
HIM 1990-2015

2013

How to help a teacher's guide to helping grieving elementary students in the classroom

Caitlin Corrigan
University of Central Florida

 Part of the [Elementary Education and Teaching Commons](#)

Find similar works at: <https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015>

University of Central Florida Libraries <http://library.ucf.edu>

This Open Access is brought to you for free and open access by STARS. It has been accepted for inclusion in HIM 1990-2015 by an authorized administrator of STARS. For more information, please contact STARS@ucf.edu.

Recommended Citation

Corrigan, Caitlin, "How to help a teacher's guide to helping grieving elementary students in the classroom" (2013). *HIM 1990-2015*. 1393.

<https://stars.library.ucf.edu/honorstheses1990-2015/1393>

**HOW TO HELP: A TEACHER'S GUIDE TO HELPING GRIEVING
ELEMENTARY STUDENTS IN THE CLASSROOM**

by

CAITLIN CAROL CORRIGAN

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the Honors in the Major Program in Elementary Education
in the College of Education
and in The Burnett Honors College
at the University of Central Florida
Orlando, Florida

Spring 2013

Thesis Chair: Sherron Killingsworth Roberts

ABSTRACT

In the United States alone, over 2 million (or a little more than 3%) of children are estimated to face the death of a parent before they turn 18 (Goodman, 2006)! The numbers only grow when the death of a grandparent, relative, sibling, or classmate are included. Death is a very real and lasting event. Most of these children will have to return to life as it was before in some way or another. For most of these children, that means returning to school. Sadly, in a teacher's undergraduate education they receive little or no formal training in how to help a child deal with tragedy or the death of a loved one. This leaves a major gap in a teacher's knowledge of how to help and of what they can do.

The aim of this small study was to help bridge those gaps. In the study elementary school teachers, parents or caregivers of students who had lost a loved one while in elementary school and students who were grieving the loss of a loved one while in elementary school were recruited and asked to share about their experiences and personal knowledge of grieving in an elementary school setting. These participants were asked to answer a short survey and share their thoughts and feelings. Through surveys and interviews the researcher found that most students and parents were satisfied with the naturally response of teacher who intervened in students' lives during a time of grief. Communication was reported by all entities to be the most effective way to help; communication between home and school and between the teacher and the grieving student. From the responses of teachers, caregivers and students a quick reference guild was created that teachers can use in the classroom when they have a grieving student.

DEDICATIONS

This work is dedicated to the children and families of *New Hope for Kids* and of Sandy Hook Elementary: the strength and courage you exhibited inspires me each day. I hope that I can use your knowledge to ease the pain for others.

To my parents that worked so hard to make me a reader and to show me that with hard work I can do anything I set my mind to! Without your love and support my dreams would never be reachable. Thank you for not giving up on me!

To my extended family, both blood and those who might as well be blood: you all keep me sane and have shown me how to smile when I can feel the weight of the world on my shoulders.

To all teachers who have mentored me: your love and passion show me that it's all worthwhile! To the teachers at St Mary who didn't give up on me, to my teachers at Choctaw who saw more in me than I saw in myself sometimes, and to my professors at UCF who pushed me further each day.

To my students: past, present and future: you are my reason! If I teach you nothing more than compassion I have done my job.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I can only begin to express my gratitude toward my amazing committee who said yes when they barely knew me: Dr. Sherron Killingworth Roberts, Dr. Elizabeth Hoffman, and Dr. Stacy Van Horn! Your patience, understanding, and knowledge are what made all this possible. None of this would have been possible without my UCF momma, Dr. Roberts. I'm so glad you kept pestering me with e-mails and forced me into your office on that summer afternoon. I'm forever grateful that you said you'd keep me.

Thank you to the amazing staff and the incredible families of *New Hope for Kids*, it's all for you! Without you none of this would have been a reality. Tamari, thank you for putting up with my craziness, I don't know what I would have done had you not said yes!

Thank you to the staff of the Burnett Honors College who always seemed to make every crisis seem minute.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION.....	1
Personal Rationale	1
Broader Rationale	2
CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	4
Transitional Theory of Literature and Bibliotherapy	4
Grieving Process in Children	6
Ways to Help Children Deal with Their Grief.....	13
Summary	15
CHAPTER THREE: PARTICIPANTS	16
Teachers Background.....	16
Caregivers Background.....	18
Students Background	20
CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY	21
CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS	25
Teachers	25
Caregivers	29
Students.....	33

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEACH.....	36
Conclusion	36
Educational Implications	37
Future Research	38
Lessons Learned.....	38
APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS.....	41
Student A	41
Caregiver A.....	47
Students B and C.....	57
Caregiver B	67
APPENDIX B: TEACHER SURVEY.....	73
APPENDIX C: CAREGIVER SURVEY	78
APPENXID D: STUDENTS SURVEY	85
APPENDIX E: TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS	92
APPENDIX F: CAREGIVER SURVEY RESULTS	105
APPENDIX G: STUDENTS SURVEY RESULTS	117
APPENDIX H: TEACHER QUICK REFERENCE.....	129
APPENDIX I: UCF IRB LETTER.....	132
REFERENCES	133

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Background of Teacher Participants.....	17
Table 2: Background of Caregiver Participants.....	19
Table 3: Background of Student Participants	20
Table 4: Teacher Survey Results	28
Table 5: Caregiver Survey Results	32
Table 6: Student Survey Results	35

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

“Allowing children to show their guilt, show their grief, show their anger, takes the sting out of the situation.” –Martha Beck (1962) American sociologist

Personal Rationale

In June of 2005 my maternal grandfather died from pancreatic cancer. It was a very short and intense battle that we, as a family, could only stand by and watch. I was very close to my grandparents growing up and it was one of my first real encounters with death on a personal level that I was old enough to really experience. I was not sure how to deal with my grief and had a hard time talking to family because I feared upsetting them or myself by bringing up the pain associated with our loss. This led to me bottling emotions and never really working through my grief. To this day, I still struggle occasionally with my grief, but am learning to deal with it in a healthier manner now through my volunteer work at *New Hope for Kids*.

New Hope for Kids (<http://www.newhopeforkids.org/>) was founded in 1996 by Cheryl Bradley from Hospice of Central Florida. The center, and many others like it around the country, is a member of the *National Alliance for Grieving Children* (<http://childrengrieve.org/find-support>). This center for grieving children works to help children and their families cope with the feelings of grief and loss that are associated with the death of a loved one. In October of 2011 I went through twenty-five hours of training and became a Grief Facilitator at *New Hope for Kids*. Not only is this helping me in my own grief journey, but I am helping the kids who attend New Hope and I am learning valuable lessons and strategies that I can use in my own classroom someday if the need should arise.

As a future teacher I went into the *New Hope for Kids* organization wanting to learn how to help children without holding them back. Once I started working with the children and families at New Hope it became so much for me. The children and families there have touched my heart and inspired me to reach out to as many people as I can. My hope is to ease some of the pain associated with grief by creating a resource to aid teachers in reaching out to those students who are grieving in an elementary classroom. Through this thesis my aim was to explore ways teachers can help by interviewing students who were grieving in elementary school, caregivers of such students, and teachers. The desired outcome was to shed a bit of light into the unknown and help connect the gaps between home and school at such a vulnerable time for the families involved.

Broader Rationale

“Books give no wisdom where none was before. But where some is, there reading makes it more.” John Harrington 1516-1617 English writer and satirist

In the United States alone, over 2 million (or a little more than 3%) of children are estimated to face the death of a parent before they turn 18 (Goodman, 2006)! That number only grows when the death of a grandparent, sibling, other relative or classmate is included. Death is a very real and lasting event even for the young (p. 1). In the past many adults believed that children were not capable of grieving and therefore did not. However, with research in more recent years it has been found that this notion is false (Worden, 1996). While the age at which children are mature enough to grieve is debatable, researchers now states that they do in fact grieve. Some researchers, like Bowlby (1963, 1980), believe grief can be experienced by

children as young as six months old. Others, like R. Furman (1964), maintain that children ranging from ages 3½ to 4 have the capacity to mourn. While still others, like Wolfenstein (1966), consider adolescence to be that age when a person has that capacity.

Sadly most teachers receive little to no formal training in dealing with tragedy, such as the death of a loved one, in the lives of their students in their undergraduate studies at the university level. This major gap leaves it hard to help and a lack in knowledge of what can be done on the part of a teacher. The aim of this thesis was to make the grieving process a little less intimidating for those close to a child who has experienced a loss by providing help guide of questions that should be asked, resources that can be given and things that can be done in the elementary classroom to help these students cope. I hope that my final product will be useful for caregivers, teachers, friends, and others who are unsure of how they can help a grieving child. I want to help teachers and other individuals create an open dialogue where a child can feel safe to share their feelings, worries, and other emotions after the death of a loved one while in an elementary classroom.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This chapter will provide a review of literature related to this thesis; therefore, this section is divided into readings that encase the topics of the transitional theory of literature and bibliotherapy, the grieving process in children, and ways to help children deal with their grief, (including literature).

Transitional Theory of Literature and Bibliotherapy

In *The Reader, The Text, The Poem: The Transactional Theory of the Literary Work*

Louise Rosenblatt (1978) states that a person's age, personal associations, and mood play a role in the creation of one's feeling or tone or how they decode or receive a written text. Therefore the place we are in our lives can change the meaning of a work of literature; this is what is referred to as the transactional theory. If we apply this to everyday life something as simple as a picture book can reach each of us in different ways.

If our place in life helps direct our response to a literary work then literary works can be used to help cope with grief.

Bibliotherapy is "a projective indirect intervention that uses literature for personal growth" explains Rozalski, Stewart, and Miller (2010) in the article "Bibliotherapy: Helping Children Cope with Life's Challenges." They go on to state that children's literature can be an aid in teaching about difficult issues by encouraging students to make personal connections with characters in a story, which allows the reader to consider their own actions and emotions by those of the characters in the story (Forgan 2002, Iaquina & Hipsky 2006). Bibliotherapy dates back to the 1930s when counselors began working with librarians to create lists of books that could help modify thoughts, feeling and behaviors (Abdullah, 2002). It has often times been

used with students who have special needs to regulate emotions (Zambo 2007). Zambo choose picture books for her work because they are easily accessible, and both children and adults are familiar with them. She uses them to help children relate to the characters and understand that they, like the characters of the stories, have emotional challenges and concerns. Zambo goes on the share that when a student is able to identify with a character from a picture book they are able to relate its feelings to their own and can more openly talk and discuss them constructively. Bibliotherapy can also be used to teach ideas to a student in that they challenge current ideas, progress reasoning skills, and present a point without the need for a lecture. Zambo quotes Leu and Kinzer in her article and sums up bibliotherapy nicely by stating “using stories to help students understand emotions can result in more empathetic and educated human beings” (Zambo, 2007, p. 34).

While bibliotherapy is divided into two fields, developmental and therapeutic, this thesis is more focused on the therapeutic side which is broken into three main principles: identification, catharsis and insight. Identification is when a reader associates with a character or situation in the story. Catharsis is the emotional release that happens when a reader revisits feelings that they repressed. Finally, insight is when a reader is aware of their feelings and sees the situation in a new light and is motivated to make behavioral changes.

Roxalski, Stewart and Miller (2010) break bibliotherapy down into five steps:

1. Identify a specific problem that a student is facing.
2. Identify potential books that contain characters who struggle with a similar issue.
 - a. Grade/interest level
 - b. Presentation of characters

- c. Context
 - d. Illustrations/pictures
 - e. Author's message
3. Review the books to determine whether texts are appropriate for students.
 4. Develop bibliotherapy lessons using the most appropriate books.
 - a. Focus on the main theme and reflect on how it compares to their current life experiences.
 5. Teach.

If the transactional theory of literary work and bibliotherapy hold true then a child should be able to relate to and find grief support in literature.

Grieving Process in Children

When most people think of grief they think of Kübler-Ross's five stages of loss. On Grief and Grieving: Finding the Meaning of Grief Through the Five Stages of Loss explains the typical responses a person has to loss in five stages: denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance (Kessler & Kübler-Ross, 2005). Denial is usually a temporary state where the individual is defensive and unsure of the situation. Anger is what occurs once the individual realizes denial cannot continue. At this stage the individual is hard to care for and the anger can be taken out on themselves or others, especially those close to them. Once bargaining begins the individual tries to postpone the death. The individual will usually bargain with a higher power while promising a reformed lifestyle. After this point depression sets in. This is when the certainty of death sets in. Finally is acceptance. At this point the individual comes to terms with the death.

The book Children and Grief explained the delicate mourning process of children in detail. This book written by J. William Worden (1996) presents findings from the Child Bereavement Study. In the beginning of the book he explores the definition of the word mourning as well as different researchers' philosophies of mourning in childhood. He shares the belief of psychoanalysts like Wolfenstein (1966) and Anna Freud (1960) that mourning involves the detaching of oneself from an object and recognizing that you are a separate being. He juxtaposes this with theorists such as Kliman (1968) who sees mourning more as a wide range of responses that are set into motion by the death of a loved one. Even while considering the differences in definition most still agree that a child must have achieved a coherent mental representation of important attachment figures, like a parent, in order for mourning to occur. This mental representation is usually formed by the age of three or four. Worden chooses to define mourning "as the process children go through on their way to adaptation (p. 11)." He uses the word grief "to describe the child's personal experience, thoughts, and feelings associated with the death (p. 11)."

Worden (1996) explains Nagy's (1948, 1959) three states of childhood mourning. One occurs from age three to age five and is where a child sees death as a departure to someplace else. Stage Two occurs from age five to nine and is where death is personified and made real for the child, but is still thought to be an avoidable occurrence. Finally, Stage Three occurs at age nine or ten and is where a child understands that death is unavoidable and affects everyone, even themselves. Worden (1996) goes on to explain that more current researchers believe that children develop a rational notion of death at a much younger age than once thought. Spinetta,

Deasey-Spinetta and Bluebond-Langner (1981) believe that a rational notion of death likely occurs as early as the age of six.

Worden (1996) created four tasks of mourning for children. The purpose of these tasks is to bring a degree of resolution to each and therefore work through one's grief. These tasks can be completed in any order and can be revisited and reworded overtime. He believes that a child can only understand each task in terms of their cognitive, emotional and social development.

Task 1: To accept the reality of the loss

Task 2: To experience the pain or emotional aspects of the loss

Task 3: To adjust to an environment in which the deceased is missing

Task 4: To relocate the dead person within one's life and find ways to memorialize the person.

Also exploring children's grief and related to Worden's work is a book entitled Healing Children's Grief: Surviving a Parent's Death from Cancer. Every person grieves differently and that same idea is applied to children as well. Through research like that by Grace Hyslop Christ (2000) as published in Healing Children's Grief: Surviving a Parent's Death from Cancer a typical grief pattern of children by their age and developmental growth can be seen. After reading this salient book, I condensed the information into an abbreviated form into an easy to read table/chart.

