

**THE ROLE OF THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATOR
APPENDICES**

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Responding to Critical Incidents in the NWSD

Division-Based CISM Team

Outlines Division wide plan for responding to school crisis.
Superintendent of Student Services, Coordinator of Student Services, Communication Officer, Educators,
Psychologists, Counsellors,
North & South Team Leaders, 3 Members at large.

Develop
Procedural
Guidelines

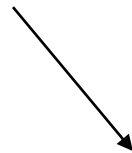
Provide
Feedback
on Policy



(At times of critical incident provides assessment
and extent of resources required.)

School-Based CISM Team

Principal, School Counsellor, Wellness Coordinator,
Trained CISM Staff Members

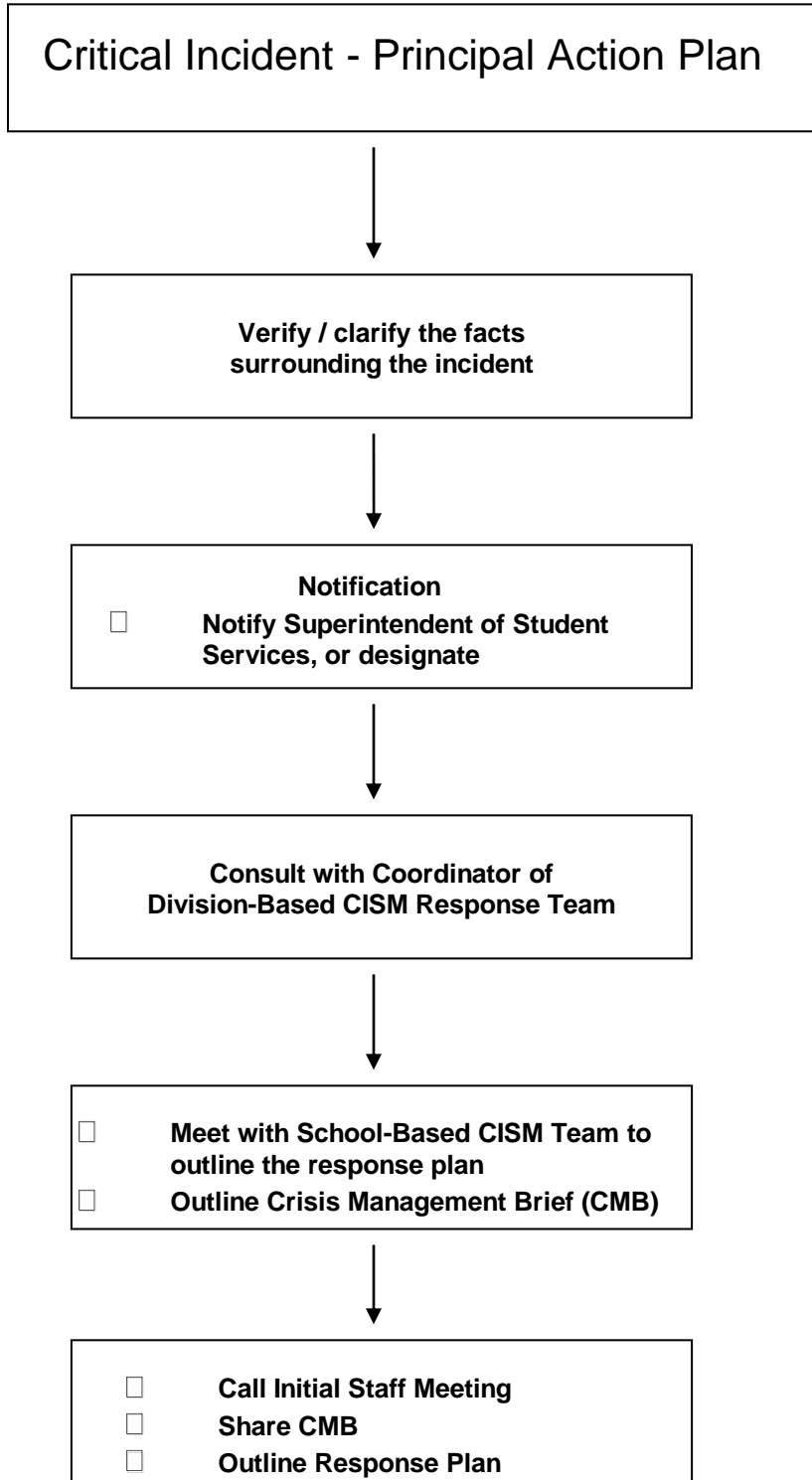


Division-Based Support Team

Educational Psychologists/Counsellors
North/South Team Leaders
CISM Team Members
Communication Officer

Resource-Based Support Team

(Outside of Division)
Mental Health Agency
Clergy
Identify Trained Community Members
Victim Services
Elders



Administrators Checklist (IMMEDIATE)

Verify Facts

- Verify facts with the family or appropriate alternate.
- Obtain permission from the immediate family for sharing information. (Decide what can be shared).
- If appropriate, speak with the police to find out what can be shared.

Notification

- Notify the Superintendent of Student Services, or designate. He/she will keep the Director updated on information pertaining to the incident. **(The Director will make all statements to the media.)**
- Notify the Superintendent of your school.
- Notify other school administrators who have siblings attending their school.
- Notify ALL staff of the incident. (Including those absent: on leave, etc.) Activate the phone tree.

Consult with CISM Team

- Consult with Division CISM Team Coordinator to assess the incident and identify the support required.
- Meet with the School-Based CISM Team.
- Prepare a CMB. Critical Management Brief. (Refer to page 11 in the *Responding to Critical Incident in the NWSD* section.)
- Design a plan to contact those currently absent from the school.
- Provide substitutes for the staff, if necessary.
- Cancel school events as necessary.
- Extend "initial" sympathy from the school to the family.

Meet with the Staff

- Meet with staff to share information and outline the plan response.
