Itasca Independent School District

Tonya J. Harris, Superintendent
EVERY STUDENT, EVERY DAY

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March 31, 2026

Dear Itasca ISD Parents and Guardians,

In the wake of the recent tragedy within our school family, we are all navigating a path of profound sadness. As we mourn the loss of Romeo Saldierna, a 17-year-old Itasca High School junior, our hearts remain with the family and the many students and staff members affected.

While our community mourns, the leadership at Itasca ISD—including our administration, counseling teams, and the Superintendent's office—wants to emphasize that the mental health and emotional well-being of our students is our absolute priority.

Grief does not follow a linear path, especially for teenagers and children. It can manifest as sadness, but it can also appear as anger, withdrawal, physical exhaustion, or anxiety. It is vital to recognize that mental health is just as important as physical health. A child's ability to process loss depends heavily on the support system surrounding them.

We encourage you to have intentional, open conversations with your children. Sometimes, a child may say they are "fine" to protect those around them or because they lack the words to describe their pain.

- **Ask specific questions:** Instead of "Are you okay?", try "What has been the hardest part of your day?" or "How are your friends doing?"
- **Be a calm presence:** You don't need to have all the answers. Simply listening and validating their feelings can provide immense relief.
- **Observe changes:** Look for shifts in sleep patterns, appetite, or interest in activities they usually enjoy.

If you suspect your child is struggling with depression, overwhelming anxiety, or persistent hopelessness, please do not wait to seek assistance. Early intervention is key. If you notice any of the following, please contact us or a mental health professional:

- Extreme withdrawal from friends or family.
- Expressions of overwhelming guilt or worthlessness.
- Talk of self-harm or risky behaviors.
- Inability to perform daily tasks or attend school.

Our school counselors are available on all three campuses to support your student during the school day. Additionally, we have compiled the following expert resources to help you navigate these difficult conversations at home:

Professional Support & Guidance

- **National Child Traumatic Stress Network:** Childhood Traumatic Grief Guide
- **Psychology Today:** The Do's and Don'ts of Talking to a Child About Death
- **Department of Education:** Parent Guide for Childhood Traumatic Grief
- **Find a Local Therapist:** Psychology Today Directory

"In times of grief, the strength of a community is defined by how we care for our neighbors."

We are committed to walking this journey alongside you. If you have any concerns regarding your child's well-being, please contact your campus administration or counseling office immediately.

Sincerely,

Itasca ISD Administration
Counseling Department
Tonya Harris, Superintendent