**Sample message to be delivered to students by staff when death by suicide has been confirmed**

***This message is designed to be presented by a familiar teacher or staff member to students in small groups such as homeroom or first period class.***

With great sadness, I am here to tell you that one of your classmates/teachers/school staff, [NAME], has died by suicide (if suicide is presumed by the authorities and family based on the circumstance of the death, such as death by self-inflicted gunshot with a suicide note found at the scene, then summarize cause of death and say it is presumed to be suicide – “died by a gunshot wound that is presumed to be due to suicide”) on (INSERT DATE or time such as “last night”). Whenever people take their own life, it leaves all of us with many questions and feelings. I want you to know that all of our teachers and staff are here to help in any way we can.

Suicide can be difficult to understand. It is usually the result of a mental illness, particularly depression. When people are very depressed, they have a hard time thinking clearly and often cannot make good choices or decisions. They may see death as the only solution to whatever problems they are facing. Sometimes people will show signs that something is wrong like talking about hurting themself or showing major changes in their behavior. But sometimes, there are no obvious signs that anything is wrong before they take their life. No matter what, it is very important to know that there are ways to help and that suicide should never be an option.

I understand that many of you may have upsetting feelings and questions about (INSERT name of deceased)’s death. If you would like, we will take the remainder, or a portion, of this class period to talk and answer your questions. At times like this, it is okay to have many different feelings, including sadness, anger, guilt and disbelief. It is okay to cry. Together, we can discuss whatever you may be feeling or want to talk about. If I cannot answer your questions, or you would like to talk to someone privately, there are support rooms available (INSERT where support rooms are located). Anyone who would like to go to talk to someone in the support rooms may do so now. I will give you a pass.

*Determine which students would like to leave to visit a support room. Ask the remaining students if they have any questions or comments they would like to share. Take time to answer their questions and talk with them about what has occurred and how they are doing.*

*Be sure to remind students of the resources, such as Support Rooms and counseling staff, which are available in the school to help them with their own feelings or if they have concerns about their friends; be sure to include the phone number of a 24-hour suicide support helpline. Emphasize that students should not keep private if their peers share that they are depressed or thinking about harming themselves – they need to share this information with a trusted adult (such as a school counselor) who will keep the information confidential, but make sure that any student who needs help will receive it.*

*If there is not lengthy discussion, consider quiet seat work rather than continuing with the lesson plan as usual.*

**If the cause of death has not yet been confirmed as suicide and the family does not wish suicide to be discussed as the cause**

***This message is designed to be presented by a familiar teacher or staff member to students in small groups such as homeroom or first period class.***

With great sadness, I am here to tell you that one of your classmates/teachers/school staff, [NAME], has died by (INSERT CAUSE OF DEATH such as “was struck by a train while crossing the railroad tracks”) on (INSERT DATE or time such as “last night”).

We understand that there have been rumors that [NAME]’s death was by suicide. The cause of [NAME]’s death has not yet been determined and therefore we do not know whether or not it was due to suicide. We ask that you do not contribute to these rumors as there is the possibility of spreading information that is wrong, making the death all the more difficult to cope with for [NAME]’s family and friends. As information that can be shared becomes available, we will do our best to share this with you.

Since there have been questions raised about suicide and we know this is an important topic, perhaps we can talk very briefly about suicide. Suicide is usually the result of a mental illness, particularly depression. When people are very depressed, they have a hard time thinking clearly and often cannot make good choices or decisions. They may see death as the only solution to whatever problems they are facing. Sometimes people will show signs that something is wrong like talking about hurting themself or showing major changes in their behavior. But sometimes, there are no obvious signs that anything is wrong before they take their life. No matter what, it is very important to know that there are ways to help and that suicide should never be an option. We do not know the cause of [NAMES]’s death, but did not want to ignore questions or concerns that some of you may have about depression or suicide.

I understand that many of you may have upsetting feelings and questions about (INSERT name of deceased)’s death. If you would like, we will take the remainder, or a portion, of this class period to talk and answer your questions. At times like this, it is okay to have many different feelings, including sadness, anger, guilt, and disbelief. It is okay to cry. Together, we can discuss whatever you may be feeling or want to talk about. If I cannot answer your questions, or you would like to talk to someone privately, there are support rooms available (INSERT where support rooms are located). Anyone who would like to go to talk to someone in the support rooms may do so now. I will give you a pass.

*Determine which students would like to leave to visit a support room. Ask the remaining students if they have any questions or comments they would like to share. Take time to answer their questions and talk with them about what has occurred and how they are doing.*

*Be sure to remind students of the resources, such as Support Rooms and counseling staff, that are available in the school to help them with their own feelings or if they have concerns about their friends; be sure to include the phone number of a 24-hour suicide support helpline. Emphasize that students should not keep private if their peers share that they are depressed or thinking about harming themselves – they need to share this information with a trusted adult (such as a school counselor) who will keep the information confidential, but make sure that any student who needs help will receive it. Emphasize that you do not yet know the underlying cause of the death, but will share information as it becomes publicly available.*

*If there is not lengthy discussion, consider quiet seat work rather than continuing with the lesson plan as usual.*