Age: 3 to 5

Developmental Themes:

- Cognitive Development:

- Nonverbal communication (play, drawing, and symbolic play, are their main forms of communication
- Egocentric point of view where they assume that everyone knows what they know and thinks like they do
- Unable to reverse the reasoning process
- Emotional-Psychological Development
 - Under developed
- Social-Ecological Development
 - Mostly within family
 - Thrive with continuation of routine though out illness

Patterns in Grief:

- Drawing of feelings
- Leave out major details when telling stories
- Believe they caused parent's disease (not as frequently as with 6-8 year olds)
- Hard time comprehending and emotionally accepting *permanence/finality* of death
- Become anxious when separated from primary care giving parent
- Unable to tolerate parents' showing of strong emotions (like sadness or crying)
- Benefit from being able to talk about the dead parent at home after bereavement groups.
- Request for a replacement parent because of teasing at school

Helpful Tips:

- Play grief groups enhance ability to communication with living parent and ability to mourn

Age: 6-8

Developmental Themes:

- Shared parent's distress over illness and death
- Range of emotions to include rejected, sad, or defected, angry, irritable, and disappointed
- Transaction between Pre-operational and Concrete Operational Thinking
 - Illogical and magical thinking (magical thinking and nonreversibility)
- Early School-Age Child's Emotionality
 - Strong emotions including sadness, anger, anxiety, guilt, rejected, fear of well being of both parents
- Parent's Central Role as Protector and Enhancer of Self-Esteem
 - Need parent's assistance, nurturing, reassurance, and encouragement to maintain a sense of security, well-being, and self-esteem
- Child's Expanding Outside World
 - School becomes stressful
 - Pressure to perform and succeed)
 - Valued friend but they were not a distraction or relief like for older children
 - Sometimes were teased by peers
 - Teacher's reaction is more important than peers

Patterns in Grief:

- Begin to anticipate the death, showed signs of anticipatory anxiety
- Understand that death is final, but worried about the family's survival (such as others dying too)
- Confused and cluing to own flawed details of events (inability to reverse thinking process, don't know how they get to an idea, they just "knew")
- Not easy to distract themselves from the death with activities and become overwhelmed
- Strong emotions promoted more illogical, primitive thinking therefore providing relief was difficult.
- Tend to personalize external events (i.e. living parent's withdrawal is viewed as a rejection, parent expresses negative affect and child feels they are to blame)
- Reduction in self-esteem from stress
- Treated "different" while being lonely and rejected

Age: 9-11

Developmental themes:

- More complex concrete operational thinking giving way to a balance of emotions
- Logical Thinking Capacity:
 - Use development of logical thinking to deal with the chaos caused by the death.
 - Feel guilty and responsible but are able to reverse thinking and piece together information in a logical manner to lighten their grief.

- Understand difference between wish and reality when wanting the dead parent back.
- Able to insist information be shared with them. May become upset if they think information is being withheld from them.
- Can become hypervigilant and skeptical when not given enough information.
- Expanding world: Involved in activities outside the home
 - Afterschool activities and sports provide distractions and the chance to avoid the tragedy while helping to build confidence and self-esteem.
 - Help to remember the deceased parent's pride and praise placing a positive focus on mourning.
 - Look for approval, comfort and understanding from teachers, coaches, guidance counselors, and school nurse.
- Are able to control their anxiety and work on increasing their capability because of mature and more effective defenses.

Patterns in grief:

- Want to openly talk about their parent's death and surrounding events.
- Rarely show emotional response
- Happy to share successes and specifics about their growth after the death.
- Disappointment in how family life is reorganized
- Only willing to talk about their grief shortly

- Participate in activities with other children but don't share emotionally charged issues with peers.
 - Look to teachers and other adults from school and extra circular activities because they are concerned with upsetting their parent.
- Do not show outward signs of anguish.

If a child's developmental themes change with age as they progress through dealing with a death, then so does the pattern in grief.

Ways to Help Children Deal with Their Grief

Another book which provided a great deal of information and insight in this research was Living With Grief: Children, Adolescents, and Loss (Corr. 2000). A chapter of the book, written by Charles A. Corr (2000), provides five guidelines to use when selecting books to help children and adolescents cope with death. The first is to evaluate the books yourself before sharing it with a child. You must make yourself comfortable with the material of the book and have an understanding of the attitude it expresses. The second step is to choose titles, topics and approaches that meet the needs of the child with whom you are working. Be sure the book addresses the principles you wish to touch on, such as what happens after death, moving on from a death, or remembering the loved one. The third step in the process is to prepare to handle limitations; such as if the book explains that a long and happy life was lived but the person who died was very young. In this step it helps to know the child you are working with so that one might predict questions the grieving child may have based on the context of the book. The fourth step involves matching a book to the child's readability (or understandability) and interests. The fifth and final step is to be available and if possible read the book with the child so

as to discuss and negotiate the possible meaning within together. Being able to discuss the book with the child is far more helpful than simply reading it. Corr (2000) goes on to say that “reading together a book about death and grief can sometimes make it possible for children or adolescents and adults to support each other in coping with loss and sadness (p. 296).”

The guidelines and bibliography of this book provides a list of picture and coloring books for preschoolers and beginning readers as well as books at all different levels that can be used to create “teachable moments” for children working through their grief.

If a child can read independently or collaboratively and be open to related conversation, then they may find comfort and be able to ask questions in a sense, through a character in a book.

There are many ways to grieve and to deal with one’s grief. Resolving Child and Adolescent Traumatic Grief: Creative Techniques and Interventions by Edgar-Bailey and Kress (2010) shares the therapeutic relief creativity can have on one’s grief. Edgar-Bailey and Kress state that creative interventions can help to foster a sense of control by giving children a choice in how they approach their grief. They provide an opportunity to make visual and tangible expressions of feelings. Poems, drawings and songs can be a way to show feelings and experiences that the child can’t express verbally. The creative arts allow a child to express painful emotions while keeping a protective distance from their own experiences.

They go on to state that creative activities can enhance a child’s skill set in both language and communication. The use of specific artistic skills can help the development of positive self-esteem and self-worth. They promote self-expression and can open a child up to trust an adult in order to share painful emotions and breakdown feelings of loneliness, mistrust and doubt.

If a child can express feelings through creativity then they may find comfort in the characters of a picture book.

After looking at the different patterns in children's grief we can see that children need different things as different stages. The research on Transactional Theory and on bibliotherapy shows that picture books can help us as teachers, parents, and caregivers reach these children at the level they need and help ease their grief.

Summary

In summary, the literature review provides the background used in my investigation of ways teachers can aid grieving students in the elementary classroom. Further, the literature suggests that the age of a student when they are grieving plays a large role in determining how to help. Oftentimes though, literature can be used to connect with the child.

CHAPTER THREE: PARTICIPANTS

For the purpose of my research I choose to interview and survey teachers, students and caregivers about their thoughts and feelings from their personal experiences of dealing with a child's grief. This chapter includes information about the populations studied. I chose the students and caregivers who participated based on their experiences as a grieving elementary student or the caregiver of such. The participants were mostly affiliated with *New Hope for Kids*.

Teachers Background

Teachers who were recruited for this study knew the researcher before the study was conducted, they were recruited by a teacher who took the survey (two school the researcher interned at sent it to all teachers, or they are associated with *New Hope for Kids*. More than 90 teachers were asked to take the survey. The response rate was 29% since 26 teachers answered the survey. Of those who participated 92% (24) currently teach or taught in the past in Florida. The 8% (2) are in Maryland and Louisiana.

For the purpose of this study, 26 teachers completed the survey, all but one have or currently are teaching within the United States of America. (The one exception was a substitute.) Of the teachers surveyed 83% (or 20 teachers) teach in a public school setting while the others taught in a private school setting (two skipped the question). Teachers who participated in the survey teach a range of subjects including pre-kindergarten, elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade), middle school (within a kindergarten to eighth grade setting), specials (physical fitness), special education (ESE), or are curriculum resource in an elementary setting. Of the teacher participants 73% (or 19 teachers) have had a grieving child in their classroom before.

Table 1: Background of Teacher Participants

Participant:	School setting:	State:	Grade taught:	Had a grieving student:
Teacher A		Florida		Yes
Teacher B		Florida		Yes
Teacher C	Private	Maryland	2nd, 3rd	Yes
Teacher D	Private	Louisiana	4th	Yes
Teacher E	Private (and some public experience)	Florida	K-5	Yes
Teacher F	Public	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, 4th	Yes
Teacher G	Private	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, 3rd	Yes
Teacher H	Public	Florida	3rd, 4th, 5th, ESE	Yes
Teacher I	Public	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, 3rd	Yes
Teacher J	Public	Florida	1st, 3rd	Yes
Teacher K	Public	Florida	2nd, 4th, 5th, PE	Yes
Teacher l	Public	Florida	7th	Yes
Teacher M	Public	Florida	3rd, 4th, Curriculum Resource	Yes
Teacher N	Public	Florida	Pre-K, 2nd	No
Teacher O	Public	Florida	1st, 2nd, 3rd	yes
Teacher P	Public	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, ESE	yes
Teacher Q	Public	Florida	1st, Substitute	Yes
Teacher R	Public	Florida	1st, 4th	No
Teacher S	Public	Florida	3rd	No
Teacher T	Public	Florida	1st, 2nd, 3rd	No
Teacher U	Private	Florida (Az, La, DoD)	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th	Yes
Teacher V	Public	Florida	4th, 5th, 6th	No
Teacher W	Public	Florida	K-5, 2nd	No
Teacher X	Public	Florida	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th	Yes
Teacher Y	Public	Florida	4th, 5th, 6th	No
Teacher Z	Public	Florida	Pre-K, 1st, 2nd	Yes

Caregivers Background

Caregivers were chosen to complete the survey or to participate in an interview because they are close to a child who experienced the loss of a loved one while they were in elementary school. Fifteen mothers answered the survey or sat down for an interview, as well as one father and two grandparents. Caregivers who participated reported a wide range of relationships between the person who died and the grieving child they care for. These include four mothers, twelve fathers, two siblings, one uncle and one friend. The grade levels of the children they care for also had a wide range with the majority being in kindergarten at the time of the death, and being spread throughout elementary school (kindergarten through fifth grade). One reported caring for a ninth grader and few also reported caring for younger children in addition to the elementary aged student. It was also reported that the time since the death ranged from less than six months to three years.

Table 2: Background of Caregiver Participants

Participant:	Relation to grieving child:	Relationship of dead to child:	Grade Child was in when death occurred:	School setting:
Caregiver A	Father	Mother	K-5	Private
Caregiver B	Mother	Father	2nd, 4 th	Private (moved to public)
Caregiver C			K-5	Public
Caregiver D				Public
Caregiver E			3 rd	Private
Caregiver F				Public
Caregiver G			3 rd	Public
Caregiver H	Mother	Father	K-5, 5th, 9 th	Public
Caregiver I	Mother	Father	K-5, 1 st	Private (left for public)
Caregiver J	Mother	Father	3 rd	Public
Caregiver K	Mother	Uncle	1 st	Public
Caregiver L	Mother	Father	4 th	Public
Caregiver M	Mother	Sibling	K-5, 2nd, 4 th	Public
Caregiver N	Mother	Sibling	K-5, 2 nd	Private
Caregiver O	Mother	Father	2 nd	Public
Caregiver P	Mother	Father	1st (addition 2 year old)	Public
Caregiver Q	Mother	Father	2 nd	Public
Caregiver R	Mother	Father	5 th	Public
Caregiver S	Grandparent	Mother	4th	Public
Caregiver T	Mother	Father	K-5 (addition 2 year old who is now in K-5)	Public
Caregiver U	Mother	Father	K-5	Public
Caregiver V	Grandparent	Mother	K-5	Homeschool
Caregiver W	Mother	Father	3 rd	Public

Students Background

Students who were surveyed or interviewed were chosen because they experienced the death of a loved one while in elementary school. All students who were involved in this study either formerly or current attend *New Hope for Kids*. The educational backgrounds varied among participants and covered an array consisting of public, private and home school. Of those interviews and/or surveyed five were female and one was male. Two of the student participants were in kindergarten when their loved one died, one student each in first, second, third and fifth. Four of the students lost their fathers while the other two lost their mothers. Two of the female participants, who lost their father, are sisters.

Table 3: Background of Student Participants

Participant:	Gender:	Grade when death occurred:	Grieved death of:
Kid A	Male	K-5	Mother
Kid B	Female	2nd	Father
Kid C	Female	4th	Father
Kid D	Female	5th	Father
Kid E	Female	K-5	Father
Kid F	Female	1st	Mother

CHAPTER FOUR: METHODOLOGY

I began this project after being a grief facilitator at *New Hope for Kids* for seven months. It was there that I learned about the hardships that students go through when transition back into their lives after the death of a loved one. I began working as a grief facilitator hoping to learn a few things that I could apply to my own classroom one day. I quickly learned that I would be learning more than just a few things. The combination of being an elementary education major and hearing the experiences of the students who attend *New Hope for Kids* I was inspired with the help of my committee to try to help shed some light on the needs of these students and to guide teachers in the process. This thesis gathered information from teachers, caregivers, and students who have experienced a loss while in elementary school. Information was collected through interviews (focus groups) and online surveys. Before interview and survey questions could be created I was approved to conduct human research by the University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board.

Next I met with my committee and created a list of questions I wished to ask each population (teachers, caregivers and students). At this time I also decided to the best way to collect data would be through focus groups. The hope was to collect large quantities of data all at one time. I also thought that by holding one centralized conversation I would be able to gather data on the same topics from each participant (if they had something to add to it). I thought that participants would be more comfortable sharing their thoughts and feelings with a group who had been through a similar event as well.

Once I knew what I wanted to ask I worked with the coordinator of *New Hope for Kids* to get the word out about who I am and that I need the assistance of families from the center (both

past and present) and teachers in order to conduct research. This was done through e-mail invitations. The e-mail contained a short background of myself and what I was doing as well as an initial survey. This survey asked basic questions (caregivers: relationship to student, relationship of dead to student, satisfied with teacher response, willingness to participate in focus group; teacher: current or former elementary school teacher, school setting, grades taught, had they had a grieving child before, willingness to participate in focus group). The e-mail also acted as an invitation to three 45 minute focus groups (one for caregivers, one for students and one for teachers) for an afternoon in November that would take place at the *New Hope for Kids* center in Maitland Florida. It was included that child care would be provided (by *New Hope for Kids* volunteers) as well as refreshments for participants.

There was little response to these initial surveys and even fewer participants showed up for the focus groups. Only three students and two caregivers turned out to participate in the focus groups and each family showed up at a separate times so the focus groups became interviews (Kid A, caregiver A, Kids B and C, and Caregiver B). (Please see appendix A for transcripts of interviews). Each interview lasted between 8 ½ to 21 minutes, with the average being 15 minutes. The interviews provided a wealth of knowledge to be applied to this project but the low response rate made me reevaluate my method of gathering data. It was at this time I decided the best way to recruit participants from all three populations and to collect data would be to switch to entirely online surveys.

The online surveys (Please see Appendix B, C, and D) were created by me with the outcome of this research in mind through an account on Survey Monkey

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/>. The main goal was to gather information of individual's experiences, what they wanted to know, or hindsight knowledge they thought would be helpful now. I believed that the online surveys would draw a higher number of responses because they were non-threatening (didn't have to meet face to face to talk about experiences), they could be complete at the participants own pace, and they could feel more comfortable to only answer the questions they felt pertained to their experiences.

In these surveys participants were also asked basic questions to be sure they met the characteristics needed for this project. Teachers were asked if they are or were teachers, where they teacher, the school setting they teach in, the grades they have taught and if they have had a grieving child in their classroom and how prepared they feel to aid a grieving child in their classroom. These questions were followed by open ended questions such as what information they felt is important for teachers to know when aiding a grieving child and experiences they have had with a grieving child in the classroom. Caregivers were asked basic questions such as their relationship to a grieving child, the relationship the grieving child had to the person who died, the grade of the child they care for, how long has passed since the death, the school setting the child attended, and if they were satisfied with how the child's teacher handled the child's grief. The next part of the survey contained more open ended questions including: actions the teacher took that the caregiver was unsatisfied with, what they wished the teacher had known or done to help, what the teacher did that was helpful. Students were asked basic questions such as gender, grade at time of the death, who passed away, and did they like the way their teacher handled their return to school after the death. The second part of the survey contained open ended questions: what they liked that their teacher did during the time leading up to and right

after their loved one's death, what they did not like that their teacher did during the time leading up to and right after their loved one's death, what they wished their teacher had known, what they wished their teacher had done differently, how their peers reacted and if this upset them, if they were involved in telling their peers about the death and if that was okay with them, and finally any advice they had for other students who are going through what they went through.

Once surveys were created they were once again sent out through the direction of *New Hope for Kids* to past and present families associated with the center. Teacher surveys were circulated to teachers the researcher knew or had worked with in the past. These teachers also shared a link to the survey with their colleagues. Some of the caregivers who participated in the study forwarded the invitation to teachers their child's teachers.

The more detailed surveys were available to be answered online for about a month and a half. After that the data was collected. The online survey company created graphs of some of the data and tables of the free response answers. I was able to then add to that the information I gathered in the interviews that were conducted in late November. In the data I looked for common themes and used this to create the quick reference pages.

CHAPTER FIVE: RESULTS

The findings from teachers, caregivers and students were compiled to create a guide for teachers to use when they have a grieving child in their classroom (Please see Appendix H).

