

Dear Fairfield Community,

This is a follow-up to my December 27 correspondence. Today, I was able to connect with the family and obtain permission to release information to the public regarding the tragic loss of one of our students.

Our beloved student, Mark Ibrahim, was a kind, fun-loving, personable, and caring 7-year-old 2<sup>nd</sup> grade boy. His smile lit up any room or hallway he was in. The entire school community is heartbroken as we mourn Mark's passing. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family during this unimaginable time.

At this moment, I would like to share some information regarding Mark's passing, (shared with the permission of Mark's family). Mark passed away due to complications related to a previous infection of Covid-19. It is important to note that at the time of Mark's passing, he tested negative for Covid-19.

Services have already been held for Mark. Many are asking how they may pay their respects. If anyone would like to give something to the family, you may have it dropped off to Stevenson School, and we will arrange for delivery to the family. We are making every effort to respect the family's privacy while they grieve this tremendous loss. In the very near future, the school district will be sending out information regarding how we plan to honor Mark's memory.

In an effort to prepare for the emotional return to school on Monday, January 3, the Fairfield School District will operate on a 2-hour delayed opening schedule for students. Morning preschool will be cancelled. During the 2-hour delayed opening for students, the entire district's staff will receive grief counseling/training prior to our students arriving at 10:35 AM.

We recognize that your child may experience a variety of feelings related to death and dying. Accepting and validating your son's/daughter's feelings is beneficial. During the weeks and months ahead, confusing feelings may surface periodically. It is helpful for them to discuss their feelings with a parent or trusted adults.

As a district, we encourage you to listen carefully to your son or daughter. Professionals suggest answering questions openly and honestly if they occur, and letting them know that even adults do not have all the answers concerning questions about death.

On Monday, counselors from the schools will be available for your children. I am grateful to the West Essex Regional School District for lending us a few of their counselors to be on campus on Monday to assist with anyone who may be struggling with the loss. Also, a counselor will be assigned in Mark's homeroom to assist throughout the day. Prior to returning to school on Monday, if you or child needs to speak to someone, please refer to the list of resources below:

Traumatic Loss Coalitions for Youth (Essex County)

Arlene O'Connell, LPC Rutgers UBHC

973-239-5382

[aoclpc@gmail.com](mailto:aoclpc@gmail.com)

Dr. Jennifer Singh, School Psychologist

Fairfield Public Schools

[singhj@fpsk6.org](mailto:singhj@fpsk6.org)

NJ Mental Health Cares Helpline

866-202-HELP (4357)

GOOD GRIEF

38 Elm St

Morristown, NJ 07960

908-522-1999

Clifton Behavioral Healthcare  
777 Bloomfield Ave  
Clifton, NJ 07012  
973-594-0125

Pathways Counseling Center, Inc.  
16 Pompton Avenue  
Pompton Lakes, NJ 07442  
973-835-6337

Grief Speaks  
Lisa Athans  
Lisa@griefspeaks.com  
973-985-4503

Below are some resources that may be beneficial in assisting you to understand the grieving process from a child's point of view and to open the lines of communication:

- **National Association of School Psychologists – Stages of grief and grief reactions**  
[http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis\\_safety/deathgrief.pdf](http://www.nasponline.org/resources/crisis_safety/deathgrief.pdf)
- **Resources for Teens**  
<https://www.tdcschooltoolkit.org/teens>
- **How to help a grieving friend**  
[https://www.dougy.org/docs/Your\\_Friend\\_is\\_Grieving.pdf](https://www.dougy.org/docs/Your_Friend_is_Grieving.pdf)
- **Grief is Good TedX**  
<https://youtu.be/snbc6jg0Oro>

Also, below is a link to the Mental Health Association in New Jersey support group calendar. It is our hope that these groups may provide some comfort during this difficult time.

<https://www.mhanj.org/content/uploads/2021/11/Dec-2021-NJHH-virtual-schedule.pdf>

I encourage you to utilize one of these resources, should you and/or your child need support. Also, please contact me if you have difficulty in obtaining counseling services at [ciccotellis@fpsk6.org](mailto:ciccotellis@fpsk6.org). I will do my absolute best to connect you to the appropriate professional.

In this extremely sad time, it is important that we pull together to support one another. Thank you for your ongoing support and please continue to keep the Ibrahim family in your thoughts and prayers.

With a very heavy heart,

Dr. Ciccotelli  
Superintendent