



PALO ALTO SENIOR HIGH SCHOOL

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Kimberly Diorio
Principal

January 26, 2015

Dear Paly Parents,

Words cannot express how heavy my heart felt as we learned about the passing of a senior at Gunn High School over the weekend. Our deepest sympathies go to his family and friends.

While this tragic event alone is saddening, it is important to acknowledge that this news, in combination with our recent experiences of other student deaths, may have a cumulative effect, even if we didn't know the students personally. As a school community, we need to take the time to process this situation fully.

In first period classes this morning, Paly teachers were instructed to speak with their students about the recent suicide and to lend support throughout the day. A script was provided and resources were made available to help teachers facilitate these important conversations with our children. Here is an excerpt of what was shared with your child:

"Since each person handles this sort of information differently, it is important that we treat each other with respect, compassion, and kindness. Sadness, anger, frustration, or anxiety are normal reactions to this kind of news. Although we don't have all the information regarding the student's situation yet, it is important to remember that suicide is a very complicated act. Sometimes there are obvious symptoms and sometimes there are not. Watching out for one another and alerting an adult when you have a concern about yourself or a friend is critical. Also, stopping any rumors that could turn out to be hurtful is important as well.

As you go through the next few days, you may find it hard to concentrate, find your feelings change or come up at varied times, and that you need to take more time to talk with your families or friends. These are normal reactions and we hope that you will reach out to a counselor on campus, if you feel you need support as you go through these experiences.

If you are worried about a friend or need to get help yourself, counselors are available to help all of us with this sad loss and to enable us to understand more about suicide. If you'd like to talk with someone, please come directly to the counseling office."

We have a host of counselors on site today and throughout the week to support students and families directly. Please encourage your child to talk about his or her feelings with you, with a staff member, or with their friends. Talking through the fear, sadness, anger or frustration they may be feeling is an important part of their healing and all feelings are valid. If you would like help on having these conversations with your child, please review the resources we have on the [PAUSD website](#) or on [Paly's Guidance Department homepage](#)

Our dedicated staff and community partners are committed to helping our families cope with this tragic situation. Please let us know if there is anything else we can do to support your child.

Warmly,

Kim

