

SAMPLE GRIEF DISCUSSION WITH STUDENTS

Share facts of the death:

"I have some very sad news to share today. Our teacher, Mrs. _____ died a few weeks ago due to complications from_____. I am feeling pretty sad and would like to take some time to talk to you about how you are and answer any questions you might have..."

Share the information that you have directly and honestly.

- Ask students if they know what happened. Ask them how they found out. At this point allow them to share what they know or think without correcting them.
- Allow students to ask questions. Answer questions as best you can, knowing that it is okay to say "I don't know" when you don't have the answer.
- Talk to your class about how grief affects people and encourage them to share how they feel. One way to do this is to discuss what other types of losses or deaths the students in your class have experienced, and what helped them cope.
- Let students know that if they would like to write a letter and/or draw a picture to support the family that they could do so.
- Let students and families know that there are support counselors that they can speak with today who can help with on-going support as well.
- Discuss how difficult it may be for their classmate(s) to return to school, and how they may help. You can ask your class for ideas about how they would like others to treat them if they were returning to school after a death, pointing out differences in preferences such as:
 - Some grieving students might like to be left alone while others may want the circumstances discussed freely.
 - Some grieving students may want everyone to treat them the same way they treated them before. These students typically don't like people being "extra nice".
 - Other grieving students may say they don't want to be in the spotlight, but they may also feel like they don't want people acting like nothing happened.

Provide a way for your class to reach out to the grieving classmate and his or her family. One of the ways that students can reach out is by sending cards or pictures to the child and family, letting them know the class is thinking of them. If students in your class knew the person who died, they could share memories of that person.

From KARA: Moving through Grief Toward Hope and Meaning. www.karfa-grief.org