

Sample Letters – Death Announcements

Sample Letter to Parents

Dear Parents,

As you may or may not be aware, our school (or district) has recently experienced (specify event, whether death, fire, etc.) which has deeply affected us. Let me briefly review the facts (give brief description of incident and known facts).

We have implemented our school's Emergency Response Plan in an effort to provide an appropriate response to the situation. This plan is also designed to provide assistance to our students and their families when deemed necessary. Students and staff will react in different ways to emergencies of this nature, so it will be important to have support available to assist both staff and students in need. Counselors are available in the school setting to assist students as they express their feelings related to (the specific event). We have included a reference sheet to help you recognize possible reactions you may observe in your child. If you feel your child is in need of special assistance or is having a great deal of difficulty coping with (the loss, disaster, etc.), please do not hesitate to call.

While it is important to deal with grief, loss, anger and fear reactions, we believe it is essential to resume as normal a routine as possible regarding school activities. The following modifications in our school's regular schedule will be in effect during (specify dates, times and places), and after that time all regular schedules and routines will resume. (Specify needed information such as memorial services, possible changes in classroom locations, alterations school operating hours, etc.).

Thank you for your support of our school system as we work together to cope with (specify event). Please observe your child closely over the next several days and weeks to watch for signs of distress, which may indicate a need for additional support and guidance. Please feel free to call if you have any concerns or questions regarding your child, or the steps being taken by the school to address this (loss, tragedy, etc.).

Sincerely,

(Principal Name)

(Phone)

Sample Class announcement to students following a death:

(DATE)

Dear Students,

I have asked your teacher to read this letter to you because I want to make sure that all students received the same information about the recent tragedy at our school. It gives me a great sorrow to inform you that **(NAME)**, a **(teacher, student/friend)** at **(SCHOOL NAME)**, has died **(DAY/DATE)**. ***(Insert what information can be shared about the cause and circumstances of the death.)***

Death can be difficult for us to understand, especially when it is sudden. Many of us may be confronted with a variety of emotions, which might include shock, sadness, and confusion. I want to assure you that we, the **(SCHOOL NAME)** staff, care about you and the feelings you may be experiencing.

Please know that we want to support you during this time. The Crisis Response Team will be available to meet with you in **(PLACE)** to assist you in dealing with any feeling you may be having. You might wish to share memories you have of **(NAME)**. Crisis Response Team members will also be available at any time during the day to help you if you feel a more urgent need to talk with someone. ***(Insert here specific information on how students can access Team members for support)***. I want to encourage those students who may be particularly upset, perhaps even struggling with a death in the family or of a friend, to talk with Crisis Response Team members. They will be available all day to meet with you.

Any time death touches us, it is extremely stressful. This sudden death may be quite shocking to you and confuse you. For these reasons, we especially want you to know of our caring and support.

Sincerely,

(PRINCIPAL'S NAME)

Sample letter – death of student or faculty member

Dear Parent:

As you may be aware, our school district has experienced a death of a (student/faculty member) that has affected us deeply.

The students and staff will react in different ways to the death of one of our school community members. We all should expect and try to understand that there will be a variety of emotions and responses to what has occurred. The most important thing we can do is to be supportive and encourage an open expression of feelings.

At the school, we have implemented a plan for responding to this tragic event focused on helping our students and their families get back to regular learning and every day activities as soon as possible. This plan has evolved from the district's experience with death in the past and the advice of mental health professionals from the community.

Our teachers and counselors have been briefed on our plans and have received guidelines for discussing about death and reactions to it. There will be district personnel available to students who need special attention and support. There is also help available from the community. We will try to maintain as normal a routine and structure as the situation and people allow, and we encourage you to do the same.

If you feel that your child or family needs some assistance, please contact us, and we will do everything we can to help you.

If you have any questions or concerns, please contact the school at (give preferred phone numbers). We know you will join us in our concern and sympathy for the family.

Sincerely,

Principal and Staff

Classroom announcement of death

Date

To: All Staff

From: Principal

Re: (name of deceased person)

****space for photo***

Please read the following announcement to all your students. If for any reason, this is uncomfortable for you, contact the office; a member of the crisis team will assist you.

On (date/time), we were given some sad news. (Name of student, teacher, etc.) was (murdered, killed in car accident, committed suicide, died suddenly). We do not have all the information at this time, but will inform you as we learn more.

_____’s (death, accident, injury) will upset some of you more than others and will upset you in different ways, just as it has the staff when we were informed. In the next few days, the crisis team will be visiting each class to answer questions you may have and to talk about the kinds of reactions you may experience.

Should you want to talk with someone about _____, and your reaction to his/her (death, accident, injury), please tell you teacher or stop in the office to visit with a member of the crisis team.

Wait a moment to let the students absorb the information. Allow a moment of reflection and show respect.

Classroom announcement of death

We are saddened to report the death of a (student). (Student) was a freshman and played on the (sports) team. (first name) attended (middle school). At this time, we have no information about funeral arrangements. We ask that you keep (first name) and his family in your thoughts today. Any student who feels that they need support and someone to talk with should tell their teacher immediately so they can arrange for you to go to the Guidance Office. We encourage all students to stay in school today so that our staff can support you.

Sample letter to parents of student death

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian:

It is with sadness that I inform you of the death of Joe Doe, a sophomore in our school. John died from injuries suffered in a car accident, which occurred last evening (do not specify reason if death by suicide or causes which are unknown, etc.).

The funeral will be held at _____ (Funeral Home or Church) at _____ a.m./p.m. Visitation will be held at _____ (Funeral Home) during the hours of _____ to _____. Parents are encouraged to attend the funeral with their child. (Note: Send a letter home to parents even if you do not know the details of the funeral arrangements.)

Students will have varied reactions to the death of a peer. Any reaction is normal in the grief process and can range from withdrawal, to crying and anger. I encourage you to openly discuss with your child their reactions and feelings regarding the death of Joe.

Special counseling services have been made available to students today and will continue to be available throughout the week and longer, if needed.

If you think your child needs additional counseling support, please do not hesitate to contact the _____ (School Counseling Office) at _____ (phone number).

Sincerely,

Principal and Staff