- Introduce the CISM Response Team and their role in the school.
- Share the CMB.
- Outline how the CMB will be delivered. (Classroom teacher or CISM member)
- Identify support mechanisms available to the staff. (E.g. theme boxes, appropriate activities, outside support, etc.)
- Provide sufficient time for discussion, questions and comments.
- Provide a suitable environment and opportunities for staff to sort out and validate their emotions. Allow time for expression and orientation around the situation.
- Announce that there will be another staff meeting at the end of the school day.
- Designate the first period of the day (or the first appropriate period) for CMB and discussion with students.
- Discuss the procedures for sharing information with the parents of students not directly involved. (Letter, telephone call, assembly, etc.). Consult with Communication Officer.
- Promote an atmosphere whereby the teachers are given the freedom to discuss and debrief the incident with the students. (Strategies and activities should be available for the teachers to enable students to express their feelings and to respond to the incident.)

Administrators' Checklist (INTERMEDIATE)

- Provide additional substitutes, if required.
- Design a plan to follow-up with students and staff who are currently absent from school.
- Conduct the follow-up staff meeting for the end of the school day. (Refer to page 13)
- Assess the nature of the reaction of the staff and students.
- Update the staff on any information concerning the event.
- Arrange for personal contact with the parents of the students who are identified as "at-risk".
- Discuss the follow-up action to be taken with respect to the students and staff absent from school.

In The Event of Critical Illness or Injury:

- Determine who will be the contact(s) with the students/parents. (E.g. hospital stays).

In The Event of a Death:

- In consultation with the Director of Education, the School-Based Team and the staff, determine who will attend the funeral.
- Encourage parents to accompany their children if they attend the funeral.
- Provide the support required to attend to the needs of the homeroom class and the teacher.
- Identify additional "high-risk" students and staff. Determine action.
- Design a plan to inform students who are currently absent from school.

Long Term Responses.

