



Four Rivers Special Education District

Elementary School Grief Guidelines

Developmental Level: Concrete thinkers, logical patterns, increased language. Questions about what will be different and the same. Want to know how we know someone is really dead, want death to be reversible. Do not understand that death is final. May overgeneralize. Death is something that happens to someone else, not child or their family.

Grief Behaviors:

- *Regression
- *Fighting, anger
- *Difficulty attending and concentrating, daydreaming
- *Not completing assignments
- *Sleepy, tired at school
- *Withdrawn
- *Portrayal of death as graphic, gory
- *Physical symptoms such as headache, stomachache
- *Guilt

How To Help:

- *Answer questions
- *Comfort child
- *Admitting you do not know why some things happen
- *Allow appropriate expression of feelings
- *Provide art, journal, music, physical outlets for grief
- *Give choices, allow for some flexibility in schedule
- *Create a "safe space" for students
- *Help them to learn how to comfort classmates
- *Provide examples of what to say to comfort/help others
- *Encourage children to seek out friendships and do "normal" things, and to invite children who are having a more difficult time
- *Give options for providing support to others-making cards, drawings, helping with homework

Adapted from the National Association of School Psychologists online resources for crisis, trauma, and grief.

Piechowski, P., *Coping with the Sudden Death of a Student*.

Schonfeld, D, *After a Loved One Dies-How Children Grieve*; and The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, *Dealing with Death*.