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## **Darien High School Provides Counseling for Students as the School Mourns Loss of a Third Student in the Past Two Months**

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Hayden Thorsen became the third Darien High School student to pass away in the last two months, students and staff learned this weekend.

Schools Superintendent Alan Addley released this statement Monday afternoon:

"It was with heart breaking sadness that the Darien High School community learned over the weekend of the untimely passing of Hayden Thorsen, a beloved sophomore student at the high school.

"This is the third student that the school has grieved in the past two months. The pain of losing these beautiful young lives is unbearable. It is devastating for the families, the school and the town. Our school community is understandably hurting from these tragic losses of life.

"Grief counselors were available over the weekend and will be available throughout the remainder of the week. The school is working closely with medical health professionals, the town and other agencies to support our students in the grieving process and to support their ongoing mental health.

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"As we support our student body, we remember and honor the lives of the young students who passed and continue to extend our heartfelt condolences to the parents and families of the three students."

The high school had a two-hour delayed opening on Monday "allowing for a responsive faculty meeting and planning to welcome our students to school," Dunn said in a third message to parents on Saturday.

On Saturday, DHS Principal Ellen Dunn sent a message to parents informing them of the student's passing. "As we need time to be with our families and friends, we are postponing the Junior Prom, which was planned for this evening, to June 4," Dunn wrote.

She added: "We know you join the DHS community in offering your condolences and deep sympathy to the family at this time. If your child needs immediate support, please use the Mobile Crisis response number, 211, or call 911 in case of an emergency."

In an update on Saturday, Dunn told parents and students that in addition to DHS counselors, other organizations in Darien and the surrounding area were making counselors available to students at the high school and at Darien Town Hall that day and on Sunday.

Among the crisis counselors were those from Mobile Crisis (211) at the high school and others from Darien and New Canaan town governments at Town Hall.

Dunn continued:

"A number of local community-based organizations and mental health providers have partnered with us and will be available when students and family require support during this time. The names of these resources are listed below:

—[Child Guidance Center of Southern CT](#)

—[The Center for Hope at Family Centers](#)

—A reminder that if your children require immediate support at any time in the coming weeks, please utilize [Connecticut's Mental Health Crisis Intervention Service/Mobile Crisis Intervention Service](#), which anyone can access by dialing 2-1-1."

On Monday afternoon, the school organized an online presentation for parents "in response to requests from parents for additional guidance from experts regarding recognizing the signs of mental health struggles in our children, and supporting bereavement and grief," Dunn said in a message on Sunday.

The Next Generation Science Standards Exam, originally scheduled for this Wednesday, was postponed until Thursday, June 2.

Dunn said that counseling will be available on Tuesday at the high school:

"Over the weekend we met with staff from Mobile Crisis, Child Guidance of Southern Connecticut, Sasco

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River Center, and consulted with Scott Newgass (MSW/LCSW) of the State Department of Education, formerly with the Yale Child Study Center, who has expertise in school crisis response. All have offered both condolences and guidance for the short and long term and have worked with us to structure the day tomorrow with faculty, staff, and students.

"Tomorrow [Tuesday], prior to the start of school, response teams will be working with groups of teachers to prepare them for classes. Teachers will be speaking with their students at the beginning of every class about the loss we all feel at this time and reminding them that we process and experience grief differently. Teachers have been asked to adjust their lessons on Monday and offer flexibility for students to make choices from a variety of activities. There will be no assessments on Monday.

"During the day, small groups of students will be invited, by grade, to meet with their school counselors and other support staff, in eight locations around the building. Each group will be composed of fewer than 50 students which will allow us to offer guidance, support, and strategies for self care as well as reminders about whom to reach out to with concerns for self and others."