

A GUIDE TO SUPPORTING YOUR GRIEVING STUDENT

Questions to ask if you learned about the death from **the student's caregiver.**

"May we discuss this news with the student's teacher?"

"What information are you comfortable sharing?"

"Do we have your permission to offer support to your child?"

"Do you have suggestions on how we can support your child (e.g., independent study instead of being in the classroom, wellness days, preferred check-in days/times, etc.)?"

Questions to ask if you learned about the death from **the student's teacher or a staff member.**

"Under what circumstance did you learn about the death? Did the student confide in someone, share the news when explaining missed schoolwork, or explaining why there was an absence from class?"

"What did you communicate about checking in on an ongoing basis?"

"What details were shared? Do you know who died, when the death occurred, how the person died?"

Create a safe space for a child-led conversation.

Be OK with silence.

Get comfortable saying "I don't know."

Practice active listening.

Use reflective language; refrain from interpreting.

Suggest activities like taking a walk, coloring, playing a game.

Help child identify support at school (i.e. teacher, coaches, etc.)

What not to say.

"I know exactly how you feel. My mom died when I was a kid, too. I remember that it felt like..."

Don't hijack the student's grief.

"They are in a better place."

"They are sleeping."

"What doesn't kill you makes you stronger."

"They wouldn't want to see you cry."

Don't use euphemisms or clichés.

"If you need help just call my office, email me or come by to talk."

Don't assume what the child needs.

"You will move on and it will get easier."

Grief is not linear. There is no timeline.

What to say.

"I have experience with loss, too. I wonder if it would be helpful to you if I shared my experience."

"Your person died and you might be feeling a lot of different emotions. Would you like to share what your grief looks like today?"

"Grief can look and feel a lot of different ways. If you're feelings start to feel heavy, you can show this pass to the teacher and you will be excused so that you can come and talk with me."

"It's OK to not be OK some days."