Once the research was gathered and analyzed it was apparent a few different themes were noticeable amongst all three populations. These themes include the need for communication, the need for monitoring of the student's emotional, social, and academic progress, making the students aware that the teacher is there to listen when they need to talk, and the need for the teacher to provide comfort.

Teachers

The survey created for teachers was completed by 26 participants. (For complete survey results please see Appendix E.) A little over 83% of these teachers either currently teach or have taught in a public school, the others teach in a private school setting. The teachers surveyed teach within the range of pre-kindergarten to seventh grade. Surveys were also completed by special education teachers (ESE), a physical fitness teacher, a curriculum resource teacher and a substitute teacher who has experience in kindergarten through fifth grade in both mainstream and ESE classrooms. When asked if they have had a grieving child in their class before, 73% of the teachers surveyed said yes. However, I found that the average rating of how prepared they felt to aid a grieving child in their own classroom was at 5.42 when rating on a scale from 1 (completely unprepared) to 10 (very prepared). This means that while 73% of teachers surveyed have had a grieving child in their classroom the average teacher only feels somewhat prepared to help aid these children.

When asked what information they felt is most important to know if there is a grieving child in their classroom survey respondents overwhelmingly agreed that communication is key. As the teacher of a grieving child they felt it was imperative to communicate with the family about what is happening at home and if the child's basic needs are being met. It was shared that the teacher will need to learn the relationship the child had to the person who died and how close they were as well as the family's beliefs and how they are coping. One respondent thought it necessary to find out if there are any triggers for the child they might encounter while at school. Teachers also felt that open communication needs to be established with the grieving students as well. When they return to school they need to be aware that they have a support system. By communicating that you are willing to listen you are letting the child know they can trust you and feel comfortable and willing to share openly with you about their emotions, concerns, or anything else.

Teachers surveyed also shared the need to know "*how to not say the wrong thing*" and "*how to comfort them when they are upset.*" They also shared a need for information on community resources and counseling options that are available. A few of these resources have been provided on the help guide (please see Appendix H).

Teachers who responded to the survey had some helpful tidbits to share about listening to the grieving child. They shared from their personal experiences after having had a grieving child in their classroom in the past. One teacher stated that just giving the students their undivided attention for a few minutes was helpful. It was shared by a few of the teachers that by letting the child know that their teacher cares for them and is there to listen if they want to talk went a long way. Along with listening it was expressed that as teacher we need to remember to be patient

with the child. We must keep in mind that this is a new experience for the child and they don't always know how to control their emotions or verbalize their needs. Sometimes they aren't even sure what they are feeling or why. Another teacher shared that "*often, a smile or hug is all the child needs to get through the day, and knowing how to read a child's emotional gauge is very important.*" A teacher from a private Catholic school shared that she feels it is a little easier when faith and belief in God can be brought into the conversation. The same teacher also states that she reminds a child in her class that her loved one that passed away is proud of her. She also stresses that the child that she is loved and that her family needs her help. Another teacher shared the importance of reading the students and only pushing them only as far as they are comfortable with. This particular teacher told her student that if the student wanted to talk that she would be there for her, but she would not push her into talking or ask questions if they child was uncomfortable. The teacher kept true to her word and evidently the student approached her to talk.

The next theme seen in teacher responses was providing comfort and support. One teacher said she expressed support for the family of a grieving student in her class by attending the funeral. She also had the child peers make cards and letters that were hand delivered to show that the class supported the student as well. This teacher drew from her personal experiences to connect with the student and together they were able to talk through some of the child feelings.

One teacher allowed the child to write or draw about their feelings and that seemed helpful. Another teacher shared that a young physical fitness teacher at her school passes away and she used the book The Fall of Freddie the Leaf by Leo Buscaglia to help put death into the language and setting that her students could understand.

Table 4: Teacher Survey Results

Participant:	School setting:	State:	Grade taught:	Had a grieving student:	How prepared (1 to 10):
Teacher A		Florida		Yes	1
Teacher B		Florida		Yes	4
Teacher C	Private	Maryland	2nd, 3rd	Yes	9
Teacher D	Private	Louisiana	4th	Yes	7
Teacher E	Private (and some public experience)	Florida	K-5	Yes	5
Teacher F	Public	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, 4th	Yes	6
Teacher G	Private	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, 3rd	Yes	8
Teacher H	Public	Florida	3rd, 4th, 5th, ESE	Yes	8
Teacher I	Public	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, 3rd	Yes	8
Teacher J	Public	Florida	1st, 3rd	Yes	5
Teacher K	Public	Florida	2nd, 4th, 5th, PE	Yes	5
Teacher l	Public	Florida	7th	Yes	4
Teacher M	Public	Florida	3rd, 4th, Curriculum Resource	Yes	6
Teacher N	Public	Florida	Pre-K, 2nd	No	6
Teacher O	Public	Florida	1st, 2nd, 3rd	yes	5
Teacher P	Public	Florida	K-5, 1st, 2nd, ESE	yes	8
Teacher Q	Public	Florida	1st, Substitute	Yes	8
Teacher R	Public	Florida	1st, 4th	No	5
Teacher S	Public	Florida	3rd	No	3
Teacher T	Public	Florida	1st, 2nd, 3rd	No	1
Teacher U	Private	Florida (Az, La, DoD)	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th	Yes	5
Teacher V	Public	Florida	4th, 5th, 6th	No	3
Teacher W	Public	Florida	K-5, 2nd	No	3
Teacher X	Public	Florida	1st, 2nd, 3rd, 5th	Yes	5
Teacher Y	Public	Florida	4th, 5th, 6th	No	6
Teacher Z	Public	Florida	Pre-K, 1st, 2nd	Yes	7

Caregivers

The caregiver survey was completed by 21 participants with an additional two being interviewed. (For complete survey results please see Appendix F and for interview transcripts please see Appendix: A.) Of those surveyed and interviewed 65% were the mother of a grieving child, 9% were the grandparent of a grieving child and 4% were the father of a grieving child (22% did not answer the question). When asked if they liked the way their child's teacher handled the child's grief 65% said yes, 13% said no, and 22% said they were indifferent. A caregiver who was interviewed stated that she felt her child teacher did enough, but that she was not satisfied with the school's counseling program. She felt her children needed to visit the school's counselor more than the one time they did while attending the school. Another caregiver from the survey stated that the teacher was very caring and understanding of the situation and was able to help her child get back on track with school work, but not with the grief. Yet another caregiver from the survey results stated that "there was no way for the teacher to understand what was happening." "There were just no resources to help my daughter deal with her pain."

Caregivers were then asked what actions or lack of from their child's teacher that they were unsatisfied with. Caregivers shared that there was a lacking of willingness to communicate about any problems between home and school. Another shared that the "teacher did not pay attention to the other children's treatment of my child."

When asked what the caregivers wished their child's teacher had known or done to help communication and school counseling were mentioned by multiple caregivers. One caregiver wanted at least weekly communication on how their child was doing academically, emotionally

and socially at school. Many parented both surveyed and interviewed would have liked for a school guidance counselor to have checked on their children on a regular basis. In an interview a caregiver expressed that he felt his child's teacher should have monitored questions and statements directed at his son more closely after the death. His son quickly became overwhelmed and felt bullied by other students. This same caregiver stated how important it is to consider accommodations for children who have lost a loved one when doing activities based around that person (i.e. Mother's day or Father's day).

Next caregivers were asked what their child's teacher did that they found to be helpful. Sympathetic and loving, supportive, patience, professionalism, kindness, and comforting were some of the words caregivers used to describe the teachers they felt were helpful to both themselves and their grieving child. One caregiver expressed through the survey that their child's teacher stayed in touch through email while still respecting the family's privacy. The same teacher also "coached the other children not to treat my son any differently when he returned to school and only speak of his dad's death if my son wanted to (not to ask)." Another teacher spoke to the child's classmates before she returned to school giving them time to ask questions without upsetting the child. A different caregiver stated that the child's teacher was understanding of how far behind the child was and tried to help the child catch up. One caregiver stated that her children's teachers tried not to focus on father centered activities and even lead discussions on how everyone's family is different and then had the whole class complete an activity for someone they loved instead of a specific person (in this case a father). Other caregiver said that teacher gave room for uncles, grandfather or other men to attend events when a father normally would. A caregiver shared that her oldest child's teacher recommended

books because she knew the child's passion for reading. It was also shared that the school allowed the children to meet up for emotional comfort during school hours if needed. A caregiver stated that their child's teacher is who referred them to Hospice for counseling. Another school's guidance counselor recommended *New Hope for Kids* to the family. By sharing these local resources with the family they were able to provide help and comfort. A caregiver stated that her child's teacher kept the school day as normal as possible but provided her a safe place to go if she needed to excuse herself from class.

Table 5: Caregiver Survey Results

Participant:	Relation to grieving child:	Relationship of dead to child:	Grade Child was in when death occurred:	School setting:	Satisfied with Teacher response:
Caregiver A	Father	Mother	K-5	Private	Yes
Caregiver B	Mother	Father	2nd, 4 th	Private (moved to public)	Yes
Caregiver C			K-5	Public	No
Caregiver D				Public	Indifferent
Caregiver E			3 rd	Private	Yes
Caregiver F				Public	Indifferent
Caregiver G			3 rd	Public	Indifferent
Caregiver H	Mother	Father	K-5, 5th, 9 th	Public	Yes
Caregiver I	Mother	Father	K-5, 1 st	Private (left for public)	Yes
Caregiver J	Mother	Father	3 rd	Public	Yes
Caregiver K	Mother	Uncle	1 st	Public	Yes
Caregiver L	Mother	Father	4 th	Public	Yes
Caregiver M	Mother	Sibling	K-5, 2nd, 4 th	Public	Indifferent
Caregiver N	Mother	Sibling	K-5, 2 nd	Private	No
Caregiver O	Mother	Father	2 nd	Public	Indifferent
Caregiver P	Mother	Father	1st (addition 2 year old)	Public	Yes
Caregiver Q	Mother	Father	2 nd	Public	Yes
Caregiver R	Mother	Father	5 th	Public	No (Sometimes)
Caregiver S	Grandparent	Mother	4th	Public	Yes
Caregiver T	Mother	Father	K-5 (addition 2 year old who is now in K-5)	Public	Yes
Caregiver U	Mother	Father	K-5	Public	Yes
Caregiver V	Grandparent	Mother	K-5	Homeschool	Yes
Caregiver W	Mother	Father	3 rd	Public	Yes

Students

The students survey was completed by three children and an additional three were interviewed. Of the students who shared about their experiences 83% (5) were female. (For complete survey results please see Appendix G.) Of these 17% (1) were in kindergarten, 17% (1) were in each of first, second, third and fifth grades. Of these six grieving students 67% (4) had lost a father while the other 33% had lost their mother. For the most part these students liked the way their teacher handled their return to school after the death. Student who were not completely satisfied shared that they had wished their teacher had not told their peers about their situation and therefore implied that they wished they had been involved in getting to choose what information was communicated.

When asked what they liked that their teacher had done one student said her teacher was “kind and willing to help me catch up.” While another said that the teacher told her class that the student would not be coming to class because her dad died. (This shows that it is the wish of the child to not be involved in telling the class, but that the peers still know. While another student wished her peers had not been told as a whole group and she had been in control of sharing with a few people when she felt ready.)

When asked what the grieving students had wished their teacher had known at the time one student expressed that she needed extra hugs while another wished her teacher had known how their dad died (cancer). Yet another student wished her teacher had known about the abuse that had happened. (This student did not elaborate on the type of or timing of the abuse, but teachers should always be on the lookout for abuse of any kind in the lives of their students!)

When asked what the students wished their teacher had done differently one student stated that she wished the class had made cards or had signed a card for her. (Once again communication must be open to know if the student wants his/her peers to know about the death.)

When asked about peer reaction a few of the students mentioned that questions and comments made by their peers became hurtful and overwhelming. One student wished “someone had answered them for me.” While another student confronted his surviving parent about his peers questions and comments. Yet another student said it was overwhelming to have her peers tell her things like “Oh, I’m sorry for you” or “I don’t want to go through what you are going through.”

Next students were asked if they got to be a part of telling their peers that their loved one had passed away. One of the students interviewed said that no one really told her peers, it just came out in casual conversation that they knew one day that she said “my dad’s dead.” This student did not want her peers to know, but her caregiver had told the school before the student started there. This student’s sibling said that her peers found out one day when she became very emotional and her teacher spent some one on one time with her. While other students felt it was better that their teachers told their peers before they returned to school. One student added that they didn’t like talking about it. Yet another grieving student shared that she did not share about the death of their loved one for fear or rejection by their peers.

Finally students were asked if they had any advice for other elementary students who may go through what they did in the future. Surveyed students stated they would want to tell

others not to “dwell on it” while another said “it’ll be okay.” One of the students said “If you are scared to tell your class your loved one died know there are other people going through what you’re going through and you can always have your teacher tell them.”

Table 6: Student Survey Results

Participant:	Gender:	Grade when death occurred:	Grieved death of:	Satisfied with teacher response:
Kid A	Male	K-5	Mother	Yes
Kid B	Female	2 nd	Father	Yes
Kid C	Female	4 th	Father	No
Kid D	Female	5 th	Father	Yes
Kid E	Female	K-5	Father	Yes
Kid F	Female	1 st	Mother	Yes

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND FUTURE RESEACH

Conclusion

After conducting research through surveys and interviews is was found that there were four main themes that need to be addressed when aiding a grieving child: communication, monitoring, listening and comforting.

The need for communication was a main concern for all three demographics. This includes communication on the student's academic, social and emotional changes or progress at school. Parents shared a concern for the lack of resources that were shared by their child's school and teachers expressed a need for knowledge on resources they could share with families about counseling and other ways to help. It was found that communication needs to be open between the teacher and the grieving child's classmates after the teacher has talked with the student to find out how much information they want to share with their peers. One caregivers expressed that their child's teacher "coached the other children not to treat my son any differently when he returned to school and only speak of his dad's death if my son wanted to (not to ask)." This helped to keep the child's peers from overwhelming him with questions and comments, which was a concern of additional caregivers.

Next it was found that there is the need for monitoring. Teachers must monitor student's progress academically, socially and emotionally. (In order to communicate with families about these topics you must watch to see if there is any change.) Students and caregivers alike expressed a desire for teachers to monitor peer reactions and questions that are directed at the grieving child as well. Often times the questions add up quickly and become overwhelming and uncomfortable for the student.

Teachers shared that from past experiences letting a child know that you are there to listen if they need you was very helpful. By not overwhelming the child, but allowing them to move at their own pace allows them to relax, develop trust and eventually feel comfortable sharing. Teachers can do this by reflecting what the child is saying when they do share. They can provide activities for the child to do in class (drawing, journaling, books, etc.) to create an outlet for the child's emotions. A safe zone can also be created where the child can go if they need some time to themselves.

Finally providing the child with comfort can be very helpful. Knowing your students and not pushing them outside of their comfort zone is important. You do not want to push the child because they may have the opposite effect you were hoping for! Let the child know you are there to listen if they need you, but wait for them to come to you. A student may be more comfortable sharing with you about themselves through the use of bibliotherapy. They can relate to a character in a book or express their thoughts, emotions, or feelings as that of the character.

Educational Implications

After completing this research I learned that teachers who are currently or have taught in classrooms in that past only felt themselves to be slightly more than somewhat prepared (5.42 on a scale of one to ten) to aid a grieving student in the classroom. This number was rather shocking considering just over 73% (19) teachers responded that they have had a grieving child in their class before. To help teachers feel more prepared and comfortable aiding grieving children in the classroom I believe that the issue should be addressed in a pre-service teacher's education. By providing teachers with resources and guides they will feel more prepared and

therefore at ease when aiding a grieving child and their family. After all knowledge cannot be shared that is not known! By providing in-services for current teachers they will have a better understanding of what they can do and provide for the students and how to make the experiences as painless for the student as possible.

Once the teacher knows how they can help and resources they can provide it will make transition back to school easier on the child. In the classroom a teacher can provide a safe zone for kids to go when they need a moment away. They can create a plan with the child to allow them to draw or journal about emotion if the child feels the need during the school day. The teacher can also provide age-appropriate books for the child and help open dialogue about emotions (bibliotherapy).

