER] life, we do know that suicide has many causes. In many cases, a mental health condition is part of it, and these conditions are treatable. It's really important if you're not feeling well in any way to reach out for help. Suicide should not be an option.

Rumors may come out about what happened, but please don't spread them. They may turn out to be untrue and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to [NAME] and [HIS/HER] family and friends. I'm going to do my best to give you the most accurate information as soon as I know it.

Each of us will react to [NAME]'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Some of us may have known [NAME] well, and some of us may not. But either way, we may have strong feelings. You might find it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork for a little while. On the other hand, you might find that focusing on school helps take your mind off what has happened. Either is okay.

I want you to know that your teachers and I are here for you. We also have counselors here to help us all cope with what happened. If you'd like to talk to one of them, just let me or one of your teachers know or look for the counselors in [NOTE SPECIFIC LOCATION] between classes or during lunch.

We are all here for you. We are all in this together, and the school staff will do whatever we can to help you get through this.

Option 2 – When the Cause of Death Is Unconfirmed

I am so sorry to tell you all that one of our students, [NAME], has died. The cause of death has not yet been determined.

We are aware that there has been some talk that this might have been a suicide death. Rumors may begin to come out, but please don't spread them. They may turn out to be untrue and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to [NAME] and [HIS/HER] family and friends. I'm going to do my best to give you the most accurate information as soon as I know it.

Since the subject has been raised, I do want to take this chance to remind you that suicide, when it does occur, is very complicated. No one single thing causes it. But in many cases, a mental health condition is part of it, and these conditions are treatable. It's really important if you're not feeling well in any way to reach out for help. Suicide should not be an option.

Each of us will react to [NAME]'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Right now, I'm feeling very sad, and many of you may feel sad too. Others may feel anger or confusion. It's okay to feel whatever emotions you might be feeling. Some of us may have known [NAME] well, and some of us may not. But either way, we may have strong feelings. You might find it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork for a little while. On the other hand, you might find that focusing on school helps take your mind off what has happened. Either is okay.

I want you to know that your teachers and I are here for you. We also have counselors here to help us all understand what happened. If you'd like to talk to one of them, just let me or one of your teachers know, or you can seek out the counselors in [NOTE SPECIFIC LOCATION] between classes or during your lunch.

We are all here for you. We are all in this together, and the school staff will do whatever we can to help you get through this.

Option 3 – When the Family Has Requested the Cause of Death Not Be Disclosed

I am so sorry to tell you all that one of our students, [NAME], has died. The family has requested that information about the cause of death not be shared at this time.

We are aware that there has been some talk that this might have been a suicide death. Rumors may begin to come out, but please don't spread them. They may turn out to be untrue and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to [NAME] and [HIS/HER] family and friends. I'm going to do my best to give you the most accurate information as soon as I know it.

Since the subject has been raised, I do want to take this chance to remind you that suicide, when it does occur, is very complicated. No one single thing causes it. But in many cases, a mental health condition is part of it, and these conditions are treatable. It's really important if you're not feeling well in any way to reach out for help. Suicide should not be an option.

Each of us will react to [NAME]'s death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Right now, I'm feeling very sad, and many of you may feel sad too. Others may feel anger or confusion. It's okay to feel whatever emotions you might be feeling. Some of us may have known [NAME] well, and some of us may not. But either way, we may have strong feelings. You might find it difficult to concentrate on schoolwork for a little while. On the other hand, you might find that focusing on school helps take your mind off what has happened. Either is okay.

I want you to know that your teachers and I are here for you. We also have counselors here to help us all understand what happened. If you'd like to talk to one of them, just let me or one of your teachers know, or you can seek out the counselors in [NOTE SPECIFIC LOCATION] between classes or during your lunch.

We are all here for you. We are all in this together, and the school staff will do whatever we can to help you get through this.