- Continue to monitor "at risk" and "high risk" students and close friends of the deceased.
- Communicate specific concerns regarding "at risk" and "high risk" students with parents.
- Determine the long term needs and plans for the students and staff in the school.
- Confirm support services as required. (Counselling, etc.).
- Continue to keep staff updated with any additional information.

If the principal is feeling overwhelmed, there are support services available, e.g. counsellors within the Division, S.T.F., etc.

A5.....Emergency Phone Numbers

9-1-1 Emergency number (Ambulance, RCMP, Fire Dep't)	9-1-1
Children's Advocate	1-800-322-7221
Department of Community Resources – child protection, foster care, financial assistance	1-877- 367-7707 (Lloydminster) 1-877-993-9911 (North Battleford) 1-877-368-8898 (Meadow Lake)
Farm Stress Line	1-800-667-4442
Prairie North Health Region	820-6181 (Lloydminster) 446- 6606 (North Battleford) 236-1550 (Meadow Lake)
Kids Help Line	1-800-668-6868 (24 Hour)
Mental Health	820- 6120 (Lloydminster) 446-6500 (North Battleford) 236-1570 (Meadow Lake)
Ministerial Association * CONTACT APPROPRIATE CHURCH *	
Addiction Services	780-875-8890 (Lloydminster) 446-6440 (North Battleford) 236-1540 (Meadow Lake)
Public Health Services	820-6225 (Lloydminster) 446-6415 (North Battleford) 236-1570 (Meadow Lake)
R.C.M.P.	446-1720 (North Battleford) 342-2005 (Glaslyn) 839-3330 (Goodsoil / Pierceland) 825-6350 (Lloydminster) 837-2440 (Loon Lake) 893-4800 (Maidstone) 236-2570 (Meadow Lake) 248-6250 (St. Walburg) 845-4520 (Turtleford)

Purpose of the staff meeting

- Disclosing the facts to students and the community.
- Providing the Crisis Management Briefing. (Page 11 in the *Responding to Critical Incidents in the NWSD* section.)
- Introducing the Critical Incident Stress Management Team (CISM).
- Outlining a plan for the next hour, for the rest of the day, for the next week.
- Identifying resources required.

Staff Meeting

- Include all school personnel, secretaries, caretakers etc.

Sharing the facts and Information

- Review the information surrounding the critical incident that has been obtained in consultations with the family and/or R.C.M.P.
- The CMB (Crisis Management Briefing) will be prepared prior to the meeting by the School-Based CISM Team and delivered in each classroom by the classroom teacher or CISM team.
- When it is anticipated that there will be a strong reaction to the CMB within a classroom, one or more CISM members should join the classroom teacher when he or she reads the news.

Outlining the Plan

- Outline expectations of teacher.
- Discuss procedures for sharing information with students. Provide staff with material relevant to the situation at hand.
- Explain location of and process for access to a “Drop In” room for students. A “Drop In” room may be established for students who are unable to continue with the regular programming following receipt of the information regarding the tragic event. Members of the CISM team will be in this room.
- Identify school personnel and assign them to monitor entrances, hallways and washrooms. Minimize students in the hallways by directing them to the “Drop In” room or back to their classroom.
- Announce time of the following staff meeting.
- Discuss possible cancellation of school events.

Introduce the CISM Team and Supports Available

- Introduce the CISM Team. Provide for discussion and input from these resource personnel.

Identify “At Risk” Individuals

- Discuss students identified to be “at risk”.

Follow – Up meeting (At the end of day)

- Feedback
- Memorial service
- Funeral attendance
- Assembly
- Tribute

- | |
|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none">❖ Restate protocol with respect to media❖ In event of a suicide remind staff to use discretion when using the word suicide. Tailor the use of terminology to your audience. Consider age appropriateness. “<i>Apparent suicide</i>” is a good alternative to use when sharing information. |
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Sample Communication (When speaking with staff)

TO: Staff
FROM: Principal
DATE:

Dear Teachers,

I am asking you to provide the following information about the death of ____, a grade _____ student, with your class at the beginning of the school day. Some students will already be aware of his/her death from the 10:00 p.m. news on TV last night. Others will be learning of his/her death. It is recommended that you give your class an opportunity to hear the facts regarding the tragedy from you, to ask questions, and to discuss their feelings. You can expect some students to be angry, upset and sad. Please be sensitive to their feelings.