Future Research

In the future I would like to expand this project. I would like to include even more participants so as to get a more accurate reading of the population. Ideally I would open the research to participants who have experiences dealing with grief in middle and high school as well. It would be interesting to see the relation between coping methods and developmental stages. I would also like to conduct more face to face interviews to get a better understanding of the participants' thoughts and feelings behind their answers. From further research I hope to be able to provide detailed descriptions and directions of activities and what intervention in the classroom for a grieving child would look like.

Lessons Learned

Any teacher knows that flexibility is key in the classroom and that was demonstrated in this project. Once the proposal was completed I learned from my students and mentors and

made changes along the way. I adapted the topic of the project to better serve the community I am hoping to reach. I also altered the means by which I gathered data.

The most difficult part of this research project was trying to coordinate focus groups. I have learned that it is very difficult to try to organize multiple people to be in the same place at the same time who have experienced the topic at hand. I found that surveys, while not as thorough as a face to face interview, seemed to get the job done. The combination of the freedom and the lack of pressure it placed on participants helped in collecting quality responses.

Another lesson I have learned is that if you start small it's easier to expand further down the road rather than try to shrink an already huge idea. I wanted to do so much with this project, but I learned that you have to start with a strong foundation before building upon it. I believe that is what this project is.

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

APPENDIX A: INTERVIEW TRANSCRIPTS

Student A

Age now: 9

Age at time of death: 6

Death: mother

School: private

Me: This is recording and I'm just going to record so I can type up some notes later, okay?

Kid A: Okay

Me: And if I ever say your name it will never appear in my typed writing, okay?

Kid A: Okay

Me: So you will be kid A. I'm going to ask you some questions. You are 9 years old and your mom died when you were six, right?

Kid A: yep.

Me: And you were in school when your mom died?

Kid A: no, I was actually in the hospital with her when she died.

Me: Oh, so you were at the hospital when mom died, but you were in kindergarten at the time?

Yeah, do you remember that? Yeah, okay. Were you scared to go back to school after your mom died? Do you remember?

Kid A: I was actually pretty sad that I had to go back to school then, because my dad had to call me home and call me back to take me to the hospital.

Me: Oh so your dad came and picked you up from school to go she her in the hospital when your mom was dying?

Kid A:

Me: What about right after your mom died, did you go back to school right away?

Kida A: yeah

Me: Maybe a couple of days later?

Kida A:

Me: Were you scared to go back? Did you want to go back?

Kid A:

Me: Can you tell me why?

Kid A:

Me: So you were scared that people would make fun of you because they had a mom and you didn't? Okay, did your teacher help you any? Yeah, can you tell me how?

Kid A: On mother's day, they made a little box that said my mom's name on it. And they gave me some flowers and I took it to her grave.

Me: Did your teacher tell your class that your mom died before you came back to school, do you know?

Kid A: Yeah, I don't know.

Me: Did the other kids know when you came back that she had died? Did they know she was sick?

Kid A: Yeah, she had cancer.

Me: did you tell your friends that your mom had cancer or did your teacher?

Kid A: My teacher did

Me: And you think your teacher told your classmates that your mom died too? Did you like that your teacher told them that?

Kid A: I was sorta okay with that, but then I was like I don't know if I'm okay with that. I don't know what to say!

Me: Did you get to decide if your class knew? Or do you think your teacher just told the class?

Kid A: My teacher told my class because I came into school late.

Me: Oh okay, did your teacher do anything to help you after your mother died. Before you said they did a special project with you on mother's day but did they do anything else?

Kid A: Yeah, they kinda helped me around, helped me do work, they helped me do stuff.

Me: Okay, so you feel like you go some extra help after. Can you describe to me what it was like to go back to school after your mom died?

Kid A: I felt scared that I am, it was just stunning.

Me: That's a really good word there Kid A. How did your classmates treat you when you got back to school?

Kid A: They um, they actually felt bad for me, and I felt sad. And they asked me a lot of questions.

Me: did you like that they were asking you so many questions?

Kid A: No

Me: do you wish they hadn't asked so many questions?

Kid A: yeah

Me: Do you feel comfortable sharing your experiences and emotions with your classmates and teachers? Did you feel safe, did you feel like if you didn't want to share you didn't have to?

Kid A: I felt like I had to share or people would be like Hey how's your mom doing, and I've have say she's dead and I didn't really feel like telling people that.

Me: You didn't really feel like telling people that your mom had died. You said that you remember that your teachers gave you extra help and helped you make a mother's day project. Is there anything else that you can remember them doing? Was your teacher like sad with you or did she kinda go on like it was a normal day after you got back.

Kid A: It was not a normal day, everyone kept on asking me questions.

Me: Do you wish your teacher had done anything differently when you came back after your mom had died?

Kid A: No

Me: You said before that you wish your teacher hadn't told your classmates that your mom had died.

Kid A: I wish they had, but no be like "Kid A's mom is dead" (said very matter-of-factly) but be more like "Kid A's mom is now dead because she had cancer." (said soothingly)

Me: So you wish they had taken more time to explain it, maybe?

Kid A: yeah

Me: do you think you would have wanted to be there when they explained it?

Kid A: yeah

Me: Do you think you had a support system at school. Teacher, counselors, or anything you could talk to when you were feeling sad or angry?

Kid A: I could ask my friend, I could tell my friend.

Me: did you have any ways that you could express your emotions in class. Like a journal or were you allowed to leave the classroom when you got too sad?

Kid A: No.

Me: What would you like to have been able to do?

Kid A: Not come home from school one or two days, stay home so it would wear off, then telling. Then just like come in and talk to me about it.

Me: So you wish that your teacher had let you be a part of telling your classmates that your mom had died, but then stay home for a few days so you won't have to answer so many questions?

Kid A: No I mean I wish I could stay home from school then.

Me: Now or then?

Kid A: then

Me: then. Cause, you went right back to school in the next couple of days. Where there any books after the death that you read that helped you with the grief?

Kid A: After that I read like 5 or 6 books.

Me: Did any of them help you with your grief?

Kid A: No, not really

Me: Oh, so reading is just one of your outlets?

Kid A: Yeah

Me: Do you see a counselor now besides coming to New Hope?

Kid A: A counselor, I use to. But then I stopped because I felt a little bit better.

Me: Does anyone at school check up on you?

Kid A: No

Me: Not that you can think of?

Kid A: Yeah

Caregiver A

Dad of Kid A

Me: (Brief on what thesis is about) Did you have anxiety about your child returning to school after the death?

Caregiver A: Oh defiantly yeah. I think you try to figure out how to put your paddle into the water the first time. Clearly, anxiety, but it was probably tempered significantly because I was in a fog. So it probably would have been more anxiety if I had been in a clear mind. Having been through that death, you know you just try to keep the wheels on that kind of stuff, but yeah there was defiantly anxiety. But at the same time he goes to a private school in Oviedo. The administration and 99% of teachers came to his mother's memorial service so they were very in tune, very supportive. At the same time he was in a class of 1 teacher and 19 kids including himself. So you know, the teacher can be in line and that kind of thing, but with 19 kids in second grade, 1st grade, 2nd grade at that time.

Me: Was there anything specific that you were scared of about him returning because of, or just the whole idea of it?

Caregiver A: I think the biggest things; it's not a whole lot different from when adults return to work. And that is what do I tell people, what are they going to ask me, what do I respond, how do I retain my dignity and that kind of thing. So those were the hot topics and I was concerned having him mentally prepared for those kind of things. Letting him know that I was always available for him, but still he's in the classroom and he has to dance on his own. Surprisingly everything I was concerned about came true, which is not good.

Me: Where you satisfied with your child's teacher's involvement around the time of the death.

You said that the teacher, faculty and staff came to the memorial service, but the time leading up to, during and right after?

Caregiver A: They were very supportive. I think isn't not so much, she was in Hospice for 5 days, so those were the days. I was the primary caregiver for her and then I was the bus driver for him. It never really impacted things until she was hospitalized and then Hospice and that kind of stuff. Kid A is academically pretty bright so him falling behind was not really an issue, managing his mental health was the issue. And like you said they were hands off, let us know what you need kind of thing.

Me: So they made themselves available to you and allowed you to make the decisions.

Caregiver A: Yeah.

Me: Okay, perfect. What did they do that you found beneficial or supportive? And you said that they let you make the decisions.

Caregiver A: Well yeah, I mean there just was no pressure. They didn't contribute to anything pressure wise and I think that they were available to have somebody come into their classroom if we needed it. Tamari and I talked about having a representative from here (*New Hope for Kids*) go down to the school and talk to the kids if there was a need for that. Other than that I have to tell you it was just a fog. You are kind of running around with rain on the windshield with no rain-x. But I can remember the teachers and administrations and everybody was caring. The biggest challenge that I had, is that more social graces than anything. Is that everybody knew my name and I knew very little of the teachers names. You know when someone says hi to you, you prefer they say "Hi Caitlin." It was a hurry up lesson in learning teachers names and going to the

internet and matching their pictures and stuff. So you can be gracious to them because I went from dual caregiver of Kid A to all of a sudden I'm the only one. Tony, his mother, had been semi active in reading, in low intensity activities such as reading to the kids, so everybody knew her and appreciated that. And then she's gone

Me: So you felt like it all fell into your lap, to pick up the pieces.

Caregiver A: It's not that, it's that I'm the kind of person that likes know people's names. That when someone says hi, I don't just like saying hi.

Me: Did you get to make the choice that Kid A's teachers told his class that his mother had died, or that she was sick?

Caregiver A: You know I honestly, don't know.

Me: It just kinda happened as far as you know.

Caregiver A: She was ill 18 months and so everybody pretty much knew about it and so I think that the teachers talked with them. And that was fine; you know to kind of let them know. So I honestly don't know, but I'm sure that if I had been objective to that they would have been responsive to that. I think that just in the absence of direction that they told the kids. You know what I'm saying?

Me: Okay, Do you wish that the teachers had known more about what to do. Do you feel like they handled it pretty well?

Caregiver A: I think neutrally. I mean this is the nugget that I think may be helpful in your study. I think that with kids, I think that an understanding with kids. Let me site this then I'll come back. Twenty kids, two teachers now, but back then it was one teacher and 19 kids. The kids have a natural curiosity about death, even in the second grade. It's a very diverse group of

students. They are probably very in tuned academically and emotionally and that kind of stuff. He went back to school about two weeks before spring break and within a week of his mother's passing. And um, you don't think about this but each child in their own little way would come up to him and ask: what's it like not having a mother. And or well you failed at this because you don't have a mother, you did badly on the spelling or kickball or what every the situation would be. And I didn't really bring it to the attention of the teachers. I was going to if it had persisted, but we had spring break and with their little minds it was gone once spring break had passed. They forgot which worked out well. I prefer to have things work out on their own as opposed to parental action. I think that the biggest thing that would have been helpful would for me to be more aware of what the kids were going to ask him. What I did was sit down with Kid A and tell him "I know it seems like they are being mean, but you need to understand that you have gone through their worse fear. You know when you are that age losing a parent is, and all of a sudden you and your situation if a reality and they know it can happen and all that stuff. They are sining you up to see how you would handle it because they don't know how you would handle it should the same thing occur. I mean they are harsh and they aren't the kinds of questions you really want from your buds, but its realty. I don't know how it is going to unfold; I mean we were writing a new chapter in both of our lives. But I will tell you that they aren't as mean as they are terrified because they are looking at you with a twist of fate. Or maybe not in the third grade or the second grade, but there is another 18 years, ten years that they are still under age 18 to have that profound effect. " So I guess the take all from this thing is to have the kids prepare with the teachers or something. I mean it ranges all the way to adults. You know "how you doing" "well my hair is on fire." It a lot like when my oldest son went to medical school, we went to parents

day and the dean said don't ask your kids how they are doing, their hair is on fire they are going crazy and they don't want you to worry! So you have a little bit of that with Kid A, he didn't disclose that till a few weeks had passed and that's when we had the talk.

Me: Would you have preferred that the teacher had tried to monitor the situations/questions a little more?

Caregiver A: I think that teachers can't always know what is going on. But if there was something in your manual about what kinds of questions the kids would ask, similar to the kinds of questions an adult would ask. "How you doing after the death of your spouse" "I'm doing poorly." I don't know what the answer is, but if the teachers knew the kinds of questions they might have the ability to get in front of the power curve for both the kids coming back from the death and the kids that they are going to be interacting with. Does that make sense?

Me: It makes perfect sense!

Caregiver A: It was a learning experience for me so I hope this doesn't come across as that. It's just an awareness of education.

Me: I'm not here to fault any teachers; that is the whole point of this is to help future teachers. So that maybe we can stop some of the problems and they might not even be problems. So that I as a teacher know what to expect and how to handle myself a little better. I'm the kind of person who likes to be prepared and to know what I'm getting into.

Caregiver A: You will never be prepared for everything, just a warning.

Me: Oh, I know! Was there communication between home and school about your son's activities at school, what was going on with him, how he was coping?

Caregiver A: Yeah, I mean I think that this is a small school. I mean I've got three adult children so a lot of people just meet me and ask what's a guy your age with a nine year old? I've said that I've done this before with my older children, I did have a spouse at the time from that. And so, it wasn't like my first rodeo, I'm not an overbearing parent in supervision, but I have interactions, like a lot of times when you have the typical parent-teacher conference we've talked. Not like I'm in the faces or anything, but we've talked so there are no surprises. We all know what is going on, and I'm not talking just with the grief situation, just his normal day to day academics. It's not like I'm cornering him every day, we stand in the parking lot and exchange pleasantries and I ask a few questions and they ask a few questions. You know like checking the engine oil or something like that. So from my stand point if you didn't have that personality, then I think one of the two is going to have to take the initiative.

Me: Okay. Perfect. The last question I have on here. Where there any books that seemed helpful to you or your child?

Caregiver A: Um, we did do one book and I got it from church and it was more recent. It was Where Do People Go When They Die? (by Mindy Avra Portney). You know some validity to that and you know why did God have mom die and those kinds of things. The biggest help to be perfectly honest at least from my stand point are the parent grief sessions. The group grief and then Kid A bring in the little people's kind.

Me: So finding the resources that help you connect with other people in your situation.

Caregiver A: I think that I'm more, instead of from a book, I'm more hands on. And one of the things, I'll put this in from a teacher awareness stand point. And it wasn't just the teacher, it was me too. So she passes away in February. Like I said, I'm still in a fog come mother's day. And

he hops in my jeep all excited, the day before mother's day all excited, and speculating the day before mother's day. And he goes "look, I made mom this mother's day gift." And then it hit him, you know what I'm saying, that there was no mom to give it to. So I mentioned that in group, cause I'm pretty open to disclose my stupidity. And there were about five other dads that went "You too, I thought I was the only one!" You know we just didn't prepare for it. It would be helpful now, and I don't think the teachers you know were prepared for it. Now when May came around this year it was, we modified it. We worked around. Mother's day would be dad's gift, or a parent's gift or something like that that they hand craft. And even to the point where I'm more aware now to have a proxy. You know a lady from church or a friend of ours or something like that that will make themselves present or go to his piano recital or those kind of thing. But you don't think, you aren't far enough ahead of the curve.

Me: It's actually really funny because your son mentioned mother's day and that his teachers helped him make a box for his mother. And took flowers to the grave site and that it rained.

Caregiver A: Because it was pretty profound. At the same time he's got a good sense of humor and I think that's what also I mean, we were doing individual counseling with Hospice for a bit. When the end of those came about we had a celebration with balloons and you know you launch them. We did it at Altamonte, it was a nice calm evening. We released them and they went up, then made a 90 degree turn right into the trees and high line wires. And he thought that was hilarious. I think sometimes parents will think "Oh, my God this is going to be a scaring event." But they are still kids and they get a kick out of goofy happenings. You know I didn't envision that happening, and I was in a state of panic what then I looked over at him he was doubled over laughing so hard.

Me: One last questions is, did your school provide you with resources around the time of the death? Information on hospice, New Hope, or anything else?

Caregiver A: No.

Me: Do you wish they had?

Caregiver A: Well you've got...

