**LETTER AFTER CHILD DEATH FROM LONG ILLNESS**

Dear Parents/Guardians,

We are writing to let you know of the recent passing of [Name}. [Name] was a sweet, courageous and joyful [Detail] grade student at [Name of School]. As many of you may have known, [Name] had a very rare form of [Specific detail] and had been in treatment since [Detail ]. We learned today that [Name] passed away with his/her family by his/her side. [Name’s] sister, [Name] is in [Detail] grade and her older brother, [Name] is in[Detail] grade. This loss is unimaginable to all of us and we extend our heartfelt sympathy to the family and friends of [Family Name].

We want to let you know that we are working with [If applicable, provide outside resource] to provide our community with support and resources to help all of us during this difficult time. More information will follow regarding times and dates for support for parents and staff. Tomorrow, we will begin talking with our students about [Name’s] passing. Mrs. [Name] , our school counselor, will meet with [Name’s] and [Name’s] classes. The purpose of these meeting will be to support the students, answer any questions they may have and find ways to help them begin processing and healing. In [Name’s] class, we will also be exploring ways we can welcome him/her back when he/she is ready to return to school. Counselors from our other schools in [City/Town] will be present as well in the event that a student needs additional support during these discussions. If you do not wish to have your child present for these discussions, please write a note to the teacher requesting that we find an alternative activity for your child at that time.

Counselors will also support classroom teachers in grades [Detail] while they talk about [Name’s] passing as we recognize that many of our students and staff have been touched by [Name] and her family during this time. At this time, we will not be conducting class discussions with our kindergarten, first and second grade students. If you are a parent of a kindergarten, first or second grade student who you feel may need some support, please contact our adjustment counselor.

More information regarding a presentation from [Outside Resource, if applicable] for parents will follow.

[Name] shared his/her enthusiasm for learning and play with us for too short of a time. [He/She] connected the [Name of School] community during his/her illness and showed us what it means to be brave and strong. We will miss [his/her] smile, giggle and [his/her] beautiful spirit and feel honored to have known [him/her].

Thank you for your support as we work to provide support for the [Name] family, your children and our staff during this very difficult time.

Sincerely,

**LETTER TO PARENTS AFTER PARENT DEATH**

Dear Parents,

We are writing to let you know of the recent and unexpected passing of the mother of one of your child’s classmates. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s mother passed away after a lengthy battle with a serious medical condition. Because this classmate is talking about her mother’s death at school, we believe that it is important for you as parents to know what the teachers are saying to the children. This may also be helpful to answer some of your questions of how to respond to your child if they ask you questions about this child’s mother or death in general.

To begin, it is important that you know we respect the fact that families have their own beliefs related to death. Our goal is not to explain religious or cultural beliefs. Parents best explain personal beliefs. Our goal is to provide simple explanations that do not raise undue anxiety for our students. Today, Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_, our school counselor, visited with Mrs. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_’s class to have a conversation about how we can best support \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ as a classroom and school community. All of the children showed a great deal of empathy and thoughtfulness for \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ and her family and we are so proud of their maturity and ability to participate in such a difficult conversation. They did not ask many questions but did want to know how they could support their peer. We talked about making sympathy cards for her family, telling \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ how sorry they were for her loss and other ways we could support her. We also talked about how just being a good friend and classmate during this difficult time might help to support her.

As a school, we will send flowers to the family on behalf of our entire school community and we will continue to offer them support at this time of loss and grieving. If you have any questions, please feel free to call our adjustment counselor, your child’s teacher or myself.

Sincerely,

Principal School Adjustment Counselor

Classroom Teacher

**LETTER TO PARENTS AFTER SANDY HOOK (POSSIBLY USEFUL LANGUAGE IN EVENT OF SCHOOL SHOOTING)**

This has been a difficult weekend for all of us with close connections to elementary schools. All of us can envision (and yet can’t possibly envision) the tragedy and feel a strong connection to the Sandy Hook school community. I can’t possibly begin to imagine the pain the families and staff will endure in the coming weeks and we join the entire nation in disbelief and prayers for the families and friends of the children and teachers who were killed.

The tragedy at Sandy Hook will lead all schools to revisit the security procedures in our buildings and here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ we will do the same. We have worked closely with the \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Police Department to implement the schools critical incident response and safety plan. We will once again conduct formal practice of our lockdown, secure room and evacuation procedures as we have each year. I want to reassure all parents and families that safety and security is paramount in our school. Our safety procedures comprise several measures including all exterior doors remaining locked when school is in session, controlled access to the main entrance, and training and practice for staff protocols in the event of an emergency.

As for our response on Monday morning to our students, it is very important that we work together to reassure them that we can and will keep them safe in our school. There are no sound explanations about what occurred at the Sandy Hook Elementary School in Connecticut. The students may have questions and we will address them in a developmentally appropriate way. We are aware that some children may have no knowledge of this event. Families have been encouraged by both the media and experts to limit exposure to such tragedies for young children. As a building staff, we will follow this advice and will not be initiating group discussions in our classrooms. We will begin our day on Monday as we do every Monday, with a school wide morning meeting. I do not plan to change our routine in any way, but have taken the opportunity to review all our safety procedures with staff. All staff will be in the gym with their classes and will be keeping a close eye out for any children that may be struggling. Additionally, our school counselor and myself, along with other available staff will be in the lobby to greet children and welcome them in. If your child is experiencing difficulty related to the tragedy, please feel free to let us know. If we notice students struggling throughout the school day, we will contact you and work with you to help them.

While it is unimaginable that such a tragedy occurred in an elementary school so close to home, we must remember that it is unlikely that a similar occurrence would happen here at \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_. Nonetheless, we maintain strict adherence to security procedures and continue to ensure our students that our school is a safe place to be. There are not words that can explain the unexplainable. We will work together to reassure our students, staff and each other that while things happened that we cannot control, we will do our best to provide a safe and happy place to learn and play.

Principal