

PORT ANGELES SCHOOL DISTRICT

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Board of Directors • Steve Baxter • Dr. Patti Happe • Cindy Kelly • Lonnie Linn • Sarah Methner

February 7, 2011

Dear Parent or Guardian:

It is with great regret that we inform you that one of our Port Angeles High School students passed away this weekend. This second tragedy occurred even as we are still working to help students heal from the recent loss of another student in January.

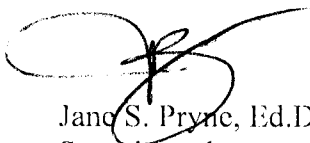
In response to this latest crisis, we have brought in extra counselors to provide support and attention to students and staff. We have also reached out to the family of the student to offer our condolences and support. The Port Angeles School District community continues to pull together to respond to the situation with sensitivity and caring as we attend to students' emotional needs. Our counselors and administrators are working closely with community agencies to ensure the safety and welfare of every student.

Included on the reverse side is a list that parents should be aware of when their child is experiencing grief about the death of someone they know. Also, included are signs that the student isn't coping well.

Additionally, we would like to reach out to parents who may have questions or desire information about how best to respond and support your children. There is a meeting scheduled for parents on Thursday, February 10, 2011 from 4 pm -5 pm in the Port Angeles High School Library to receive information, and have questions answered. Counselors, administrators, and suicide prevention educators will be available at this meeting.

The Port Angeles School District staff is doing everything possible to respond to this newest crisis. Please feel free to call any of our counselors with your questions or concerns. They can be reached at 565-1562. Your child's counselor can also direct you to other community resources, if needed. You may also reach administrators by calling 565-3700.

Sincerely,



Jane S. Pryne, Ed.D.
Superintendent

Dr. Jane Pryne
Superintendent

Michelle Reid
Assistant Superintendent
Teaching and Learning

James Schwob, CPA
Executive Director
Business & Operations

Annette Dotlich
Director
Human Resources

Helping The Grieving Student

Common Behaviors to Expect

- Withdrawal from parents and other adults
- Angry outbursts
- Increased risk-taking behaviors (substances, reckless driving, sexual behaviors)
- Pushing the limits of rules
- Lack of concentration; inability to focus
- Hanging out with a small group of friends
- Sad face, evidence of crying
- Sleepiness, exhaustion

How to Help

- Allow for regression and dependency
- Encourage expression of feeling such as sorrow, anger, guilt, regret
- Understand and allow for variation in maturity level
- Answer questions honestly and provide factual information
- Model appropriate responses, showing the students your own grief
- Avoid power struggles and allow choices
- Help students understand and resolve feelings of helplessness
- Assist students with plans for completion of assignments
- Allow for some flexibility in assignments, e.g. be willing to adapt assignments to topics relevant to the student's current experience

Common Mistakes: Words and Actions to Avoid

The following words and actions can be harmful to children and teens

- **DO NOT** suggest that the student has grieved long enough
- **DO NOT** indicate that the student should get over it and move on
- **DO NOT** expect the student to complete all assignments on a timely basis
- **DO NOT** act as if nothing has happened
- **DO NOT** say things like:
 - "It could be worse, you still have one brother."
 - "I know how you feel."
 - "You'll be stronger because of this."