

Hi Everyone,

First of all, we are very sorry for your loss as parents of our dear Kristin, as well as your children's loss of their Mrs. Westra, we are truly sorry for your personal loss and hope you will take care of yourselves in your own best ways.

Last Tuesday Denise spoke to the 3-5 class not only about their feelings but, what we each can do to take care of our feelings. The children were very forthcoming with their feelings, which very much mirrored our own as adults. They also were very insightful and each and every one of them had a way to take care of themselves.

We are all focusing on how to take care of ourselves and we thought it might be helpful to all of you to know our thoughts and plans at school. Also, we wanted to bring your attention to our school website, please go to it to access some resources from the Center for Grieving Children as well as some resources on how to talk with children when someone dies by suicide.

Secondly, as you can imagine, we have received an outpouring of help and offers of support that we plan to take advantage of, some resources sooner than others. One such resource is the Center for Grieving Children and another is NAMI (National Alliance on Mental Illness). Both organizations have been involved with our island previously. Erika Neumann is working on getting a commitment from the Center for Grieving Children to come to support the parents/families and details on that will follow at a later time.

We wanted to share with you some information of our thoughts/plans going forward:

We are working towards providing the students with a safe, nurturing, and predictable environment. To that end, we are planning on keeping our structure and routines of school as normal as possible. We encourage students to come to school and we will have staff ready to continue with the safety and routines of the school.

To help us meet the needs of the children, we ask for your support by dropping them off in the morning, and allowing us to meet with them in our way as a school and staff. Having additional people around or in and out of the school and classes could be distracting at this time, so we ask for your help in allowing us to be with children as we have planned. If we find that a child needs the support of a parent, we will contact you asap. We know you are the best resource to help your child when that is needed, but we will do our best to support each and every child at school as we can.

Our plan is to have a staff meeting before school starts for those scheduled to be at CIS on Tuesday, and to get on the same page with our plans and how to support each other and the children as we start the day before the students arrive. Our students will go to recess outside until 8:30, and will be under the guidance of Kevin Wentworth and our new Educational Technician Missy Smithwick.

From 8:30 - 9:00ish we will meet as a class (as we did last Tuesday, where students did an amazing job), to check in with feelings, to share ways to take care of those feelings, and to inform the children that there are individuals available to meet with anyone who may want or need to do so. Denise will be available all day and we also will have two other elementary school counselors from Yarmouth coming out and available for our students as well.

After that check in time together, students they will have class as usual (like math)

10:15 – 10:45 we will have snack recess as usual

10:45 -11:45 we will have class as usual (like reading/writing literacy)

11:45 - 12:15 we will have our lunch recess outside

12:15 - 12:45 we will have lunch time

In the afternoon will have two specials for both classes: Technology and Library

3:00 we will have dismissal

After 3:00 Mike and Denise will be at the school, and can stay late to meet with parents (or anyone) if they want to talk or just check in.

On Wednesday we have our Cow Island Field Trip – It should be sunny and warm, and our hope is the children will be able to experience the island adventure and activities and enjoy the day together as a school. We know this was Kristin's plan for the day, and we know she would want the children to still have that opportunity, and we are planning on taking the trip.

We will continue to check in, and please do not hesitate to call or e-mail with questions.

Thinking of you. Sincerely,

Denise and Mike.