

# Emery County School District



## Policy: FFA—Student and Staff Memorials

Date Adopted: 8 April 2015  
Current Review / Revision: 8 April 2015

The Board of Education of the Emery County School District recognizes that the loss of a student or staff member is deeply and broadly felt in the school community. The purpose of this Policy is to set forth uniform guidelines when responding to the death of a student or staff member. From time to time, the Emery County School District must confront the issue of dealing appropriately with the death of a student or staff member. Schools are immediately identified as sharing some responsibility with the community to recognize and honor deceased students and staff. The Emery County School District desires to help in the grieving and healing process and recognizes the chief role of the family, clergy, and funeral services community in this response.

Research indicates two potential problems if uniform guidelines are not established: 1) physical memorials have the potential to communicate immortalization, essentially glamorizing the death in the minds of some. Young people who suffer from depression or other psychological problems and are at risk for suicidal behavior are often motivated to consider taking their own lives when they are exposed to a memorial immortalizing the death of a student; 2) memorials can be an ongoing visual reminder of what happened, leading to students worrying if it will happen again or wondering if they could be next.

From these perspectives, and since we all grieve differently, memorials in the school or on school property pose a significant risk because it is almost impossible for students to avoid the physical reminders of a death when the memorial is located on school grounds. For some it is healthier not to be reminded. Since schools are intended to be “closed environments”, those reminders should be a matter of choice.

The District must balance the physical and emotional impact traumatic events have on the education of all students.

The secondary philosophy underlying this Policy is “what we do for one, we do for all,” reminding us of the importance of a uniform treatment of student and staff memorials. Funerals on school property are not encouraged, however, this will be considered on an individual basis according to the building use policy dealing with limited open public forum/civic center usage.

Acceptable types of student memorials and activities may include:

1. Scholarships established in the name of the student or staff member.
2. Donations to a charity or program that is dedicated to helping students.
3. Collection of money to be donated to the deceased’s family or charity or scholarship of their choice.
4. A sympathy card from the school (possibly signed by students and staff) and flowers at the funeral.
5. A student or staff member may be acknowledged in his/her school yearbook or one edition of the school newspaper/newsletter or during the first part of graduation ceremonies and on graduation programs in the year

of his/her death. Information may be included on a "Memorial Page," but should be limited to the name, photo, dates of birth/death, and school activities in which the student or staff member participated. It is not appropriate to list cause of death in yearbooks or newspaper/newsletters or at graduation.

6. A student and/or staff member may be acknowledged by a "moment of silence" and/or an "empty chair", and/or a dedicated musical number, during the first part of graduation exercises.
7. Dedicating a single game or performance to the deceased student or staff member.
8. Endowments are monetary donations that are made to a particular school, activity, department, or program in the memory of a student or staff member.

The District will not allow:

1. Memorial services that may alter the routine of a regular school instructional day.
2. Memorials that require the altering of school property.
3. Memorials that require the altering of school activities or the activity schedule.
4. Memorials that infringe on the separation of church and state or memorials that require the use of public funds to purchase, develop, or maintain.
5. Memorials that include plaques or mock headstones attached to any object on school property.
6. Memorials that draw attention or have the potential to glamorize the death.
7. Memorials that consist of a monument on school property.
8. Memorials attached to a wall or in a trophy case.
9. Vigils or candlelight ceremonies on campuses (students wishing to conduct candlelight vigils may legally secure a location off site and conduct the vigil independent of the school they attend).
10. Retiring a student's jersey, number, or any other sport, activity, or club representation.
11. Planting of trees or construction of benches or other permanent structures.
12. Commemorative events on school premises.
13. Awarding of honorary or posthumous diplomas, unless all requirements have been met.