Me: What do you wish they had provided you with? Or what do you think it would be important to share with families now that you have gone through it?

Caregiver A: I think that, I was in health care for 30 years. I was a health care consultant. And so the employee assistant program says stuff, I understand them and the mechanics of those. I have three other sons who have tried me. You know they aren't pristine, but they've climbed out and done well. And so I consider myself one who is a little more aware of community service such as Hospice, New Hope and that sort of stuff. But having said that I think I'm unique. That there are a lot of people who may not have access to that. Who are Spanish speaking who don't have the communication skills. My school didn't have any of that. They didn't address that, but I don't think I'm a good proxy for that. In fact when Tony was ill, about half way through I called to see if they had pre-death counseling. You all don't and probably won't in the near term. I honestly don't recall how I found it, I had just known about it for a long time. So there was very little time between her passing and our involvement here.

Me: Having gone through this experience, if another child at your son's school was to lose a parent what resources would you share with them?

Caregiver A: Oh I mean, I tell people that life is a collection of events. Some of the stuff that I tell other parents, some of the stuff that we are doing, I know darn well that it's not if it's when

that they will have an adult, a parent, or a loved one in a similar situation. And I want them to know about New Hope, what it does and what it is, that sort of thing and I'd say better than 50%, more like 80, of the people I talk with don't have any idea what it is. So I think definitely, an awareness of New Hope, a package for the school or something in your book and that's a resource. And the other would be Hospice one for end of life activities but also Hospice being a nonprofit they will allow you to go to six weeks of counseling for free, even if you didn't pass under their roof. I think those two things because most parents don't know what they don't know. On a more personal level, the burial. Not everyone goes to church and you have to figure those things out. Think about how that young person is going to pay their respects to their parent on an ongoing basis as they feel comfortable. Fortunately Kid A was baptized before his mother passed and am a part of the Episcopal church on both sides. I got a lot of assistance from that, stuff that I was just overwhelmed by. So I don't know how you do that in today's society, make mention of church, but it's certainly something to think about.

Me: It defiantly is! Unless you have anything else...

Caregiver A: No, just like I said an awareness on both parties so that you know I blew it on like mother's day or some of these holidays that would incorporate one parent or the other if one is missing would be good for them to be aware of that. And for them to maybe call the parent and say you know this is coming up, do you have any thoughts? These are our thoughts.

Me: So, keep that open communication...

Caregiver A: Especially in the first year when there are instants where one parent would be involved. You know Mother's day, and Father's day would be the same thing if the mother were surviving. Or a day when you have parents in for Thanksgiving feast and those sort of things.

Me: It sure does, thank you so very, very much!

Students B and C

Kid B:	(sisters)	Kid C:
Grade now: 4 (1/2)	at time of death: 2	Grade now: 6 at time of death: 3
Age at time of death: 6		Age at time of death: 6
Death: father		Death: father
School: public and private		School: public and private

Me: I'm just going to ask you a few questions and just give me as much information as you think you can. What grade are you in now?

Kid C: Sixth, she in fourth and a half. She in private school so it's like that.

Me: Okay, and you were going into second and third grade when dad died about two and a half years ago. I'm going to ask you some questions about going back to school and your experiences in school around when and after dad died. So my first question is: What was your level of anxiety when returning to school after the death? Were you scared or nervous?

Kid B: I thought people were going to talk about it, because I have like no parent. And like you can't have no fun, cause you have no parent. And it just made me upset.

Me: So you were scared that people would make fun of you and talk to you because you didn't have a parent and it made you upset. What about you? Were you nervous or scared?

Kid C: I wasn't nervous or scared to go back to school. I didn't want to go back to school because it's like, everybody like have both of their parents. They might be split up but they have both of their parents and they are with somebody every other week. So when I did get to school everybody was like Oh my dad this, my dad that. And I was just like really, whatever.

Me: So you didn't want to go back to school because you didn't want to hear other kids talk about both of their parents?

Kid C: Yeah, and then I didn't want, when I was in school all I did was think about my daddy. When we was alive that's all I did was think about him. And that helped me get my work done. Well, I'm go to school and I not going to get anything done, that's what I was afraid of, my grades failing because of that.

Me: When you went back to school after the summer when you dad passed away did you guys tell your classmates that your dad had died, did your teachers tell them?

Kid C: Nobody, for me nobody told anybody. Like until everybody was like, somebody said something. I don't remember, somebody said something and I was like my dad's dead. But I didn't tell everybody. I told like my best friend. That's the only person I really told, I wasn't going to tell anybody else. I don't talk to you, why would I tell you my personal business. But my mom told the counselor, school counselor and we went to her one day. Like that's all.

Kid B: Just one day. People found out that my dad died when ever we was going to pe. I was just thinking about him because he liked playing sports and it just reminded me of him. And we were going to play flag football and I just started crying. My teacher, she had to take me back to the classroom. And I had to write about him.

Me: And you got to write about him? Okay, so you guys were in control of telling your classmates or telling who you wanted when you wanted. Do you think that was a good experience or would you have rather your teachers have told your class?

Kid B: I think it was a good experience for me, because I don't want the teacher to just tell the class. Cause then the class would just be like I'm sorry that you don't have no dad and just walk

off. And start laughing and that would be really rude. Like you don't know what I'm going through.

Me: Do you agree with her?

Kid C: I liked it that I told one person. Because it's really none of my business for everybody to know, in my class. Like you don't have to feel bad for me there is no reason. So, like yeah.

Me: Did your teachers help you in any ways with your grief after the death? Did they provide resources for you to say journal while in class or allow you to leave if you became too emotional?

Kid C: Yeah my teacher did.

Me: What did she do?

Kid C: She did let me excuse myself from the classroom and I'd go to the bathroom. Um, then when we were doing something in class she's let me go aside and do something else with my one friend. That's all.

Me: Can you give me an example of the situation that had taken place?

Kid C: One day, I think it was like the super bowl. I dad loved football, like every Sunday watched football. So, I don't remember what everybody else was doing, I think we were fixing to have a super bowl party and everybody, she (the teacher) was passing out everything and they were putting up decorations and stuff. Me and my friend sat aside and I drew a picture of you know I think it was of watching football or playing football or something like that. And she (the teacher) gave me paper, and colored pencils, markers all that kind of stuff. Me and my friend drew, she helped me draw my picture.

Me: So you were able to decide if you participated in certain activities or if you made your own activity while the class was doing something else.

Kid C: Mh Hmm

Me: Did you do anything? Did your teachers help you in anyway? Did they provide resources for you to say leave class if you became too emotional or journal or maybe sit in a quiet place by yourself?

Kid B: Yeah, my teacher she did like part of that. My teacher she would just let me like draw a picture like when I would feel like it and I would draw a picture.

Me: How did your classmates react when you went back to school?

Kid B: My classmates kept saying Oh, I'm sorry for you and kept saying I don't want to go through what you are going through and stuff like that.

Me: How did that make you feel?

Kid B: It made me feel like "Okay Kid B don't cry, you can be a big girl"

Me: Do you wish your teacher had done anything while that was going on?

Kid B: No, not really?

Me: What about you, your classmates' reactions?

Kid C: None of my classmates really knew. Just like a couple of my friends. And they would help me with certain things that I needed help with.

Me: Did you feel comfortable sharing your experiences and emotions with your teacher?

Kid C: No

Me: Was it a personal no, or did you feel like you couldn't go to your teacher with that?

Kid C: Well, I could, I knew I could go to my teacher. Mrs. *** was my favorite teacher out of all the years she was my favorite. I know that she was cool, I know that I'd be able to go to her. And be like this is going on and I need you to do certain things for me. She's be like okay you know there but I just didn't want to.

Me: Okay, but you felt like you could have if you needed to?

Kid C: yep

Me: And was that a comfort?

Kid C: Mh hmm

Me: did you feel like you could go to your teachers?

Kid B: No, I just felt uncomfortable. I felt uncomfortable saying it to people. I even feel uncomfortable when my sister is talking about him. I say can you go away or like if she doesn't want to go can you just like stop talking about him.

Me: Okay, so you like to keep it on the inside and you don't like to have to talk about it. Did your teacher respect that?

Kid B: Yeah

Me: And you liked that, so your teacher kind of knew you and knew what you wanted?

Kid B: mh hmm

Me: Can I ask how your dad died? Do you know?

Kid C: He got shot in one of his arteries. A bullet hit one of his arteries and he lost so much blood.

Me: Okay, so you didn't know it was going to happen/

Kid C: But my thing was, it's so stupid he could have survived.

Kid B: He could still be living if he didn't go to a hospital that didn't have no emergency room!

That's not even a hospital!

Kid C: That's a doctor's office! Why would you do that? And you are an ambulance! That makes no sense at all!

Kid B: If you are an ambulance why aren't you a hospital?

Kid C: Like that makes no sense to me! That's what got me mad! But the real thing that got me made about it was that the person who killed my dad wasn't trying to kill my dad.

Kid B: And it was his friend.

Kid C: It was basically his ex brother in law.

Kid B: His homies

Kid C: But his best friend, who they were trying to kill. But they killed my daddy instead, and the dude they tried to kill still alive, he go around. And the reason they tried to kill him, he stole something from them. So he still going around stilling stuff. But ain't nothing happen to you.

Kid B: But it happened to mine. It's not yours it's mine!

Me: Do you think there are support systems for you at school after your dad died? Did you see a counselor or anything like that?

Kid C: We saw a counselor one time.

Me: In school?

Kid C: One counselor.

Kid B: Other than New Hope.

Kid C: One time, one day, one school.

Me: And that wasn't enough, you don't think?

Kid C: No, but I'm kind of glad we didn't go back. Because you know at New Hope Kid B doesn't cry that much. That girl cried the whole time we was there!

Kid B: But then she gave us some candy.

Me: Now you guys are at a different school now then you were before?

Kid B: Yeah, but at this school they are Christians. But these Christians can't afford nothing, jack. This school is small.

Kid C: Broke.

Kid B: It's like small as this house. Yeah, so they don't have no counseling, they don't have no nurse, they don't have nothing. They just have teachers. They don't even have a lunchroom.

Me: Do you think you get support from your teachers?

Kid C: No, they don't care.

Kid B: No, my teacher there she wasn't. When I was crying, I kept on crying and crying and then I couldn't speak. This teacher, I still have her this year. She's not supportive. And she said "Well, I don't know why you crying cause you don't tell me." "Well I'll tell you when I could be able to speak." But the person I told, Mr. Brown, I'd rather have him as my teacher, rather than that unsupportive lady.

Kid C: My teacher don't know, and they aint suppose to. Cause this was two and a half years ago, okay. I don't need to tell you every single school I've been to. I've been to like three different schools.

Me: So you want to be in control of who knows?

Kid C: So four different schools.

Me: So were you in public school when it first happened?

Kid C: Yes, Stonebroke public elementary, then I went to another public elementary in Rosemont, then I went to a private school, the one she goes to know. Now I'm back to public school, so.

Kid B: She on and off at these schools.

Kid C: yeah.

Kid B: Then we be in a private school before. We've been in two private schools.

Me: You guys said that you like to be in control of who finds out that your dad died. But when other people found out, did kids ask you questions?

Kid C: Yes! And that irritated me! I tell you, not the whole wide world. That is not your job, it's mine.

Me: What kind of questions did other kids ask you?

Kid B: Is it true that your dad died? Yes. When did he die?, Non of your business! How did he die? Non of your business. Leave me alone! It's none of your business how it happened, when it happened, where it happened. If I wanted you to know I'd tell you, but I didn't!

Me: Okay, the very last questions I have for you. Where there any books that helped you after the death, in your grief process after the teacher? Oh two hand shot right up! Who wants to go first?

Kid B: The *New Hope for Kids* book! That book with the tree and the apple. It helped to know that I could make more friends. Even a tree!

Kid C: The obituary thing, the little thing that people get when they die, like for a funeral.

Me: Oh, okay like a little card.

Kid B: We had to flip the thing.

Me: A pamphlet?

Kid B: Yeah, with the pictures.

Me: Kind of like a program?

Kid C: Yeah, that.

Me: It kind of said your dad's name and his life and what he did with his life. And I'm sure it mentioned you guys.

Kid B: Yeah, and his kids.

Kid C: Yeah, that. That helped me. So it was really nice. We still have it, we have our own. I can still look at it and be like that was our daddy!

Me: Is there anything you'd like to share with other kids who in the future might be experiencing the same thing?

Kid C: Yes.

Kid B: It's going to be very hard for you! You gonna have to go through a lot of questions, you gonna have to go through a lot of people. It's not going to be easy.

Kid C: But if you go to *New Hope for Kids* you will grief easy, like fast. You'll meet new friends, new people who understand what you are going through. Cause it seems like most the people at New Hope, their daddy died.

Me: So it's important to find a support system that understands you?

Kid C: Yes.

Kid B: Just like New Hope.

Me: Is there anything you'd would like future teachers to know about children who are grieving?

Kid C: Mind your business, no just playing! What I want them to know is don't tell everybody unless I tell you that you can. If they don't give you permission don't just blurt it out. Like "leave her alone, her daddy died." That's rude, if she didn't give you permission. Some kids want the whole world knowing. That just starts a whole new chapter of kids asking questions. There is no point feeling bad for someone useless they want you to feel bad for them.

Me: So you just want teachers to talk to the student who is grieving and find out what they want. If they want to be open about it or not?

Kid C: Yes.

Caregiver B

Mother of Kids B and C

Me: There are just a few questions and you can go into as much depth or as brief as you want to. And we will just kind of move around what I have here and the girls explained to me that it was very sudden and that it happened in the summer. So they went back to school after it happened. So the very first question I have for you is did you have any anxiety about sending your girls back to school?

Caregiver B: No

Me: No, you were pretty comfortable with it.

Caregiver B: Yeah, and I'm going to tell you why. What they probably didn't explain is that they actually had lived with their dad prior to coming back here. So them, he passed away in August, they moved back in July. They had only been back for a month. So, um, when they started school I went and had a meeting with both teachers to let them know what had just happened.

Me: So the girls were brand new to school when they went back as grieving children?

Caregiver B: Here, yeah. So they were new to the school they were attending.

Me: And you met with teachers and so their teachers knew their situations?

Caregiver B: Exactly.

Me: Perfect, were you satisfied with the girls' teachers involvement?

Caregiver B: Um,

Me: Communication, what they did for the girls.

Caregiver B: For the most part. I felt like when I met with the teachers and had told them what had happened they were like okay we have a guidance counselor on staff and whatever. So the kids will be able to meet with this person. That didn't happen. The girls met with this person, I think once. They may have said twice throughout the school year. And I felt like it should have been more frequent than that. You know because Kid B use to have a lot of breakdowns in class. Her teacher would say Kid B had a pretty bad day today; she was really emotional, whatever. My thing is at that point she should have been able to go to the counselor and have a conversation about how she was feeling at that time.

Me: So the teacher was communicating it to you but there was nothing beyond the communication of this is what happened.

Caregiver B: Exactly, right.

Me: Did you like the open communication with the teacher?

Caregiver B: I did, but they didn't have a choice (laughter).

Me: perfect, I kind of get that from you. And you found that beneficial. Were there other things that you thought were beneficial that your girls' teachers did?

Caregiver B: I think because I did make them aware of the situation, uh when they did have their moments they knew to remove them from the situation and let them do whatever they needed to do at that time. You know Kid B would tell me the teacher just let me draw a picture. So I felt like, yes, that was a good thing that I did let them know what the situation was in the beginning.

Me: Where there any/ is there any think you wish the teachers had one differently? You had mentioned the follow through with the counselor.

Caregiver B: Yeah, that's the only thing. Just, you know have them meet with the guidance counselor a little more frequently. If they needed to. And obviously she did.

Me: Is there anything you wish the teachers had known about grieving children before your girls were in their class. As far as how to handle it.

Caregiver B: How to handle it? Yeah, because I'm sure it was probably something new because it was new for me too. So maybe she didn't know that when she had the breakdown I need to send her to the counselor. So they do need to have some type of proposal as to how to handle, you know grieving kids. You know, okay if you recognize or realize that a child is having a difficult time, don't just put them in the corner and tell them here draw a picture. You know, have them go talk to somebody and play or act it out, there frustration or whatever feeling they are having at that time. You know help them to work it out at that time, don't just push it off until she get home and then I got to deal with it.

