



Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative Overview



What it is

The Grief-Sensitive Schools Initiative (GSSI) is part of New York Life's nationwide effort to better equip educators and other school personnel to care for grieving students. Through the program, trained New York Life ambassadors connect with schools in their local communities to raise educators' awareness of the impact and prevalence of grief among school-age children, and to direct them to critical resources designed especially for education practitioners by the Coalition to Support Grieving Students. GSSI recognizes



schools that commit to better support their grieving students by awarding them the "Grief-Sensitive School" designation,

which is accompanied by a grant to help them build a more robust culture of grief support and resiliency at their school.

Why it exists

Most educators and school professionals will encounter grief in the classroom firsthand. An estimated one in 13 children will experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18* and the majority experience some kind of close, personal loss before graduating from high school. Grief's impact on children can be far-reaching, with potential to lead to serious behavioral issues and poor school performance when it goes unsupported.

A survey conducted by the New York Life Foundation in conjunction with the American Federation of Teachers revealed that only seven percent of teachers had received training to support bereaved students, while a full 92 percent of educators felt that childhood grief was a serious problem deserving more attention from schools. In recent years, the tragedy of school shootings across the U.S. has only created additional urgency and concern around addressing issues of grief and death at school.

New York Life's Commitment

As the largest corporate champion of childhood bereavement support over the past decade, the New York Life Foundation has committed to improving the ability of schools to reach their grieving students. In 2013, the Foundation partnered with the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement to convene the Coalition to Support Grieving Students, a collaboration among leading K-12 professional organizations to develop and deliver the best possible grief support resources to educators through its dedicated site, grievingstudents.org. The GSSI is an extension of the Coalition's work, directing schools and districts to accessible grief resources to empower even more educators to support their students.

How it works

As part of the program, New York Life trains interested and qualified agents and employees on how to support grieving students. These GSSI ambassadors then connect with schools (which must be accredited K-12 public or private institutions) to offer a presentation on the issue of grief at school and direct educators to existing grief resources (including grievingstudents.org) that can help them provide a more supportive environment for their students.

Participating schools are encouraged to make a commitment to strive to become more grief-sensitive; those that take this step receive New York Life's "Grief-Sensitive School" designation, as well as a \$500 grant to help enhance the grief support and resources available in their school community.

For more information

Please contact nylffoundation@newyorlife.com.

*Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM) developed by Judi's House/JAG Institute www.judishouse.org/CBEM, 2020



Coalition to Support Grieving Students

Empowering school communities



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, the Coalition was founded by the New York Life Foundation, a pioneering advocate for childhood bereavement support, the National Center for School Crisis & Bereavement, and 10 leading professional organizations representing K-12 educators and school personnel. Today, the Coalition's robust membership comprises a wide range of groups whose missions align with delivering grief support to children at school—including nonprofit organizations dedicated to education, children's health, afterschool programs, and bereavement support.



Why we exist

We seek to empower school communities to deliver better support to grieving students. Unfortunately, educators encounter grief in the classroom on a regular basis: In the United States, approximately **one in 13** children will lose a parent or sibling by the time they reach 18 years of age*, and the vast majority of children will experience a significant loss by the time they complete high school. Students are also 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. By serving as a source of support and stability in difficult times, school professionals have an enormous opportunity to improve outcomes 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 tailored for different audiences, including classroom educators, principals and administrators, student-support personnel, and family and community 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 percent of educators agreed childhood grief is a serious problem that deserves more attention from schools, yet only seven percent 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.



For more information

Please contact us at info@grievingstudents.org.
The Coalition to Support Grieving Students
www.grievingstudents.org

LEAD FOUNDING MEMBERS



FOUNDING MEMBERS



THE SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS ASSOCIATION



AMERICAN FEDERATION OF SCHOOL ADMINISTRATORS



AMERICAN SCHOOL COUNSELOR ASSOCIATION



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SECONDARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF ELEMENTARY SCHOOL PRINCIPALS



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL NURSES



NATIONAL ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGISTS



NATIONAL EDUCATION ASSOCIATION



SCHOOL SOCIAL WORK ASSOCIATION OF AMERICA

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