



COALITION *to* SUPPORT GRIEVING STUDENTS

EMPOWERING SCHOOL COMMUNITIES TO SUPPORT THEIR GRIEVING STUDENTS

Who We Are

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a groundbreaking cross-sector collaboration that seeks to improve the level of support and care that grieving students receive from their school communities. Convened in 2013 by the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement and the New York Life Foundation, the Coalition is made up of leading professional organizations representing K-12 educators and school personnel, as well as many other key constituencies across the education, health, and bereavement spaces.

Why We Exist

We seek to empower school communities to deliver better support to the grieving students in their midst. Unfortunately, educators encounter grief in the classroom on a regular basis: in the United States, approximately [one in 15 children](#) will lose a parent or sibling by the time they reach 18 years of age, and the majority of children experience a significant loss by the time they complete high school. Students are also frequently affected by tragic and violent events that they learn about in the news and encounter in their communities.

The Coalition affirms that schools have a critical role to play in supporting children's grief journeys. Grief can have a serious impact on learning for school-age children, manifesting itself in decreased academic performance, social withdrawal, new behavioral problems, and more. But by serving as a source of support and stability in difficult times, school professionals have an enormous opportunity to improve outcomes and make a positive difference for their students.

Our Work

The Coalition's flagship project is the development and maintenance of grievingstudents.org, a first-of-its-kind resource designed to equip educators with the information, insights, and practical advice that they need to better understand and help the millions of grieving children in America's classrooms. This user-friendly site features videos and downloadable grief support modules for school personnel, with materials appropriate for different audiences including classroom educators, principals and administrators, student support personnel, and family and community members.

The Coalition to Support Grieving Students

www.grievingstudents.org



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The site offers information and best practices for handling issues related to death and loss at school. Popular resource modules include:

- [Talking With Children](#): practical suggestions for initiating conversation with a student who has lost a loved one
- [What Not To Say](#): concrete advice on avoiding well-meaning comments that may hurt rather than help in the wake of a loss
- [Death and School Crisis](#): strategies to plan for and cope with the death of one or more students or school staff members

This resource was developed in response to an expressed need from educators: in a survey on grief at school (conducted by the New York Life Foundation in partnership with the American Federation of Teachers), 92% of educators agreed childhood grief is a serious problem that deserves more attention from schools, yet only 7% reported having had any amount of bereavement training.

To further its mission to reach school communities across the country, the Coalition has partnered with New York Life on the Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative (GSSI), which seeks to educate local schools and districts about childhood bereavement, introduce them to resources, and encourage proactive thinking about how to support grieving students through the “Grief-Sensitive Schools” designation.

Our Members

The Coalition was founded by the New York Life Foundation, a pioneering advocate for childhood bereavement support, and the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement, led by pediatrician and childhood bereavement expert David J. Schonfeld, MD. Today, the Coalition’s robust membership comprises a wide range of groups whose missions align with delivering grief support to children at school – including non-profit organizations dedicated to education, children’s health, afterschool programs, and bereavement support.

The Coalition’s Founding Members all consist of professional organizations representing K-12 classroom educators, principals, administrators, student support personnel, and other school professionals. The Coalition’s Supporting Organizational Members include the American Academy of Pediatrics, Boys and Girls Clubs of America, CASEL, and Save the Children, among others. A full list of members can be found [here](#).

For More Information

Please contact us at info@grievingstudents.org.