



STATE OF NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

A Memo from the New Jersey Department of Education

Date: December 16, 2020

To: Chief School Administrators, Charter School and Renaissance School Project Leads, Administrators of Approved Private Schools for Students with Disabilities, and Directors of Nonpublic Schools

Route To: Principals, Teachers, School Counselors, Social Workers and School Psychologists

From: Peggy McDonald, Ed.D., Assistant Commissioner
Division of Student Services

Grief and Loss Resources to Help Support Students

In our continued efforts to assist both school staff and families in supporting students, the New Jersey Department of Education (NJDOE) has updated the list of resources regarding grief, loss, and traumatic events on the NJDOE's COVID-19 Resource Page, [Supporting the Emotional Well-Being of Students](#).

Grief and loss can be seen and experienced in many forms. It can be the death or serious illness of a loved one, teacher, staff member, classmate, or pet; changes within a family structure such as a divorce or separation; or a loss of an important relationship. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, the [grief and loss](#) felt by students can also be attributed to changes in school routines, in-person or close connections with loved ones, and loss of family income or housing. With the holiday season approaching and the number of COVID-19 positive cases and deaths continuing to rise, these resources serve as a timely reminder of the delicate nature of grief and loss and how students may present their mourning in various ways.

These expressions are entirely unique to each individual but may include:

- acting out;
- sleep disturbances;
- regressive behaviors;
- changes in academic performance; and/or
- the appearance of somatic symptoms such as frequent headaches or stomach aches.

These expressions may also ebb and flow over time and as students develop emotionally and cognitively and revisit the loss. School staff have been instrumental in supporting students with many of the challenges they are currently facing. It remains incredibly important for staff to continue to be mindful that while any death or loss can be a traumatic event for a student, losses due to COVID-19 may also lead to a student experiencing complicated or traumatic grief.

Please visit the webpage regularly as we will continue to gather and post new resources to support the social emotional health and well-being of educators, students, and families.

c: Members, State Board of Education
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NJDOE Staff
Statewide Parent Advocacy Network
Garden State Coalition of Schools
NJ LEE Group