_____ died last night at approximately _____ PM after _____.

Students may be excused from classes for _____'s funeral if they bring a written note from a parent. Funeral arrangements are still pending. We will keep you updated on funeral arrangements as we receive it. The family will be at the funeral home tomorrow evening if anyone wishes to pay their respects and extend their sympathy. A box is placed in the office for the collection of any cards written to _____'s family.

The CISM Team will be in the school building today and _____.

If you wish some assistance in discussing _____'s death with your class, a CISM Team member will be available to come to your classroom. Student drop-in centres will be set up in rooms _____. Please assist students in accessing the drop-in centres when they need to do so.

Today you may experience varying emotions. A CISM Team member will be available if you wish to talk further about the death.

In the case of a death by suicide, refer to Suicide Concerns Information Section.

A8 Designated Individual and Group Intervention Areas Map

Examples of a School Map
For Response to a Critical Incident

Designated Areas for Individual and Group Interventions

- School-Based CISM Team
-
-
-

A9 Guidelines of Written Notification for Teachers to Share with Students

Written notification is helpful to staff but not necessary. The important part is that teachers are aware of what to tell their students. (Note: more in-depth information found in the *Teachers' Section* of this manual.)

The following sample statements may be used in the notification of students:

After a suicide... See Suicide Concerns Information Section

After a fatality...

"A tragedy has happened. _____, a grade ___ student was killed in an accident (died in the hospital). You will be given information about the funeral arrangements later."

"This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You will probably experience many feelings within the next few days. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, depressed."

"Drop-in Centres where you can come to talk about these feelings are available to you. Drop-in Centres will be located in room's _____ for the next _____ days. You can use the Drop-in Centres whenever you like. The people in the Drop-in Centres want to help you. Let your classroom teacher know when you are doing so."

After a homicide...

"A tragedy has happened. _____ a grade ___ student was killed. Details of _____'s premature death are not available to us. The police are investigating the death."

"This kind of tragic news is hard to accept. You will probably feel many feelings within the next few weeks. You may feel sad, angry, confused, numb, depressed, frightened."

"Drop-in Centres where you can come to talk about these feelings are available to you. Drop-in Centres will be located in rooms _____ for the next _____ days. You can use the Drop-in Centres whenever you like. Let your classroom teacher know that you are doing so."

(To be placed on school letterhead)

(Date)

Dear Parent(s):

On _____ one of our students died suddenly and unexpectedly. In addition to our grief over the loss of this member of our school community, we are sensitive to the fact that such an event has an impact on other students.

In response, the school has implemented a plan which allows students an opportunity to talk about their thoughts and feelings with trained professional staff. We expect that some will seek out this help, while others may not. Those who do will be provided an opportunity to express their feelings and grief. This is not intended to take the place of other professional counselling.

Anticipating that your son/daughter may have a reaction to this event, we have enclosed in this mailing some information which should be helpful to you as you respond to your son's/daughter's concerns. If you should determine that your son/daughter needs further professional counselling, please feel free to contact the school for phone numbers of local agencies that are available to assist you.

If it seems advisable, we will offer all concerned parents an opportunity to meet with professionals to discuss this recent incident.

Sincerely,

Principal

In the case of a suicide, please refer to Suicide Concerns information Section.

The school administrator, in consultation with the School-Based Team, will decide if a letter to parents of other students enrolled in the school is appropriate. The letter may be directed to all parents, parents of students at the deceased's grade level or parents of classmates. In the event of a serious accident involving students, a similar letter with modifications would be appropriate.

