



Dolores School District RE-4A
Scott Cooper, Superintendent
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November 7, 2016

Dear Parents:

Our school community, and our community at large, is shocked and deeply saddened by the death of one of our 6th grade students. Her presence will be deeply missed.

This news for some students will be very distressing. We recognize that just seeing other children and adults saddened can be equally upsetting. We are taking the following steps to assist our grieving students and staff. Staff members and counselors worked with all classrooms today providing opportunities to talk about their feelings and offer support. Sixth grade classrooms spent the morning engaged in specific activities to help them process their thoughts and feelings. We have kept routine and structure to our day, while remaining flexible to the needs of the students and staff. Counselors will be available on campus this week and for as long as our students need.

Like adults, children handle grief in different ways. They may cry excessively, become easily agitated, experience nightmares, or show little emotion, perhaps causing you to wonder if they were upset at all. Please share with your child that grief is a normal response to a great loss and there is no right or wrong way to feel it.

What can you do to support your child?

- **Keep their routine.** In unsure times, it is very comforting for children to follow their routine so they can predict their day. Ensure they get plenty of sleep and healthy foods.
- **Be available.** Let children know you are available to talk, listen and answer their questions. Don't be afraid to say, "I don't know." Keep your answers simple and at their level of understanding. Since all people process events differently, recognize their response to this situation may not come for several days, or in some cases, weeks.
- **Watch them.** Listen to what they are saying, drawing and playing. This is how children express what is on their mind, and in their heart. Provide an avenue for these outlets.
- **Watch for warning signs.** All of us move through the 5 stages of grief (denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance) at our own pace, and in any order. Some of us, for a variety of reasons, can get stuck in a stage and may need some help from a professional to move through it.

As a community, we will support and care for each other through this. There is additional information on grief and community resources on our website. Please do not hesitate to call us for information or support.

Karen Finch, School Counselor

Elementary 970-882-4688 Middle School/High School 970-882-7288 Preschool 970-882-7277