

May 29, 2017

Dear Parents / Guardians:

It has been a very tough day for the Burnsview community as we grieve together. As Principal, I'm so proud of our students and staff for being so supportive of each other during such a difficult time.

Recognizing that our healing as a community is just beginning, we will continue to provide any supports that students and staff need as we move forward into the coming days / weeks. We have set up the Library as a counselling and gathering centre where students have been writing messages to Mitchell's family on a banner. The banner and the many bouquets of flowers will be brought to Mitchell's family sometime in the next several days. The family has planned a memorial service for Mitchell on Friday, June 2nd at 11:30 at Immaculate Conception Church.

Counselling supports will continue to be in place and the counselling team will be making both group and personal counselling available to all students who need any type of support. Group sessions will run in the Library at 10:00 and 12:05.

We have an assembly planned for Wednesday this week with the group "Robb Nash" that was pre-planned several months ago. This assembly addresses issues related to youth mental health and the difficult topic of helping students who may be considering suicide. Our counselling team has discussed the timing of this assembly and we collectively feel that it will be beneficial to students and staff. More information can be accessed on the group's website: <https://www.robbnash.com>.

In the coming days, you can expect that your child may want to discuss their feelings at home and this can be difficult for many of us as adults to talk about. Below are some brief tips that might help you in these difficult conversations:

- Be Yourself – Demonstrate your natural concern calmly and in your own words.
- Be Available – "Check in" and spend time with your child. Attempt to engage your child by reading, walking, going to a movie, etc.
- Listen – Let your child express his/her thoughts, concerns, feelings and perceptions in a non-judgmental, emotionally safe environment.
- Explain – Talk about what you know in short, truthful statements. Don't be afraid to admit that you do not have all the answers. Do not speculate.
- Develop Resiliency – Your child will look to you for reassurance. Do not convey your own feelings of hopelessness, but rather let your child know that they will get through this difficult period. Provide Comfort – Physical and verbal comforts are great healers.

- Maintain Regular Routines – As much as is possible, attempt to provide normalcy to your child. Humans are creatures of habit and derive comfort from regular routines.
- Monitor Social Media Exposure – monitor your child's use of social media (Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram). This can add to the stressors of such a situation.
- Seek Additional Support – When appropriate your child should be directed to community support agencies. See information under Counselling on our website.

Please don't hesitate to contact us if you have any concerns.

Thank you so much for your on-going support to our school community.

Sincerely,



Don Younger
Principal