Me: Okay so maybe have something in the classroom or at a counselor outside of the classroom that allows the child to express the emotion while they are in the moment.

Caregiver B: Exactly.

Me: Did the school provide you with any resources?

Caregiver B: No.

Me: Do you wish that they had?

Caregiver B: Yes, but they can't provide it if they don't know. I gave the counselor more information.

Me: Right so as a follow up, what would you like teacher to provide grieving families with?

Caregiver B: More information as far as outside counseling, individual counseling, group counseling. Things like New Hope. I provided this information to the school. I let them know that there is an organization, you know that can help. Any resources that I got I actually got from here, New Hope. So if they have the knowledge and can provide that to parents, that would be great.

Me: So you are stemming mostly from counseling, inside the school counseling, outside counseling, individual counseling.

Caregiver B: Any kind of counseling, yeah.

Me: Was there anything else? Hospice or um, a dad earlier mentioned social security for his child because one of the parents had died and the child was under eighteen. I mean anything under the sun that you can think of.

Caregiver B: That would be good information for them to provide. Any information that would assist the parents that would benefit the child would be beneficial.

Me: Now you said you got most of your resources from New Hope.

Caregiver B: Right.

Me: What resources are you referring to?

Caregiver B: As far as individual counseling for the girls, um, just outside things for them to do. You know what I mean, stuff that will occupy their time. You know, just outlets for them. So you know, if they could provide that information too. Something they can do outside of school, you know that can help them get their little frustrations out and little angers. Counseling is very important, but they need physical activity too.

Me: My very last question is: where there any books that helped you? That helped you understand the grieving process or that helped your girls.

Caregiver B: I didn't. I can't remember the name of the book but I can e-mail it to you. The girls found a book here at New Hope and it was actually a bunch of stories by other kids who had experiences a death.

Me: Would that be what your girls referred to as the New Hope book with a tree on it.

Caregiver B: It maybe, they love that book. They still read that book. It's just stories of other kids who experienced death and its multiple ways. There are some by illness, sick, whatever but then there are some homicide, suicide, you know whatever. And they just talk about how they deal with their grief and what they experience. And they like that book. They read it and I ask them, you know well how do you feel about it? I think it's easier for them to open up when they know someone else experienced it and we can just talk about reading it in the book.

Me: Is there anything else you'd want to share with a teacher who has a grieving child in their classroom?

Caregiver B: Just be prepared. You know, be prepared. They will have their good days and their bad days just like most kids do. But I think with a grieving child a bad day is a really horrific day and you just need to be a little more understanding with that child and a little bit more patient. And just help them through it. If you are not a touchy feely person you need to find somebody in your class that can be because sometimes those kids just need a little love!

Me: That is perfect!

Caregiver B: Sometimes they just need a little love! They need a little hug and they bounce back!

APPENDIX B: TEACHeR SURVEY

APPENDIX B: TEACHER SURVEY

This survey is part of an exploratory study of the way teachers can help grieving students in the elementary classroom. The study has been approved by IRB at UCF, where Sherron Roberts is the Primary Investigator. You do not have to participate. Your willingness to respond to the following questions indicates to your agreement to participate. However, if you do, your identity will be held in confidence and never be associated with your responses.

1. Have you or are you currently teaching elementary school?

☐ Yes

☐ No

2. What school setting do you teach in (or have you taught in, choose all that apply)

☐ Public

☐ Private

Other (please specify)

3. What state and county do you teach (or did you last teach) in?

4. What grades have you taught (select all that apply)?

☐ Kindergarten

☐ First

☐ Second

☐ Third

☐ Fourth

☐ Fifth

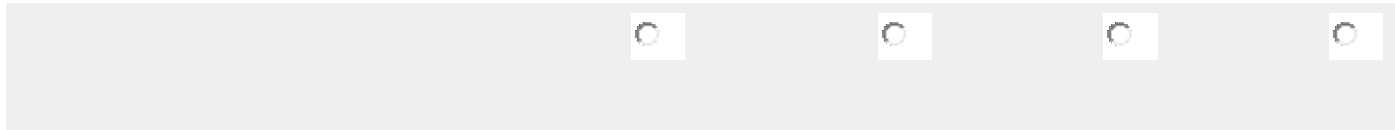
Other (please specify)

5. As a teacher have you had a student who is grieving the loss of a loved one in your classroom?

- ☐ Unsure
- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

6. How prepared do you feel to aid a grieving child in your classroom?

Completely
unprepared



7. What information do you feel is most important for you to know if you had a grieving child in your classroom?



8. Have you had a grieving child in your classroom? If so share some of your experiences.

A rectangular text input field with a thin border. On the right side, there is a vertical scrollbar with a small triangular slider. Along the top and bottom edges, there are horizontal scrollbars with triangular arrowheads pointing left and right.

9. Please provide an e-mail address or phone number you can be reached at if I have questions concerning your responses or further questions for you.

A rectangular text input field with a thin border. On the right side, there is a vertical scrollbar with a small triangular slider. Along the top and bottom edges, there are horizontal scrollbars with triangular arrowheads pointing left and right.

APPENDIX C: CAREGIVER SURVEY

APPENDIX C: CAREGIVER SURVEY

This survey is part of an exploratory study of the way teachers can aid a grieving child in an elementary classroom. The study has been approved by IRB at UCF, where Sherron Roberts is the Primary Investigator. You do not have to participate. Your willingness to respond to the following questions indicates to your agreement to participate. However, if you do, your identity will be held in confidence and never be associated with your responses.

1. What is your relation to the grieving child?

- ☐ Mother
- ☐ Father
- ☐ Grandparent

Other (please specify)

2. What relation did the person who died have to the grieving child?

☐ Mother

☐ Father

☐ Grandparent

☐ Sibling

☐ Friend

Other (please specify)

3. What grade was (were) the child (children) in your care in when their loved one passed away? (If there is an older sibling who was not in elementary school at the time please specify this in other)

☐ K-5

☐ 1st

☐ 2nd

☐ 3rd

☐ 4th

☐ 5th

Other (please specify)

4. How long has passed since the death?

- ☐ Less than 6 months
- ☐ Between 6 months and 1 year
- ☐ 1 year
- ☐ 2 years
- ☐ 3 years
- ☐ 4 years
- ☐ 5 or more years

5. Was your child attending private or public school at the time of the death?

- ☐ Private
- ☐ Public

Other (please specify)

6. Did you like the way your child's teacher handled your child's grief?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Indifferent

Other (please specify)

7. What actions or lack of from your child's teacher were you unsatisfied with? (Please be as specific as possible)

8. What do you wish your child's teacher had known or done to help? (Please be as specific as possible!)

9. What did your child's teacher do that you thought was helpful for you or your child? (Please be as specific as possible!)



10. Please provide an e-mail address or phone number you can be reached at if I have questions concerning your responses or further questions for you.



APPENDIX D: STDUENT SURVEY

APPENXID D: STUDENTS SURVEY

This survey is part of an exploratory study of the way teachers can help grieving students in an their elementary classroom. The study has been approved by IRB at UCF, where Sherron Roberts is the Primary Investigator. You do not have to participate. Your willingness to respond to the following questions indicates to your agreement to participate. However, if you do, your identity will be held in confidence and never be associated with your responses.

1. Are you male or female?

- ☐ Male
- ☐ Female

2. What grade were you in when your loved one passed away?

☐ Kindergarten

☐ First

☐ Second

☐ Third

☐ Fourth

☐ Fifth

Other (please specify)

3. What relationship did the loved one who passed away have to you?

☐ Mother

☐ Father

☐ Sibling

☐ Grandparent

☐ Friend

Other (please specify)


4. Did you like the way your teacher handled your return to school after the death?

☐ Yes

☐ No

☐ Indifferent

5. What did you like that your teacher did during the time leading up to your loved one's death or right after to help you?



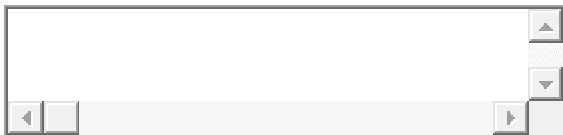
6. What did you NOT like that your teacher did during the time leading up to your loved one's death or in the time right after the death?



7. What do you wish your teacher had known at the time?



8. What do you wish your teacher had done differently?




9. How did your peers react? Did this upset you or help you with your grief?



10. Were you involved in telling your classmates that your loved one passed away? Was this okay with you?



11. What advise do you have for other elementary students who are going through what you went through?



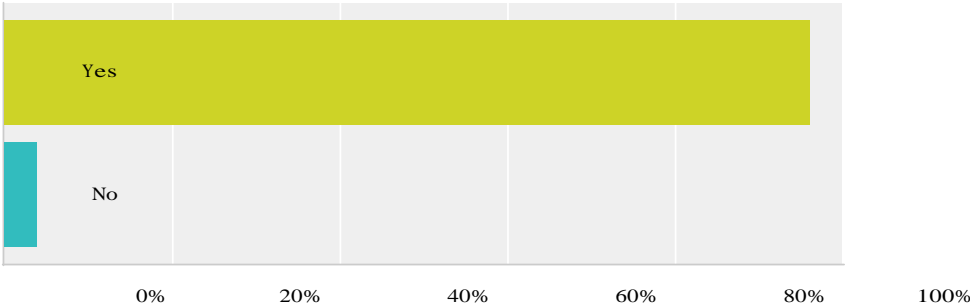
12. Please provide an e-mail address or phone number you can be reached at if I have questions concerning your responses or further questions for you.

APPENDIX E: TEACHR SURVEY RESULTS

APPENDIX E: TEACHER SURVEY RESULTS

Q1 Have you or are you currently teaching elementary school?

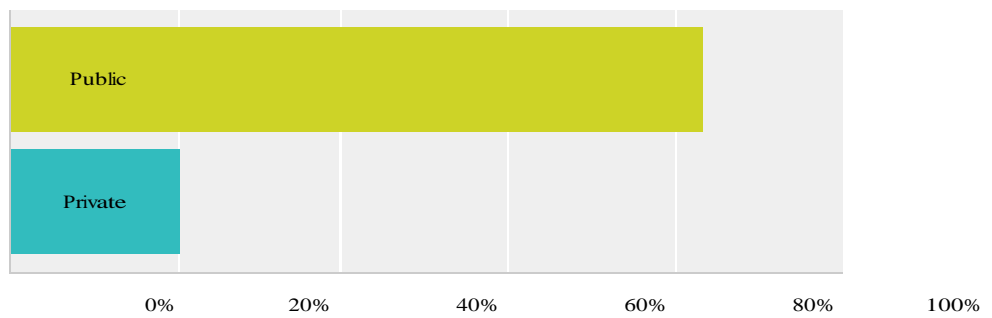
Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	96.15%
No	3.85%
Total	

**Q2 What school setting
do you teach in (or have
you taught in, choose
all that apply)**

Ans
wer
ed:
24
Ski
ppe
d: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
Public	83.33%
Private	20.83%
Total Respondents: 24	

Other (please specify) (0)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
	There are no responses.	

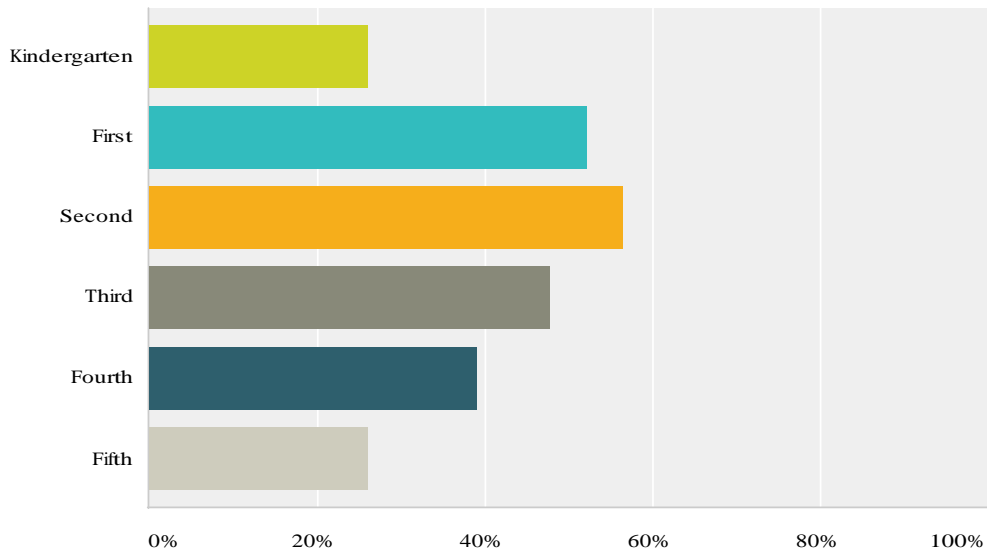
Q3 What state and county do you teach (or did you last teach) in?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	Orange County, FL	3/19/2013 6:48 PM
2	Sarasota County, Florida	3/19/2013 12:54 PM
3	Orange County, Florida	3/19/2013 9:04 AM
4	Orange, Florida	3/18/2013 12:30 PM
5	Florida, Sarasota	3/18/2013 8:37 AM
6	Florida - Arizona - Louisiana - Department of Defense Dependent Schools	3/17/2013 1:22 PM
7	florida , orange	3/15/2013 11:56 AM
8	orange, Florida	3/15/2013 11:54 AM
9	Orange County, Florida	3/15/2013 9:50 AM
10	Orange County, Florida	3/15/2013 9:30 AM
11	Orange County, Florida	3/15/2013 9:13 AM
12	Orange County, Florida	3/15/2013 8:44 AM
13	Florida	3/15/2013 8:12 AM
14	Florida; Orange	3/15/2013 8:08 AM
15	Orange County, FL	3/15/2013 7:37 AM
16	Florida, Orange County	3/15/2013 7:18 AM
17	Florida	3/15/2013 7:00 AM
18	florida orange county	3/15/2013 6:53 AM
19	FL	3/15/2013 6:51 AM
20	Florida, Okaloosa	3/15/2013 6:18 AM
21	Orange County, Florida	3/15/2013 6:14 AM
22	Orange Co., FL	3/4/2013 6:39 PM
23	Louisiana, Livingston Parish	3/3/2013 8:32 PM
24	St. Mary's County, MD	3/3/2013 8:21 PM
25	Florida	11/16/2012 12:47 PM
26	Florida, Polk County	11/12/2012 12:49 PM

Q4 What grades have you taught (select all that apply)?

Answered: 23 Skipped: 3



Answer Choices	Responses
Kindergarten	26.09% 6
First	52.17% 12
Second	56.52% 13
Third	47.83% 11
Fourth	39.13% 9
Fifth	26.09% 6

Total Respondents: 23

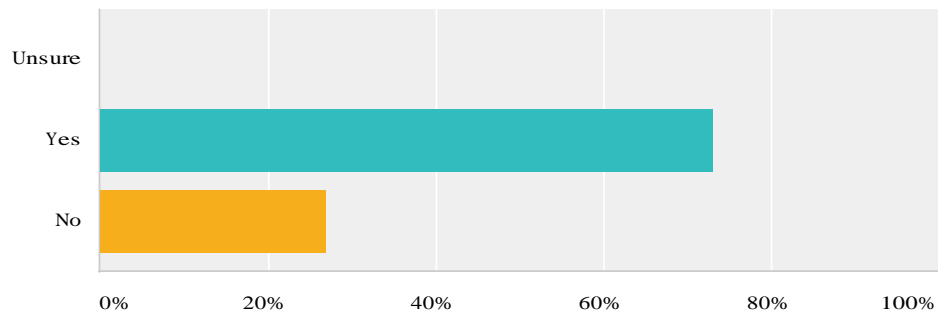
Other (please specify) (10)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Pre-K	3/19/2013 6:48 PM
2	Sixth	3/18/2013 8:37 AM
3	I was a substitute in all grades K-5th, regular, ESE, Autistic...and i subbed for all subjects	3/15/2013 9:30 AM
4	Special Education - Emotionally Handicapped	3/15/2013 9:13 AM
5	Pre-K	3/15/2013 8:12 AM
6	Curriculum Resource Teacer	3/15/2013 8:08 AM
7	7th grade	3/15/2013 7:37 AM

8	Physical Education	3/15/2013 7:18 AM
9	ESE	3/15/2013 6:51 AM
10	Pre-K	3/3/2013 8:21 PM

Q5 As a teacher have you had a student who is grieving the loss of a loved one in your classroom?