A letter home should be brief and should include:

- How the school community is handling the expression of sympathy to the parents and/or family of the deceased;
- Explanation of the facts surrounding the death, funeral arrangements, and how the school will be handling attendance at the funeral. School personnel may wish to ask students planning to attend the funeral during school hours to bring written permission from their parents/guardians authorizing attendance at the funeral;
- Some details on the deceased person's background; and
- Concluding comments which focus on support for the family.

Suggested Model of Letter to Parents of Students Informing Them of the Death of a Student/Staff Member

Dear Parent/Guardian:

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 had been on staff at school for ____ years] The cause of death is reported to be [_____]. (Permission needs to be granted by the family).

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 in dealing with the death.

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

Principal's signature.

NOTE: Letter could include handouts on how children respond to grief.

CONSIDER DOING THE FOLLOWING:

- A review of the events of the day in an informal atmosphere by the school administrator.
- Having food present. Food and drinks give people something in their hands and help to provide a relaxing environment.
- At this time, an update on the critical incident (E.g. funeral arrangements) may be timely. Having dealt with the most recent information, encourage feedback from the staff.
 - How was their initial meeting with students?
 - What is the mood in the classroom?
 - Which concerns did students identify?
 - Are the support resources sufficient?
 - Are any students "at risk"?
 - Have parents of those students been notified?
- Sharing this kind of information is helpful for all staff. As they listen to each other, they congratulate each other and recognize they have survived and learned through a very difficult day.
- Discuss the plans for the next day and ensuing days. Most importantly recognize the many successes.
- Acknowledge the good ideas, the sensitivity and the caring. Your staff needs to be congratulated on helping a community work through a very emotional incident.
- Encourage your staff to go home early and rejuvenate. Remind them that they have their own lives to live and that they should do "a good deed" for themselves...they deserve that.

A13..... Vulnerable Students (Sudden Death)

Identify and refer to the School-Based CISM Team. Students who may have a stronger reaction to a sudden death could include:

- Students with prior suicidal behaviour.
- Students with a history of emotional illness or depression.
- Students who have recently suffered a loss such as a death, break-up of a romance, and/or a separation/divorce of parents.
- Students who were close friends or siblings of the deceased.

**“AT RISK” STUDENTS
(After Suicidal Death)**

* Also refer to *Suicide Concerns Information* section.

Immediately following a completed suicide, there may be other students and adults in the school and community who become suicidal themselves. (Note: two weeks prior, or until media subsides, is considered the critical period)

Probable “High Risk” Students after Suicidal Death

A Student who:

- Participated in any way with the completed suicide: helped write the suicide note, provided the means, involved in a suicide pact, etc.
- Knew of the plans but kept it a secret.
- Were siblings or other relatives, best friends, girlfriend/boyfriend.
- Was a self-appointed therapist.
- Had a history of suicidal threats/attempts themselves.
- Identified with the victim's situation.
- Has reason to feel guilty about things they had said or done to the student prior to the suicide.
- Who observed events which they later learned were indicative of the victim's suicidal intent.
- Who have experienced sudden or traumatic losses in their own life. (E.g. death, divorce.)

Also be aware of other students desperate for any reason that now sees suicide as a viable alternative, (E.g. depressed.)

Consider doing the following:

- It is important for members of the school's administrative team to be visible and available to staff, students and parents within the school setting by informally visiting classrooms, walking the hallways and/or playground during breaks in the day.
- Being an active listener demonstrates caring while keeping a finger on the "pulse" or "mood" throughout the school.
- It also helps if you plan for a follow-up meeting with staff at the end of the day.
- Check to see that the "plan" from the morning staff meeting is in place and being followed and make adjustments as required. Staff members will not be equally comfortable or knowledgeable in following a plan related to a critical incident.
- You may have to reallocate or shift resources so that the "plan" is followed for all students.
- Finally, take time to assess the initial staff meeting. Was it helpful? Which parts of it require follow-up?

