



February 22, 2021

Dear Heritage Students, Staff, and Families:

It is with heartfelt sadness that I inform you that we just found out that Dr. Mark McKenna, Family and Consumer Science Teacher, passed away due to a suspected medical issue. We do not have any other details at this time, but we have been in touch with Mark's family. We are all deeply saddened by this news.

Because of the sudden impact to our school community, **we will dismiss in-person school at Heritage at 1:00pm today so we can provide counseling support to our staff and students. Buses will run at 1:00pm, and students waiting for transportation will be supervised in the main gym. Students on an asynchronous schedule today should continue their work as scheduled. After school activities and athletics will continue as scheduled for today, and school will resume tomorrow at the normal time.**

In person counseling for students (A-K) will be provided on site today between 1:00-3:30pm and all students can also access virtual counseling today from 2:00-3:30pm at this [VIRTUAL COUNSELING LINK](#). School counselors and the LPS mental health team will be available at Heritage in the days ahead to provide support for students and staff.

Dr. McKenna has been a member of the Heritage staff since 2008. He taught Family and Consumer Science and Culinary Arts in the Practical Arts Department. He has been a sponsor for the Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA) club for the past several years.

Student reactions to grief and loss vary greatly. There is no right way to express the sadness, grief, and confusion that our students feel when they encounter a tragedy. Some students may not react outwardly at all, while others might openly express their grief. Students can be particularly vulnerable if this event reminds them about another loss or sadness in their own lives. Other students may not have had a personal connection to Dr. McKenna and may not be affected by this loss. This is also a perfectly normal reaction.

Knowing what to say to your teenager is often difficult. Making yourself available for conversation or support is important. It would be helpful if you would take time this evening to have a family conversation with your son or daughter and provide explanations that fit with your values and beliefs. Expect that your student(s) may take quite a while to process grief and loss feelings. It is normal for a teen to bring up questions or concerns well after the fact and often when you least expect it. You can access additional mental health resources on the [HHS Counseling website](#) and the [LPS Mental Health website](#).

If you have expressions of sympathy for the family, please direct them to the school office and we will forward them in a timely manner. We will provide information regarding services for Dr. McKenna as they become available.

Thank you for all of your support during these difficult times. It is in times of adversity that communities come together and rally around one another. The Eagle Family needs you more than ever. Please take care of yourself, our students and those most impacted by this tragedy. The one thing I know for sure in these difficult times is that we are truly better together.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Stacey Riendeau".

Stacey Riendeau
Principal