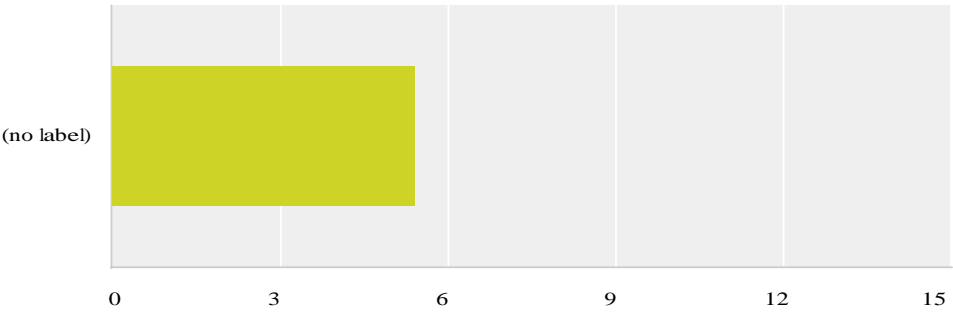
Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Unsure	0%	0
Yes	73.08%	19
No	26.92%	7
Total		26

Q6 How prepared do you feel to aid a grieving child in your classroom?

Answered: 26 Skipped: 0



	Completely unprepared		(no label)	(no label)	Somewhat prepared		(no label)	(no label)	(no label)	Very prepared	Total	Average Rating
(no label)	7.69% 2	0% 0	11.54% 3	7.69% 2	26.92% 7	15.38% 4	7.69% 2	19.23% 5	3.85% 1	0% 0	26	5.42

Q7 What information do you feel is most important for you to know if you had a grieving child in your classroom?

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	Ways the family is trying to cope, as well as their beliefs.	3/19/2013 6:48 PM
2	Knowing the appropriate steps to take and what words or phrases should be said as part of the conversation	3/19/2013 12:54 PM
3	How has the family dealt with the situation with the child and/or if the child has had any counseling.	3/19/2013 9:04 AM
4	What to expect from the child--behaviors, moods, etc.; techniques to use to help the child cope with his/her feelings; resources of people that can help with the child one-on-one or provide teacher support.	3/18/2013 12:30 PM
5	It would be helpful to know how the student is doing and how the family would like the grief to be discussed or not during school.	3/18/2013 8:37 AM
6	Communication with the family about living arrangements is the most important. What does the child know about the situation (how the person passed, why the person passed and how close to the child was the person?)	3/17/2013 1:22 PM
7	how to not say the wrong thing	3/15/2013 11:56 AM
8	How to comfort them when they are upset.	3/15/2013 11:54 AM
9	The support system at home.	3/15/2013 9:50 AM
10	I actually have a good rapport with my parents, so they do share this type of information with me. Therefore, I in return feel comfortable asking about enough of the details to have adequate information to help the student if they become upset, despondent, etc. while in my charge.	3/15/2013 9:30 AM
11	The situation and how the family is dealing with it.	3/15/2013 9:13 AM
12	How can I support them? What community resources are available?	3/15/2013 8:44 AM
13	The background of the family. Other family members that are available for the child for support, grandparents, siblings, parents.	3/15/2013 8:12 AM
14	Counseling options available; information about why the person had passed (in order to know how to approach the subject with the child)	3/15/2013 8:08 AM
15	How the student is handling the loss. If there are any "triggers" that I should be aware of.	3/15/2013 7:37 AM
16	How the loved one passed, how close they were to each other	3/15/2013 7:18 AM
17	What resources do we have locally within the school to help the student	3/15/2013 7:00 AM
18	It is helpful to know the relationship the student had with the loved one that was lost. As well as how it is being handled at home.	3/15/2013 6:53 AM
19	Background, what the support is like at home, and resources available.	3/15/2013 6:51 AM

20	It is always helpful to know how much the child is aware of concerning the death of the loved one. Did he/she know the circumstances behind the death (illness, suicide, accident, etc.) because I never want to inadvertently reveal any "new" information to the child that was not previously discussed with family. Also, being aware of the child's level of awareness helps me to actively listen to the child.	3/15/2013 6:18 AM
21	How to support them when they are going through the different stages of grief.	3/15/2013 6:14 AM
22	Open communication with a family member to explain the situation the child is in. Honesty.	3/4/2013 6:39 PM
23	Knowing the family situations.	3/3/2013 8:32 PM
24	The relationship that the child had with the loved one - were they close?	3/3/2013 8:21 PM

Q8 Have you had a grieving child in your classroom? If so share some of your experiences.

Answered: 24 Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	Yes, and so far just giving the student my undivided attention for a few minutes has proven very helpful. They seem comforted just knowing that you care and that you are there to listen if they'd like to talk. Letting them write or draw about their feelings helps as well.	3/19/2013 6:48 PM
2	No	3/19/2013 12:54 PM
3	I have had three. Two of the children had a parent who had died the year previous to coming into my classroom. I did have one student whose Mother died while in my class.	3/19/2013 9:04 AM
4	No.	3/18/2013 12:30 PM
5	Not that I recall.	3/18/2013 8:37 AM
6	The most important thing is to let the child talk about the situation and LISTEN. Expressing emotions is important. Catholic Schools are a little easier as faith and belief in God can be brought into the conversations. Children need a person to confide in and trust. Teachers can be that person. Always assure the child you care and will be there for him/ her. I currently have a child from last school year who lives with her Grandparents. The Grandmother passed away in January. When she is upset I let her talk out her feelings. We then focus on how she is doing with her Grandfather. I always tell her Grandma is very proud of you and wants you to help her by being there for your Grandfather. Make sure the child knows he/she is loved and others in the family need his/her help. Just listen, reassure and love them.	3/17/2013 1:22 PM
7	No	3/15/2013 11:56 AM
8	No	3/15/2013 11:54 AM
9	None	3/15/2013 9:50 AM
10	One of my little girls lost her grandfather. She was quiet and did not really participate with the other students upon her return from the funeral etc. Because I did have some details of the situation from her family, I let her know I was there if needed and would not push myself into the situation unless she let me know she needed me. I think that with this particular child she appreciated knowing I was there if needed but felt safe that I wasn't going to question, hug, etc. unless she approached me. Which one afternoon she did. She wanted to talk and all I did was listen. She needed a shoulder and I was there. And I kept my word by not asking questions etc. or prolonging the situation.	3/15/2013 9:30 AM
11	I have had children going through divorce. I have provided the name of the school counselor and made it clear to parent/child that I am available if they need to talk	3/15/2013 9:13 AM
12	Father was killed suddenly in car accident.	3/15/2013 8:44 AM
13	No	3/15/2013 8:12 AM
14	This past year, the father of one of my 4th grade boys shot himself in a hotel room. The mother and son had no idea this was going to happen. The boy and his father were best friends, and he and the mother were absolutely devastated. I attended the father's funeral to show support to the family and gave them cards and letters the other students had made for them. I had a friend who also committed suicide when I was in high school, so I was able to talk to him about our experiences and help him through it. He received counseling through a family counselor outside of school with his mother.	3/15/2013 8:08 AM

15	I have had two students who have lost a parent in the year before my grade or over the summer. I worry about that when I pass out flyers for the "mother-son" events at our school or the "daddy-daughter" dance. I'm not sure if giving them the material would be upsetting, or if they didn't receive the flyer they would feel singled out. Anyway, it can be awkward.	3/15/2013 7:37 AM
16	I had a child in 4th grade whose dad was killed in a trucking accident and the principal had to come to the classroom and tell him. It was heartbreaking to see the child struggle with all of his emotions and grief. Fortunately that principal was a trained children's grief counselor. It's so important.	3/15/2013 7:18 AM
17	The student became very clingy, and didn't want to leave his mother at all	3/15/2013 7:00 AM
18	No	3/15/2013 6:53 AM

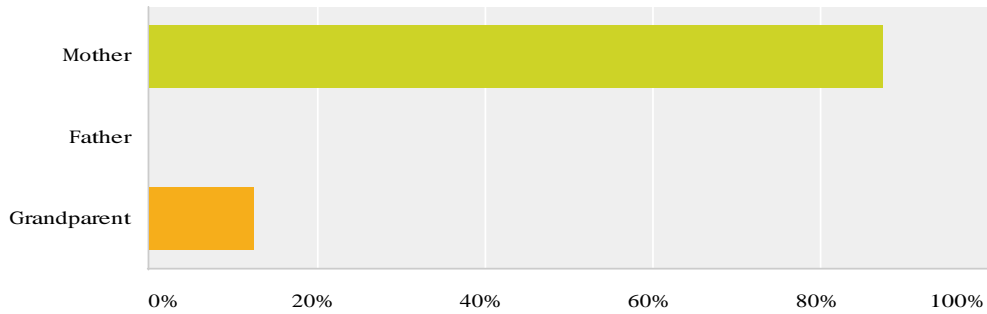
#	Responses	Date
19	Yes, student's mom abandoned him and father was in jail. Student was bounced around for many years, now father is out of jail. He talks a lot about being "motherless".	3/15/2013 6:51 AM
20	I have found the most important aspects of helping a grieving child are just being able to listen and be patient as the child works through the grieving process. Some children share a great deal while others tend to be more reserved. Sometimes it takes weeks, even months, for a child to open up about the loved one who has died, and I have found that even months after the event, some children still need to be reassured about the stability of their lives. (for example, they worry about whether or not someone will be at the bus stop to pick them up). Often, a smile or hug is all the child needs to get through the day, and knowing how to read a child's emotional gauge is very important.	3/15/2013 6:18 AM
21	Yes, I had a student who had just lost his dad to cancer.	3/15/2013 6:14 AM
22	The children often verbalized what they are going through.... "my Daddy is dead" or "my Daddy has" in the case of a lingering illness.	3/4/2013 6:39 PM
23	Yes. I had a student that lost her grandmother. Her grandmother was battling cancer, so it wasn't unexpected. It did not affect her school work or socialization.	3/3/2013 8:32 PM
24	I have had students who've lost grandparents. Also, last year our very young PE teacher passed away in the middle of the school year. The best thing I've found to help deal with the loss is reading the book "The Fall of Freddie the Leaf" by Leo Buscaglia. It helps to put death in a language/setting that children can understand.	3/3/2013 8:21 PM

APPENDIX F: CAREGIVER SURVEY RESULTS

APPENDIX F: CAREGIVER SURVEY RESULTS

Q1 What is your relation to the grieving child?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 5



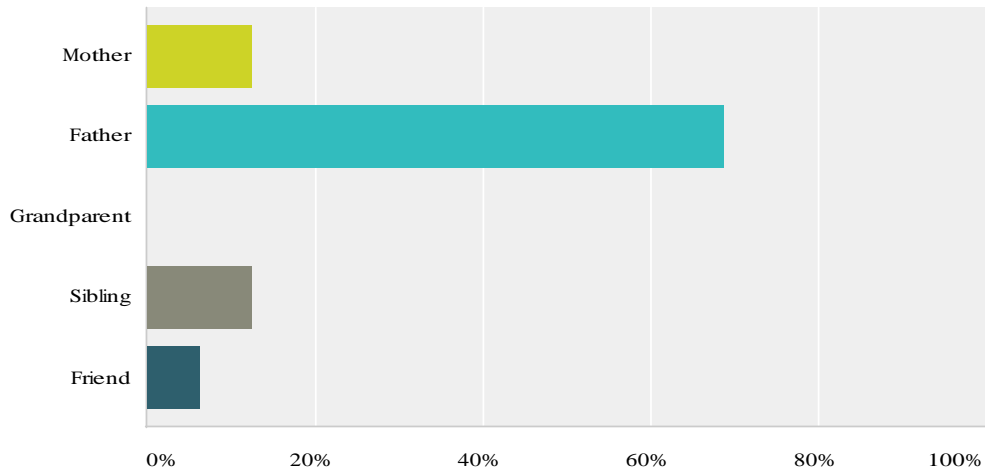
Answer Choices	Responses
Mother	87.50% 14
Father	0% 0
Grandparent	12.50% 2
Total	16

Other (please specify) (0)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
	There are no responses.	

Q2 What relation did the person who died have to the grieving child?

Answered: 16 Skipped: 5



Answer Choices	Responses
Mother	12.50% 2
Father	68.75% 11
Grandparent	0% 0
Sibling	12.50% 2
Friend	6.25% 1

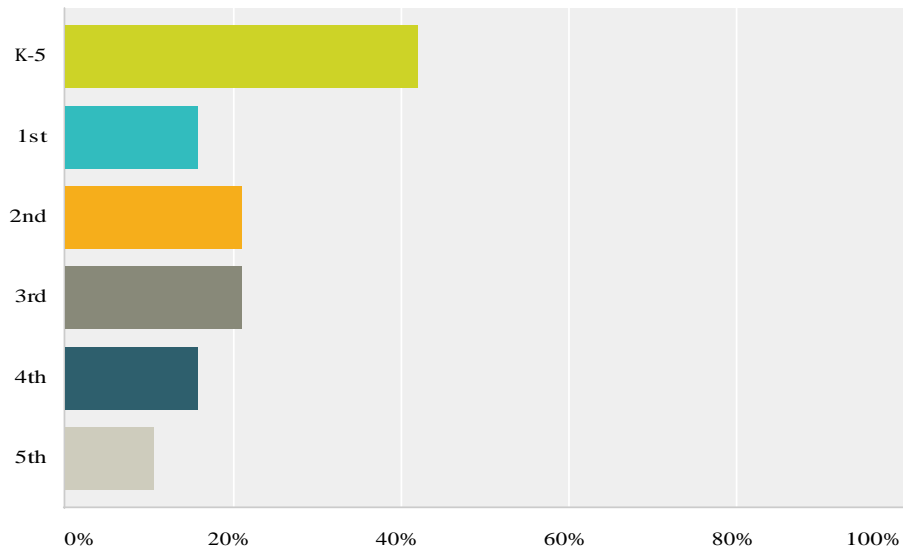
Total Respondents: 16

Other (please specify) (2)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Daughter in law	3/6/2013 5:50 AM
2	Uncle	3/3/2013 4:53 PM

Q3 What grade was (were) the child (children) in your care in when their loved one passed away? (If there is an older sibling who was not in elementary school at the time please specify this in other)

Answered: 19 Skipped: 2



Answer Choices	Responses
K-5	42.11% 8
1st	15.79% 3
2nd	21.05% 4
3rd	21.05% 4
4th	15.79% 3
5th	10.53% 2

Total Respondents: 19

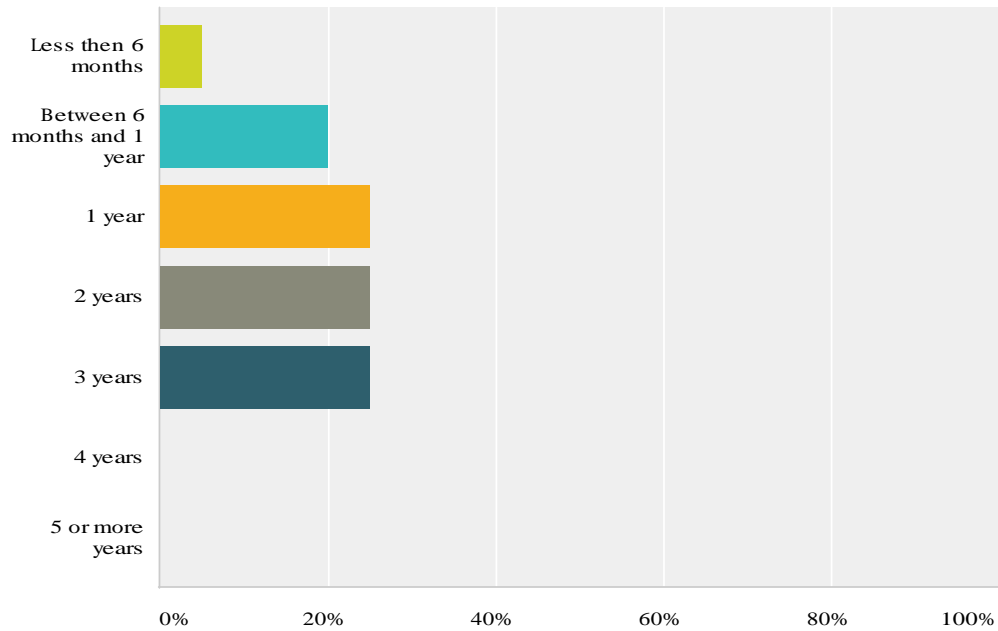
Other (please specify) (4)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Home schooled	3/9/2013 4:25 PM
2	also a younger child who was 2 at the time and in K now	3/7/2013 1:37 PM
3	Have a son who was just under 2 yr. old also	3/4/2013 8:52 AM

4	9 th	3/3/2013 3:40 PM
---	-----------------	------------------

Q4 How long has passed since the death?

