



COALITION *to* SUPPORT
GRIEVING STUDENTS

EMPOWERING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES

to support their grieving students

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a unique collaboration of the leading professional organizations representing classroom educators, principals, administrators, student support personnel, and other school professionals who have come together with a common conviction: grieving students need the support and care of the school community. The Coalition's purpose is to create and share a set of industry-endorsed resources that will empower school communities across America in the ongoing support of their grieving students.

Our Task

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students has come together to remedy a current gap in the educational professions: the development of a set of resources broadly approved by leading professional organizations to guide educators and other school personnel in supporting and caring for their grieving students. The primary resource—grievingstudents.org—provides practical, accessible information for classroom educators, principals, administrators, and student support personnel and other school professionals who have come together with a common conviction. This user-friendly, interdisciplinary site represents a major step forward in enabling educators to learn about the issue of childhood grief and develop an understanding of how to help. Informed by the expertise of leading bereavement expert Dr. David Schonfeld, with feedback and contribution from each participating organization, this online resource captures current best practices for addressing grief at school through a dynamic multimedia approach.

Why We Exist

Childhood bereavement is all too common: in the United States, approximately one in 20 children will lose a parent by the time they reach 16 years of age and the vast majority of children experience a significant loss by the time they complete high school. Yet grieving children are vastly overlooked—both in society at large and in schools in particular. Schools have a critical role to play in the grief journey of children who have lost a loved one. Teachers' and classmates' response to a student's grief can either serve as a source of support and stability during a difficult time, or as an additional hurdle to surmount. Moreover, grief can have a serious impact on learning for school-age children; bereavement can manifest itself in decreased academic performance, social withdrawal, and new behavioral problems.

By demonstrating support, educators have an enormous opportunity to improve outcomes for their students. Unfortunately, the vast majority of teachers feel unequipped for this task. In a survey on grief at school conducted by the New York Life Foundation in conjunction with the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), seven in 10 teachers reported having at least one grieving student currently in their classroom. While 89 percent of teachers believe that there should be a greater focus on training educators to support grieving students, only 7 percent reported having had any amount of bereavement training. Teachers desire, but currently lack, the knowledge of how to support the grieving students in their midst and identify this as the single greatest barrier preventing them from reaching out and offering support.



