

Staff Guidelines for Dealing with Death

Do's	Don'ts
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Feel comfortable asking for help. This experience need not be handled alone. 2. Develop an environment in which students feel perfectly safe to ask any questions, and completely confident of receiving an honest answer. 3. Use correct terminology related to death (i.e. avoid euphemisms – “gone on a long journey”, etc. 4. Listen and empathize. Make sure you hear what is said and not what you think the student ought to have said. 5. Allow the students to express as much grief as they are able or willing to share with you. 6. Share your own feelings and tell about your own memories of the child but don't idealize the dead child. 7. Say “I don't know” when you don't know. 8. Recognize that classroom routines and management may be disrupted. This is natural – be flexible. 9. Maintain a sympathetic attitude toward the student's age-appropriate responses. 10. Organize activities that will allow student to tangibly express their grief (e.g. memorials, letters, etc.). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Don't force a child to participate in a discussion about death. 2. Never link suffering and death with guilt, punishment and sin. 3. Don't be judgmental, don't lecture. It's all too tempting to make a point or moralize. 4. Don't force a “regular day” upon grieving students, but at the same time don't allow the class to be totally unstructured. Offer choices of activities, e.g. letters, journals and discussion. 5. Don't say “I know how you feel” unless you truly do. 6. Don't force others to look for something positive in the situation. 7. Don't feel you must handle this alone. Ask for help. 8. Don't expect “adult responses” from children and teenagers. Their grief responses may seem inappropriate to you (e.g. giggling).
<p><i>Note: It may be useful to provide a copy of this for each staff member.</i></p>	