



November 13, 2021

Dear Helena Public Schools Community,

Having worked as a teacher and school administrator in multiple districts, I have experienced death. Yesterday's tragic loss of a Capital High School student to suicide was one of the hardest. It happened in our front yard, causing widespread and immediate impact to our CHS students and staff. The difficulty of managing a tragic event so close to a school made the situation even more complex.

The grace and professionalism shown by our Capital High School staff in the midst of this tragedy was truly remarkable. Likewise, the swift response of local, county, and state law enforcement made it possible for our administrators and staff to focus on supporting our school community and the deceased student's family.

Yesterday's loss came at the end of a traumatic week for our HPS school community, with a fatal car accident that claimed the life of a former Helena High School student and injured three other high school students last Saturday and the suicide of a Helena High School student on Sunday. Our hearts lie with each of these families as they bear the unimaginable pain of the loss of a child. We will provide information on how to support them in the coming days. In the meantime, we must give them space to grieve and respect their privacy.

Rumors may come out about what happened, but please don't spread them. They may turn out to be untrue and can be deeply hurtful. Each of us will react to these losses in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other.

The top priority for my administrative team right now is supporting our students and staff and we continue to coordinate resources. As a new superintendent for the district, I am deeply impressed by the heartfelt and tireless support that staff from each of our two high schools have given their cross-town colleagues. Even in the wake of last weekend's losses, Helena High School counselors immediately mobilized to help at Capital High yesterday and will continue to provide support next week. Counseling staff from our K-8 schools also are being redirected to support both high schools.

Of course, the pain from these tragedies has spread well beyond our school district community. **If you're struggling emotionally, please reach out for help.** To reach the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline, please visit [Lifeline \(suicidepreventionlifeline.org\)](https://www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org); call 1-800-273-TALK; or text MT to 741-741.

Above all, I want our students to know that our counselors, teachers and administrators are here for them. If you have a high school student in your life, let them know that they can visit their counseling center or let a teacher know if they'd like to see a counselor.

We are all in this together, and we will do everything possible to help our school community through this.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rex Weltz". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large loop at the end of the last name.

Rex Weltz  
Superintendent, Helena Public Schools