Here are our top tips for how to support a student who is grieving.

Talk with the parent and student about what to share with their classmates, and how to help.

Ask the student **how you can show them support**. This provides reassurance that you're there for them.

See past the behaviors. **A student who is grieving holds many emotions** which can be hard for them to express.

Listen and reflect without judgment. When students feel heard, and their feelings are accepted, they know they can come to you for support.

Create a plan with specific and flexible goals for schoolwork, and check in regularly.

Provide breaks and create a plan for when they're struggling.

Jessica's House offers free peer support groups for children, teens, young adults and their adult caregivers grieving a death. Each group combines therapeutic talk, play and creative expression to promote healing and hope for the future.

For additional support and resources:

jessicashouse.org

info@jessicashouse.org

or we welcome your call at **(209) 250-5395**

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Supporting a Student Who is Grieving

a guide for educators

Jessica's House

Grief Support for Children, Teens, Young Adults and Their Families

After a student experiences the death of someone close, they may feel anxious or fearful about returning to school. Connecting with the student's parent before they return to school with the points mentioned below can help ease anxiety for both the student and parent.

Talk with the parent and student about what to share and how to help

Connect with the student's parent and ask what they wish to be shared with other students about the death. Assure them that providing accurate information can help decrease the chance of rumors and increase support for the student.



Before the student returns to school, ask them how you can show support. Would they find it helpful for you to check in with them during the day? Do they need extra time to complete assignments? The student may not know what they need but will appreciate the reassurance that you're there for them and will continue to check in.

See past the behaviors

A student who is grieving holds many emotions that can be hard to express. You may notice anger, sadness, anxiety and fatigue. The death of someone they love has turned their world upside down, and they may be doing their best to get through the school day.

Listen and reflect without judgment

Feeling and expressing emotions is key to healing. You can support your student's feelings through reflection. For example, if they say, *"I miss playing with my dad,"* you can say, *"You miss your dad and wish you could play with him again."* When students feel heard, and their feelings are accepted, they know they can come to you.

Support with schoolwork

A newly bereaved student may be experiencing difficulties with concentration and low energy or motivation. In contrast, some students may direct their energy to schoolwork and other activities. With the student and their parent, create a plan with specific and flexible goals for schoolwork, and check in regularly to show your support.

Provide breaks

Students may feel overwhelmed at times during the school day. Create a plan with them for when they're struggling. A hand signal from them could communicate their need for a break. You could ask them to take a note to the office so they can move their body and get some fresh air. Include a visit to the school counselor if the student prefers.

After a death, a student may have increased worries. Going the entire school day without communication with their parent can be hard. Talk with the office staff about allowing students to call and check in with their parent during breaks.

Be sensitive to the hard moments

The student may experience difficult moments during their school day. Birthdays, holidays or the anniversary of a death can also stir strong reactions. Ask the student's parent to remind you when these days are approaching. They may also experience grief "bursts," which are times that evoke more intense feelings of grief. Tell the student you understand they may have those moments and create a plan with them. Having a plan and giving the student choices can help ease anxiety.

Additional support and peer support groups, like those offered at Jessica's House, are a way to be surrounded by others living through a similar loss.

