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 to 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 first by welcoming you to your first day of school. The start of a new school year is often an exciting time, but it can also be one that is a bit challenging.

TOPIC: PROVIDE STUDENTS WITH AN OVERVIEW OF YOUR CLASS
SAMPLE: NOTE TO TEACHERS: Please share some highlights of the subject you are teaching 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 the shooting that occurred at the local movie theater a couple 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. In case students have questions, here are a few facts.
SAMPLE: As you may know, early in the morning of Friday July 20th during a showing of the new Batman movie (The Dark Knight Rises) at the Century 16 movie theater, a young adult shot 70 people (killing 12). This man has already been arrested (and is in custody awaiting trial) so we don’t have to worry about him hurting anyone else. My heart goes out to those who have been affected.
TOPIC: DISCUSS HOW THIS TRAGEDY MAY AVERSELY 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: For those who were in the movie theater at the time or know someone they care about who was, this can be very upsetting. Even if you didn’t know anyone who was directly involved, you may still find yourself at times more worried about your safety, saddened by the loss that occurred, angry that something like this could happen, confused and distracted, or otherwise having trouble adjusting even today. I know that at times, I still have concerns/worries/feel sad. The shooting may also remind you of a difficult event in your own life or something you are afraid may happen to you or someone you care about.

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: INFORM STUDENTS THAT YOU CAN HELP THEM FIND OTHER RESOURCES

SAMPLE: I also want you know that I am here to help connect you with other people in the school who also care and who are ready to provide additional assistance today or over the next several weeks and months. You can talk with me after class today or anytime in the coming weeks.

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. Over the school year, we will have evacuation and lockdown drills to practice safety skills, and together we will keep our school safe.

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 WITH THIS. MANY STUDENTS WILL NOT HAVE OR WANT TO SHARE ANYTHING.

SAMPLE: Because we care and take safety seriously, our school staff decided that this was such an important event that we wanted to be sure to talk about this on the first day of school. We want to ask you what you are hearing about how your friends and classmates are adjusting. We also want to know what you think we can do to help you deal with this event. Please feel free to share how people are reacting, but don’t mention the names of the person who told you something or how specific people are doing. Hopefully, we can share thoughts about how to cope with the event (and other difficulties in students’ lives) and what we can, as a school community, do to support each other and help our community heal. If you are worried about a specific person,
please talk with me after class so we can respect your friend or family member’s privacy.

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

TOPIC: LET STUDENTS KNOW THAT YOU MAY SHARE THEIR FEEDBACK
SAMPLE: Thank you for sharing this information. It helps me to better understand what you are going through and how I can help. I will share general information about our conversation with other staff in the school so we can determine how to help anyone who may have challenges coping with this difficult event.

TOPIC: REASSURE STUDENTS
SAMPLE: Whether or not you shared anything today, please know that I am here to talk with you or helping you find someone you can talk to over the next several weeks and months. Even though we won’t be talking repeatedly about the shooting, we have people in the school always ready to meet with you when you are ready or wish to talk.

TOPIC: EMPHASIZE THE IMPORTANCE OF WORKING TOGETHER TO KEEP OUR SCHOOL SAFE
SAMPLE: Although this shooting 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 safe, secure, 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: INFORM STUDENTS OF SAFETY REPORTING RESOURCES
SAMPLE: We also have resources available online and by phone if you want to report something that may be unsafe at or around our school.

You can use our online safety site called APS Safenet, which is designed to help you report any safety concerns anonymously and securely.

You can also anonymously use Safe2Tell, a toll-free tip line that is available for anyone in Colorado. The number is 1-877-542-SAFE (1-877-542-7233).

Both resources are available on the front page of the school website so you can quickly use them at any time.

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 we’ll have a great class. Some of the learning resources that are available for you are…