November 10, 2014

Dear ONW Families:

I wanted to follow up with all of our families related to the tragic information we have had to share with you regarding the suicides of two students here at ONW. First I want to share with you how the events unfolded here at ONW  this morning, the action that we took immediately to support our students and staff, and most importantly , I want to leave you with a strong request that you have a very heartfelt conversation with your son or daughter this evening .

As you are aware, we opened ONW yesterday to any students in need of support or just needing a place to go and be with friends after learning on Friday evening of the death of (student’s name removed.) This morning we met with our staff at 7:30 to brief them on the incident from Friday. They were provided with resources for talking with and supporting students. Qualified counselors, social workers, school psychologists, school resource officers from ONW, other schools/community resources were available for students upon their request or if any adult noticed that a student was struggling.  Each student was told in their first hour about the death of (student’s name removed.)

After the ONW administration was notified of the death of (second student’s name removed), we asked that staff share the new information with their second hour class. After that announcement many additional students sought out the support and counsel from our crisis team of qualified personnel. Students were told that they could call their parents. Many parents called to check their students out of school.  Care was taken to ensure any student that was leaving campus had a parent with them or they were in direct contact with their parents.  Many students have remained here at school, with classes continuing as planned and with staff and resources available to them throughout the day.  We are in constant communication with those on the band trip in New York.  Please know care and support is being provided to them as well!

Here is my request for all parents for this afternoon or evening - please have a heartfelt conversation with your student about these tragedies and specifically about suicide. Have this conversation with your son or daughter tonight – you know them best.  Ask them how they are feeling, be non-judgmental, and avoid any gossip related to details of the deaths or causes. Keep communication open and maintain high supervision and knowledge of their whereabouts. It will be vital that you are closely monitoring your student's social media accounts for messages being sent and received.

Include in your conversations tonight these messages:

-          Suicide is a horrible decision and is not an option.

-          There is nothing they could have done or said to change the outcome of these tragic deaths.

-          Emphasize that suicide is not the way to handle problems, no matter how big or how painful.

-          Help is available. Talk to a parent, a teacher, any trusted adult.

-          If they know of a friend that is struggling, let an adult know as soon as possible.

ONW is here to support our students and our families in any way needed. Please do not hesitate to reach out to any of the administrators or staff. **School will be in session tomorrow.** ONW is a safe place for them to be – surrounded and supported by their teachers and friends that care deeply for each of them. Counseling and support will continue to be available for any students in need throughout the week.

We have been contacted by numerous churches and agencies.  The following will be available tonight.

Life Church – 6:00-8:00 p.m. 16111 S. Lone Elm - (913)829-7511

Grace United Methodist – 3:00-6:00 p.m. 11485 S. Ridgeview   (913) 859-0111

Again, please do not hesitate to call or email with any questions or concerns.  We are one Raven Family!

Gwen Poss, Principal​