

Pittsford Central School District

Commemoration Guidelines

A school commemoration is intended to bring closure to a period of grieving and serves as a point from which to move on. Commemorations should reflect the needs of the school community while being respectful to the deceased individual and his/her family.

For each commemoration, it is important to consider the precedent that is being set and the implications, both short- and long-term. These guidelines are intended to assist building administrators in concert with Trauma, Illness and Grief (TIG) response teams. These leaders may work with families and/or assist individuals or groups who want to commemorate students and staff. Commemorations will be permitted for Pittsford students/alumni/staff for one year post-graduation. This includes deceased students who left the district for other reasons, including employment, military duty, or a family move.

The final planning of commemorations should take place three to six months from when the immediate impact of the loss has subsided. Commemoration requests should be made through an application process (see attached form) to the District TIG Team, who will include the Director of Students Services, Building Principal, building TIG team members, the Director of Building and Grounds and others as appropriate. The District TIG Team will consider commemoration requests in the context of district guidelines and in consultation with both impacted faculty and the family of the deceased. The team will also assemble a commemoration committee.

Temporary memorials may be established by administrators in consultation with the Commemoration Team. Temporary memorials may be created and maintained for up to five school days or when a natural break occurs in the school calendar. Items left at the temporary memorial may be shared with the family. A variety of factors should be considered regarding removal of temporary memorials, including the magnitude of trauma, general psychological readiness of the family, peers and staff, and the location of the memorial.

In the event of the loss of a member of the Pittsford School Community, communication with students' parents/guardians will be sent recommending that families support their children through the grief process and will direct parents to the district website where pertinent information about grieving resides. In the event of a large scale tragedy, additional support may be requested and approved through building and district administration.

Faculty members may choose to attend funerals or calling hours or may volunteer to become part of a delegation representing the district. In the event a faculty member attends a funeral or calling hours outside of the school day he/she will not be expected to supervise or intervene with students since ceremonies outside of the school district are private functions. Others who choose to attend, independent of any district delegation, will do so by utilizing their personal time.

Activities and support in the classroom to address the loss will be provided with the support of the building TIG team, counselors, social workers, psychologists and administrators.

The District TIG Team will respond in a timely fashion to any commemorative requests. Commemoration requests will be considered through submission of the Commemoration Request Form to the Coordinator of the District TIG Team who will assemble a Commemoration Committee to review all requests.

Commemorations

The district reserves the right to accept or reject any and all commemorations donated or purchased in memory of a student or staff member. Furthermore, the school reserves the right to cause any/all commemorations currently on school property to be respectfully disassembled.

Suggested Commemorations Include:

1. The purchase of library books, school supplies and equipment with the approval of the building administrator. Donated books may include a book plate and other items may include an engraved plate no larger than two by six inches. Wording on the plates will be limited to, "Donated in memory of..." Or "In memory of..." along with the student/staff member's legal name, and year of donation. Any engraved plate, other than bookplates, may be removed at the end of five (5) years and will be offered to the family.
2. Contributions by students/staff to memorials designated by the family, e.g., KEEP Foundation, Pittsford School Scholarship Fund, Pittsford Alliance for Substance Free Youth, or Pittsford Youth Services.
3. Contributions to scholarships established in the name of student/staff through the Pittsford Central School District.

In addition to the above listed suggested commemorations, singular events may also be considered. Singular events are intended for the dual purpose of both memorializing and providing closure. Singular events such as acts of community service, development of creative expressive works including artwork, concerts, and films may also be included in the request process.

If the Director of Building and Grounds determines that an existing living commemoration needs to be removed due to weather, damage, or other reason, plaques or markers will be returned to the family whenever possible.

Unacceptable commemorations include those which may:

1. Violate Title IX or other federal guidelines.
2. Contradict our school district's mission.
3. Significantly alter the conduct of a regular school instructional day.
4. Significantly alter school activities or the school activities schedule.
5. Require the retirement or discontinued use of school property. This may include such items as sport team jerseys or uniform numbers.

6. Be permanent, such as monuments and statues.
7. Infringe on the separation of church and state.
8. Require the use of public funds for purchase, development or maintenance beyond the normal care and maintenance of school properties.
9. Any item that is affixed to the building (e.g., plaques or permanent landscaping including gardens and trees).

The District discourages living memorials, such as trees due to the maintenance and life span. Placement of such memorials has the potential to limit future building projects and diminish safety sight lines.

The location of any commemoration is at the discretion of the District Commemoration Committee.

Yearbook guidelines:

1. Appropriate space may be designated in commemoration of students/staff members, past and present. This space will include a uniform size picture of each student/staff member, if available, along with the deceased legal name and dates of birth and death as deemed appropriate.
2. If there is a death after the printing of the yearbook and the student has not graduated, the student's photograph may appear in the next year's yearbook or in the year the student would have graduated.
3. A deceased student/staff member's photograph, if available, may be included with the photographs of other students/staff in the class for the year covered by the yearbook.

Commencement Ceremony guidelines:

1. Commencement is a time to recognize the many years of work and achievement of the seniors, therefore, efforts to maintain a sober yet joyful event are essential to the planning of the ceremony.
2. If the name of the deceased student is read, it should be read in the same order that it would have been read if the student were graduating. If appropriate, the principal may approve a commemoration that aligns with the primary purpose of the graduation ceremony and is of suitable length of time in balance with the rest of the ceremony.
3. If a student passes away in the senior year prior to graduation but has met the graduation requirements, a posthumous diploma may be awarded if the family indicates they wish to participate in the commencement ceremony.
4. If a student passes away in the senior year prior to graduation but has not met the graduation requirements, a certificate of attendance may be awarded if the family indicates they wish to participate in the commencement ceremony.
5. If the family wishes to participate by either receiving a diploma or a certificate of attendance, the name of the deceased should be read and the diploma or certificate should be presented to the family by a staff member. The family shall sit in a designated area for the presentation.

Existing Commemorations:

Any commemoration in existence at the time these guidelines are adopted, whether in compliance with these guidelines or not, will remain unfettered. However, all future commemorations including temporary memorial requests will abide by these procedures and recommendations.

Notice of Address Change:

Family members of deceased student/staff members are requested to inform the school of any address changes to enable the district to return any commemorations to them. The district will make a reasonable effort to return all commemorations to the family with due diligence at the conclusion of five years. If the family is unable to be located, the commemorative items will be disposed of with respect and dignity.

Scholarship Guidelines:

Pittsford Central School District will accept scholarships at the request of the family. A scholarship is a gift to the district, and is guided by board policy 5520. Families will be asked to complete the Gifts to District form (5230F), indicating the benefactor(s) of the funds and details related to its use and purpose. The scholarship will become district property that is in trust form with a specific use.