Dear Families,

Today we received extremely tragic news. We learned of the death of STUDENT NAME , a grade GRADE student at SCHOOL, who died by suicide on the weekend.

We have the help of our Board Office staff who will be helping teachers announce the sad news with the students in Block 1 class tomorrow. They will also staff a room for students to go to if they need a little extra time for expressing their grief with others*.*

Although we have been in contact with the family, we have no news to share at this time, about any funeral arrangements. We will have a school memory event next week, with students close to STUDENT involved in the planning, and will share that information with students when it has been arranged. If you have any questions about this event or supports available to students, please contact the school at XXX-XXX-XXXX. We have also attached the script that will be read out in class tomorrow, so you are clear as to how and what information will be shared.

This event might bring up questions, concerns or fears for your child.

* Be sensitive about whether she or he is wanting to talk.
* Bring it up in case she or he is reluctant to do so.
* Ask about his or her reactions and ***accept those feelings as stated***. Resist the temptation to minimize the pain, deny the feeling or give advice. ***Simply listen and provide empathy.*** Helpful responses on your part:
  + *“Tell me more about that.”*
  + *“Have you ever felt that way before?” (Guess feelings and needs?)*
  + *“I wonder if there are other things that are worrying you?”*
* Allow some silence and processing time for youth.
* Be emotionally available and non-judgemental.
* Realize that kids move in and out of the grief process, but it is very intense for them when they’re experiencing the sadness, anxiety and fear. Encourage them to go out and have fun, get noisy, be active and celebrate life. Those periods of reprieve are important in sustaining health and in recovery. Allow them to move in and out of grieving at their own pace.
* Remember the importance of humour, laughter, joking
* Support finding healthy coping tools while avoiding less healthy tools that include social media speculation and gossip.
* Other resources to support youth can be found on the Esquimalt Web site, under “counselling”.

We will update you with new information as we receive it, by email.

Sincerely,

SCHOOL PRINCIPAL