MESSAGE FROM SUPERINTENDENT BARRY:
This is a list of suggested topics that we ask you to discuss with students and sample talking points that demonstrate the conversation we would like you have with students at the beginning of the first day of classes. Please adapt the samples to reflect your own voice and style.

The goal of this discussion is to acknowledge in the classroom that something happened in our city so students are not only hearing about it in the halls, cafeterias or playgrounds. Most importantly, the goal is to provide you with the opportunity to display your professional commitment to our students by reminding them that you care, and that you and others are here to support their success. With this conversation, we encourage you to be the teacher that connects with your students and changes their lives.

We developed the following list of topics and sample talking points in conjunction with Dr. David J. Schonfeld and Dr. Dan Nelson of the Center for School Crisis and Bereavement.

TOPIC: WELCOME STUDENTS TO SCHOOL
SAMPLE: Students, let me begin by welcoming you to our first day of school. The start of a new school year is often an exciting time, and it will be full of new experiences.

TOPIC: PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR CLASS
SAMPLE: NOTE TO TEACHERS: Please share something you are excited about teaching this year and what students can look forward to learning. Also, please review other class related items that are appropriate at this time.

TOPIC: OPEN THE CONVERSATION OF THE TRAGEDY
SAMPLE: Before we go further, I’d like to take a moment to discuss what happened at the local movie theater a few weeks ago. This tragedy may make the start of this school year challenging for some of us.

TOPIC: PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH INFORMATION ABOUT THE EVENT
NOTE TO TEACHERS: Provide students the level of detail that you believe is appropriate. Below are a few facts.
SAMPLE: As you may know, an individual hurt people who were at a movie theater. This man has already been arrested so we don’t have to worry about him hurting anyone else.

TOPIC: DISCUSS HOW THIS TRAGEDY MAY ADVERSELY IMPACT INDIVIDUALS IN OUR COMMUNITY WHETHER OR NOT THEY WERE DIRECTLY INVOLVED.
NOTE TO TEACHERS: Please address the range of involvement that students may have had with the incident.  
SAMPLE: If any of you know someone you care about who was at the theater, this can be very upsetting. Even if you don't know anyone who was directly involved, you may still find yourself at times more scared, sad or confused.  
NOTE TO TEACHERS: Briefly share how you are doing: I know that at times, I still have concerns/worries/feel sad, etc. This event may also remind you of something sad or scary in your own life or something you are afraid of.

TOPIC: VALIDATE FEELINGS AND LET STUDENTS KNOW THAT YOU CARE  
SAMPLE: I want to make sure you all realize that whatever you are feeling, I am here to talk with you.

TOPIC: REASSURE STUDENTS THAT OUR SCHOOL IS SAFE  
SAMPLE: Another thing that can happen after a bad event like this is that you may wonder if you are safe. I want to reassure you that everyone working in our school is committed to keeping it safe and you should continue to feel safe in our school. Over the school year, we will have evacuation and lockdown drills to practice safety skills.

TOPIC: CREATE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS THAT RESPECTS THE PRIVACY OF OTHERS. THE GOAL IS NOT TO PROCESS INDIVIDUAL FEELINGS, BUT TO CREATE THE CHANCE FOR STUDENTS TO DISCUSS HOW THEY MAY BE COPING WIT THIS. MANY STUDENTS WILL NOT HAVE OR WANT TO SHARE ANYTHING.  
SAMPLE: Because we care, our school staff decided that this was such a big event that we wanted to talk about this on the first day of school. We want to start by asking you how you are doing. We also want to know what you think we can do to help students deal with this event.

NOTE TO TEACHERS: After eliciting feedback from students, please continue:  

TOPIC: REASSURE STUDENTS  
SAMPLE: Whether or not you shared anything today, please know that I am always open to talking with you today or throughout the school year.

TOPIC: EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR SCHOOL SAFE  
SAMPLE: Although this event did not have anything to do with our school, it is important that we work together during the year to keep our school safe. We want to make sure that you feel welcome and comfortable while at school. Please feel free to talk with any staff member or an adult family member if you have any safety concerns.

TOPIC: LINK BACK TO YOUR CONTENT AREA. NOTE TO TEACHERS: Please adjust this to fit your class/school.  
SAMPLE: I'm excited to be your teacher this year/quarter/semester, and I'm sure this will be the best year/class ever.