A15.....Administrator Suggestions for Home Visit

- With a designated staff member, visit the deceased student's family.
- Offer formal condolences.
- Obtain family wishes about staff/student attendance at the funeral.
- Offer appropriate assistance if requested. (E.g. - readings, music, etc. for funeral service.)
- Parent Assistance request. (E.g. student belongings.)

HOME VISIT FORM	
ONE	
Principal _____	Telephone _____
Designated Staff _____	
Confirm visit with home _____	
Time of Visit _____	Date of Visit _____

TWO		
Parents Name _____		
Address _____	Telephone _____	
Deceased Name _____	Age _____	-Grade- _____
Sibling's Name _____	Age _____	-Grade- _____
Sibling's Name _____	Age _____	-Grade- _____
Sibling's Name _____	Age _____	-Grade- _____
Sibling's Name _____	Age _____	-Grade- _____

THREE	
CONDOLENCES	
Staff _____	
Students _____	
Home & School _____	

FOUR
Parent/Guardian Preference _____
Re: Funeral Attendance _____
Parent Assistance Request:
1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

School should have a policy re: Memorials.

Recommendations regarding Sudden Death:

It may be appropriate for the school to plan a response to a death within the school community. Particular sensitivity needs to be exercised with respect to the deceased's/survivors cultural and religious background.

The response could take several forms such as:

- Attendance at the funeral
- School assembly (not recommended for death by suicide)
- Lower flag
- Moment of silence
- Yearbook recognition
- Awards
- Memorial fund
- Donation/flowers
- Memory book for the family

For recommendations regarding suicidal deaths refer to the *Suicide Concerns Information* section.

A17School Memorial Address (NOT recommended for death by suicide)

School Memorial Address (NOT recommended for death by suicide)

This address is intended to focus on the value of the life lived and to provide accurate factual information. Before composing this address, it is sometimes helpful to meet briefly with a few staff and students to hear their thoughts about the person. Reviewing the student's records and speaking to a previous school's teachers might be helpful as well. After delivering the address, you may wish to send a typed copy with a letter of sympathy to the parents. File a copy in the student's records as well.

The components in a memorial address may be:

- Explanation** that this is a special address regarding the death of a member of your school community. The address should be brief with a minute of silence observed at the end.
- Clarification of facts:** name, age, grade level, date and manner of death. If the manner of death is being investigated (e.g. murder, suicide), consult with the police regarding what can be shared.
- Background of the Student:** names of schools recently attended, extra curricular activities, hobbies, favourite subjects, part time jobs, etc.
- Personal remarks:** relay some of the positive remarks of staff/students. The deceased will always be remembered. If there is no personal information, speak in general terms about the loss of a young life and the value of the brief time spent together.
- Concluding Remarks:** recognize the emotions arising from the situation, the need to support one another, that expressions of grief are normal and the importance of recognizing the value of the person's life.

Recognizing the Individual(s)

Students, teachers, parents and sometimes other interest groups will express their desire to recognize the individual(s) involved in the critical incident. People have a need to show that they care, and it is important to provide appropriate opportunities within schools to demonstrate this caring in a positive way. Assemblies, cards to the families involved, a book of memories and tribute in a newsletter are some of those ways. As students, staff, and community look for ways to express their feelings, they should be aware of the wishes of the families involved, and the recommended procedures or protocol around particular critical incidents. As one provides direction to the many groups a school serves, it sometimes becomes necessary to educate those groups about what not only could be done, but in some cases, what will be done. Recognizing individuals involved in a critical incident should be accomplished in a supportive and sensitive manner, and that sometimes requires considerable dialogue.

A critical incident within a school raises anxiety which requires educators and members of the community to work in partnership to cope with the critical incident.
School and Central Office staff must work effectively with the media to ensure that the media become a positive force in responding to the tragedy.

