



Mother's and Father's Day May Be Different During the Pandemic

For many students, Mother's and Father's Day will be different this year. It's been estimated that more than 167,000 U.S. children have [lost a parent or caregiver](#) to Covid since the beginning of the pandemic.

Mother's and Father's Day have always had the potential to trigger grief responses in children who have lost a parent/caregiver. This year, with more children grieving and many experiencing greater anxiety generally, it is especially important for educators to be mindful of the ways they introduce activities about Mother's and Father's Day.

What Educators Can Do

Educators may know of students who have experienced the death of a parent/caregiver. However, it is not possible to know the full array of losses facing every student. The following steps help create a more positive learning environment for students across a range of circumstances.

1. *Introduce activities thoughtfully.* Some students may have lost a parent. Some may have a parent who is incarcerated, on military deployment, or separated from the family. Others may be in foster care settings or live with extended family. Still others may have a father (or fathers) and no mother, or vice versa. Keep the focus of any instructions broad enough to include all of these students. For example: "Tomorrow we're going to do an activity for Mother's Day where I ask you to focus on your mothers. Some of you may not have a mother who is alive or currently living with you. You can focus on your memories of your mother or pick another woman

who has been supportive and important to you. This might be someone you're close to now, or someone who has been important to you in the past."

Be sure to adapt the activity if necessary to keep it inclusive (e.g., revise templates with "Mom" on them).

2. *Reach out to students you know have lost a parent.* Approach students privately before introducing the activity to the class. Let them know what you're planning. Check to see if they want to participate or would prefer an alternative. Tell them you will not call on them to share their work with the class, though they can volunteer if they wish.

3. *Understand grief triggers and have a plan.* Many different events in school can trigger a grief response. The response might be mild and brief, or intense and troubling to a student. When necessary, help students find a safe place to experience powerful feelings and regain their composure (counselor or nurse office, library, a moment in the hallway).

These simple steps can make a genuine difference for grieving students.

Find more information at the website of the [Coalition to Support Grieving Students](#), including the [module on grief triggers](#) and [Covid pandemic guidance](#) for educators.