

SUICIDE OF STUDENT #3

(Date)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

You may have been informed by your son or daughter that a (school name) student died last week. Whenever we experience a tragedy like this, we are left with the responsibility to find an appropriate response. As a school, we have made every effort to respond to the needs of all of our students. Which would include providing the resources for them to deal with their issues of shock, grief, and bereavement. The (school name) family, staff, and students alike, came together during this crisis and responded to the situation with caring, concern, and attention to the needs of one another. We can be proud of the ways in which our students have rallied to be supportive of each other. I have attached a list of things that all parents should be aware of if and when their child is experiencing grief about the death of someone they love and care about. Included are signs that indicate the student isn't coping well. (Attach signs of suicide from local crisis line/mental health agency.)

Even though we often deal with students who are depressed, an event like this one heightens our awareness of how much at risk some of our students really are. Certain factors place students at greater risk for suicide. And there are specific signals that we, as parents and educators, can look for when a young person is under stress and appears to be having difficulty coping. I have included an attachment about this with this letter. (Attach signs of depression from local crisis line/mental health agency.)

The third issue that needs to be addressed is one of substance abuse. It is important to be clear that not all kids who talk about suicide use drugs. And not all students who use/abuse drugs are suicidal. However, every list of warning signs and risk factors for suicide emphasizes substance abuse as one of the most important red flags. While we are very aware that (school name), like any other high school, has its share of students who use alcohol and other drugs, it has come to our attention recently that there seems to be an increase not only in the number of students who are using, but in the amount and variety of drugs that are being used. There has been an increase in risky behavior among some of our students, and we want to make parents aware of what they should look for. An attachment regarding substance abuse information has been included, but it is important to emphasize that students are using over-the-counter medications in very harmful and dangerous ways. It is crucial to remember that any use of alcohol or drugs by young people is unacceptable, and that parents need to be aware of where their children are and whom they are spending time with. Supervision is crucial. (Attach substance Abuse info from counselor.)

The (school name) staff as a whole is doing everything possible to respond to this crisis. We also have plans to continue with drug and alcohol education at all grade levels, as we have always done. All of the counselors deal with these issues with students, both individually and in groups. Please feel free to call any of our counselors with your questions or concerns at (phone number). You may also reach administrators by calling (phone number). Your child's counselor also can direct you, if needed, to other resources in the community.

Thank you for your support,

(Principal name)
Principal