Specific Recommendations

- The Director or his/her designate should assume responsibility for media who contact the school. All school personnel should be informed that all contacts from the media should be directed to the designate spokesperson.
- The designated spokesperson should attempt to gather as much factual information as possible. Factual information will help to decrease anxiety and dispel rumours. Care must be taken to avoid release of unauthorized information.

Prepare a written statement outlining the information that can be shared.

- Be open to contact with the media. The designated spokesperson is in a position to give responsible information about the critical incident. If the spokesperson is unavailable or perceived by the media as not open to communication, members of the media will turn to other sources of information such as students. This may be counterproductive to school personnel managing the critical incident and its aftermath.
- Using the phrase "no comment" may be perceived as withholding information. If a media inquiry cannot be addressed, provide the reason which it cannot be answered. Never speak "off the record" or give exclusive interviews. Give the information that you need to give even if the right question is not asked.

SAMPLE COMMENT TO MEDIA (Director only)

Our school community has been saddened by the death of _____ , a student(s)/staff member(s) at _____ . The cause of death is reported to be _____.

Members of the Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) Team have responded to our request for support in coping with our grief. The CISM Team will work with students and staff in our school to help them discuss their feelings and cope with this loss.

(Name of staff member) will be available for updated information regarding this incident. I ask that members of the media respect our need for privacy. Please do not attempt to interview students and staff at this time.

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

WESTMOUNT ELEMENTARY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

Mrs. Mercereau's Death

Our school is experiencing the sorrow which comes with the loss of one of our family members. Mrs. Sherri Mercereau, our secretary, met with a sudden, tragic death last Friday.

This morning all teachers in our school discussed this event with students, gave them time to express their feelings and helped students to deal with the incident. We are fortunate to have Ms. Colleen Kohler, and Mrs. Leanne Smithson, school counsellors, here to assist students and staff.

Our thoughts, prayers and sympathies go out to friends and family members. Mrs. Mercereau will be remembered for her friendliness to students, parents and staff.

A memorial service will be held on Wednesday, March 10/93 at 10:00 am from Park Funeral Chapel, 311 Third Avenue North.

WESTMOUNT COMMUNITY SCHOOL NEWSLETTER

A Tribute to a Little Boy

On Thursday evening at 9:00 p.m. Ryan Taniskishayinew was struck by a car as he crossed 22nd Street at Avenue E. Ryan was taken to Royal University Hospital. Friday afternoon Ryan died.

Ryan Taniskishayinew was a six-year old, Grade One student in Ms. Clarke's class at Westmount Elementary School. We are saddened by this tragic loss of life and the death of a member of our school family.

Ryan was an energetic little boy who always arrived at Westmount Elementary School with a smile and enthusiasm. He was often one of the first students at school and one of the last to leave. He was known as the little boy who greeted guests by holding the front door open and welcoming them to Westmount Elementary School. He enjoyed playing hockey on the rink, attending after school activities, visiting with the staff, and listening to stories at the Breakfast with Books Club.

The staff of Westmount Elementary School wishes to extend our deepest sympathy to Ryan's parents, his brother Terence, and his sisters Chassidy and Amanda.

Westmount Elementary School is a family of students and staff. We will all be experiencing grief with this tragic death. Normal emotions of shock, regret, anger, and grief will be felt by students and staff. We recognize this and we will be assisted in dealing with Ryan's death by a team of trained counsellors who will be at our school during the next few days.

We would encourage parents to talk with their children and invite you to contact the school if you have concerns.

Terry Scott
Jackie Flow
On behalf of the staff of
Westmount Elementary School

SCHOOL LETTERHEAD

WESTMOUNT ELEMENTARY — SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

This morning we had a brief staff meeting and a general assembly with all students. Information about the death of _____ was shared with children and strategies for dealing with grief are well underway. Collectively we are making up a scrapbook of memories for the parents. Our teachers continue to work with our children in a very warm and caring way ...I thank them for that.

On behalf of all students and teachers at Westmount Elementary School, I would like to thank all of you for your continued support as we work to assist your children. It is our wish that your holiday season be joyful and safe.

Principal