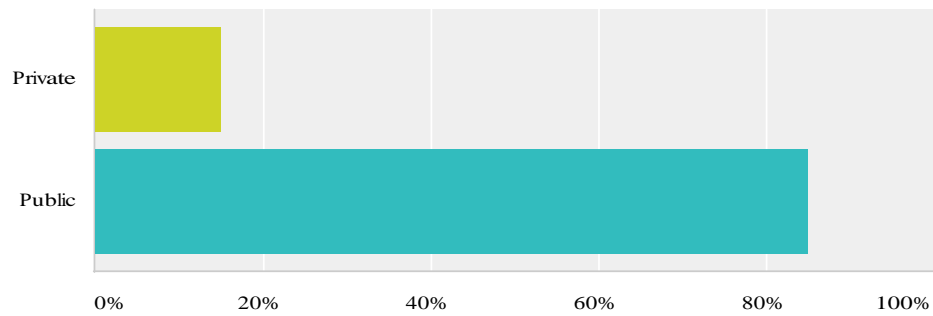
Answered: 20 Skipped: 1



Answer Choices	Responses	
Less than 6 months	5%	1
Between 6 months and 1 year	20%	4
1 year	25%	5
2 years	25%	5
3 years	25%	5
4 years	0%	0
5 or more years	0%	0
Total		20

Q5 Was your child attending private or public school at the time of the death?

Answered: 20 Skipped: 1



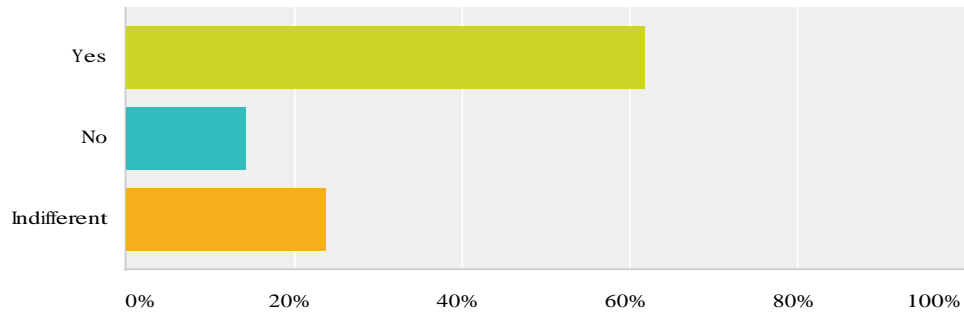
Answer Choices	Responses
Private	15% 3
Public	85% 17
Total	20

Other (please specify) (3)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Homeschooled	3/9/2013 4:25 PM
2	it was during the summer- oldest twins leaving private heading to public	3/3/2013 3:48 PM
3	in kindergarten, we retained him and he is repeating kindergarten again	11/9/2012 2:00 PM

Q6 Did you like the way your child's teacher handled your child's grief?

Answered: 21 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Yes	61.90% 13
No	14.29% 3
Indifferent	23.81% 5
Total Respondents: 21	
Other (please specify) (3)	

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Sometimes.	3/5/2013 10:53 AM
2	Somehow, the teacher was very caring and understanding of the situation, she helped her getting back on track with school work, but not with the grief.	3/4/2013 7:07 AM
3	There was no way for the teacher to understand what was happening. I don't think it was negative or positive, there were just no resources to help my daughter deal with her pain.	11/12/2012 12:52 PM

Q7 What actions or lack of from your child's teacher were you unsatisfied with? (Please be as specific as possible)

Answered: 11 Skipped: 10

#	Responses	Date
1	N/A	3/13/2013 6:25 AM
2	Willing to communicate about any problems.	3/9/2013 4:25 PM
3	None, I was very pleased.	3/9/2013 4:51 AM
4	Teacher did not pay attention to other children's treatment of my child, and communicate with me so I was aware of issues at school.	3/5/2013 10:53 AM
5	None	3/4/2013 1:58 PM
6	East Lake Elementary had a program and we were happy with it.	3/4/2013 8:52 AM
7	The teacher feels sorry for my daughter, but I feel the teacher did not know how to help her out emotionally at the time of the death.	3/4/2013 7:07 AM
8	Rejection and reprimands most of the time.	3/4/2013 5:17 AM
9	Not much communication from the 4th grade teacher on how my child was doing. 2nd grade teacher was supportive and let my child talk about his brother. PreK special needs teacher was the best with allowing my daughter to speak about him whenever she wanted and talk about death, etc. she tried to answer q's as much as possible and never discount her feelings even if uncomfortable, let her sit out if needed. That teacher also knew her brother.	3/4/2013 4:29 AM
10	n/a	3/3/2013 3:48 PM
11	None	3/3/2013 3:40 PM

**Q8 What do you wish your child's teacher had known or done to help?
(Please be as specific as possible!)**

Answered: 8 Skipped: 13

#	Responses	Date
1	N/A	3/13/2013 6:25 AM
2	None, in my opinion they did great.	3/9/2013 4:51 AM
3	At least weekly communication of how my child was doing, academically and what she saw emotionally and socially. For the guidance counselor to have checked on her on a regular basis. I have heard that some schools have therapists or counselors but in our Seminole County schools this has not been offered or mentioned as available even though my girls have shown a real need.	3/5/2013 10:53 AM
4	-	3/4/2013 8:52 AM
5	I wished the school itself had a counselor. This school doesn't have one.	3/4/2013 7:07 AM
6	Showing more comprehension according to my kids situation and empathize.	3/4/2013 5:17 AM
7	Watch for change in behavior, ask privately how the child is doing, refer for counseling, let parents know how child is.	3/4/2013 4:29 AM
8	n/a	3/3/2013 3:48 PM

Q9 What did your child's teacher do that you thought was helpful for you or your child? (Please be as specific as possible!)

Answered: 15 Skipped: 6

#	Responses	Date
1	She stayed in touch with me by email but respected our privacy. She also coached the other children not to treat my son any differently when he returned to school and only speak of his dad's death if my son wanted to (not to ask). She also offered to come to the funeral which I was very touched by. Finally, she sent me periodic emails when he returned to school school to let me know how he was doing which was so comforting.	3/13/2013 6:25 AM
2	Understanding on far behind she was and tried to help her catch up. Sent home books to help.	3/9/2013 4:25 PM
3	Both of my sons teachers were great about trying not to focus so much on father activities. For my then pre k'er for fathers day they included how all families are different and did an activity for someone they loved. My oldest was in the fifth grade and his teacher would email me how his week was emotionally. My son lost himself in books to cope so his teacher was suggesting books he could also read. Both boys attended the same school and they were able to meet for emotional comfort during school hours if needed.	3/9/2013 4:51 AM
4	She was the person that refered our family to hospice for counseling sessions	3/7/2013 1:37 PM
5	Sympathetic and loving	3/6/2013 5:50 AM
6	When I made an appointment with her, she did seem to care and listened to my concerns, my child did seem comfortable with her and never asked to miss school. Seemed to be happy to go, that was a great comfort to me.	3/5/2013 10:53 AM
7	She as been very supportive in assisting him in class. She keeps me informed.	3/4/2013 1:58 PM
8	-	3/4/2013 8:52 AM
9	Answering to my request of meeting the next day.	3/4/2013 5:17 AM
10	See answer 7. Never dismissed any talk about her brother! Honored our wishes to say that her brother was in heaven and he was an angel.	3/4/2013 4:29 AM
11	My child's school was wonderful during the time of her loss. The guidance counselor recommended New Hope for Kids to me and was a great support to me and my daughter. She spoke to my daughter's classmates while she was away to help them understand what she was going through and to give them ways in which they could help her. It gave her classmates an opportunity to ask questions without upsetting her. It is also hard to be a friend to someone who is dealing with death/loss/grief and it's often difficult to know what to say so I thought this was helpful. My daughter's teachers were also wonderful. She was in 4th grade at the time of her father's passing and every teacher she had had since K made a point to contact her/me to offer condolences and support. She had two classroom teachers that year and they were very supportive also. They both attended the funeral services. They also hand beaded a bracelet for my daughter as a gift, which made her feel very loved and still reminds her of those teachers and how special they were. In class, they kept things as normal as possible (it was FCAT week) but also allowed her a safe place to cry on the two occasions she needed it. I am so grateful for the stability the school offered my daughter (and myself) during what was an incredibly difficult and upside down time in our lives. I honestly don't think they could have done anything better and I will be forever thankful for their support, love, patience, professionalism, and kindness.	3/3/2013 7:45 PM
12	She is a very loving teacher. So care and concern was something she does naturally.	3/3/2013 4:53 PM

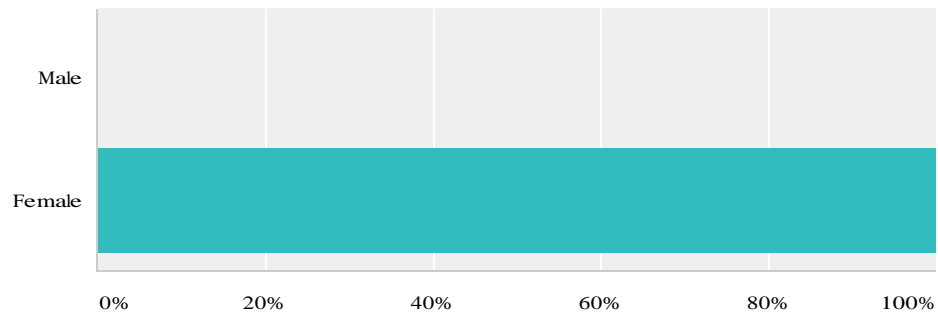
13	Truthfully, I am not sure she did anything specifically, I made her aware obviously of our situation	3/3/2013 3:50 PM
14	After my husband was diagnosed, they hired a grief counsellor to talk to the teachers at the school (another mom had been diagnosed with advanced stage cancer), gave room for kids to be with uncle, grandpa or other at Dad's Special Event, communicated with me early and often conversations they shared with my child about daddy, listened to me and hugged me and let me cry, school put a new piece of playground equipment in memory of my husband, teachers and director came to his funeral.	3/3/2013 3:48 PM
15	Communicated frequently with me. Was very thoughtful in the way certain things were approached (i.e. Fathers Day)	

APPENDIX G: STUDENTS SURVEY RESULTS

APPENDIX G: STUDENTS SURVEY RESULTS

Q1 Are you male or female?

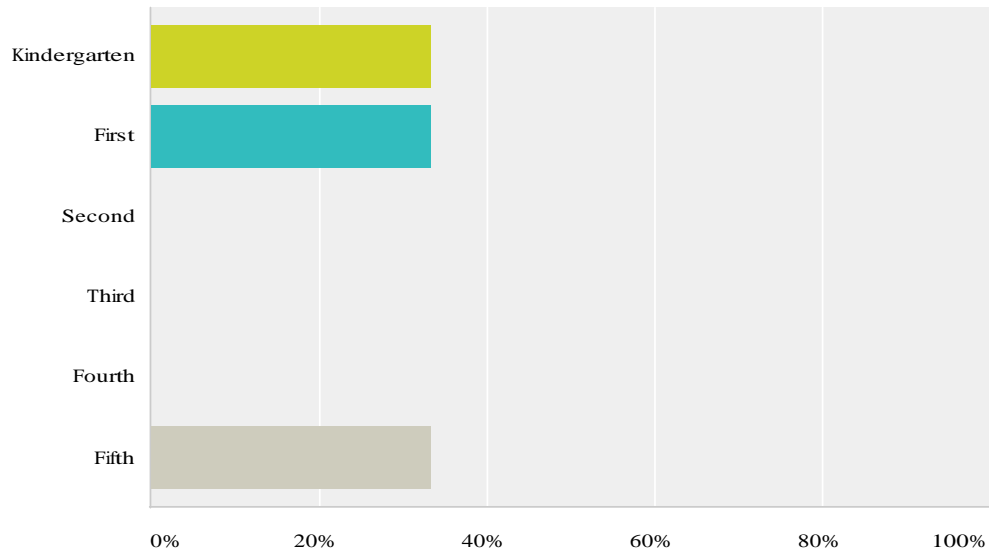
Answered: 3 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Male	0%
Female	100%
Total	3

Q2 What grade were you in when your loved one passed away?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 0



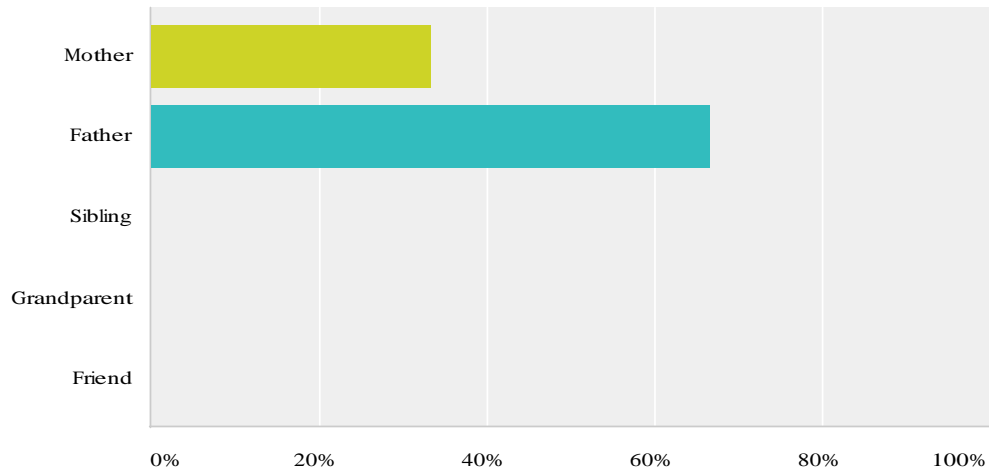
Answer Choices	Responses	
Kindergarten	33.33%	1
First	33.33%	1
Second	0%	0
Third	0%	0
Fourth	0%	0
Fifth	33.33%	1
Total		3

Other (please specify) (1)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
1	Being home schooled at time of death.	3/9/2013 4:20 PM

Q3 What relationship did the loved one who passed away have to you?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses
Mother	33.33% 1
Father	66.67% 2
Sibling	0% 0
Grandparent	0% 0
Friend	0% 0

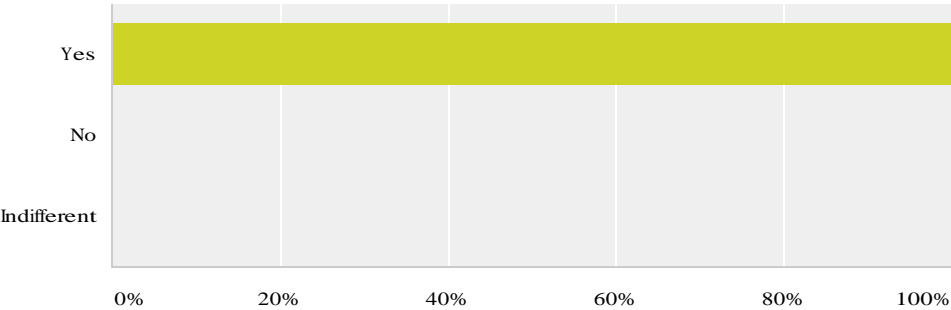
Total Respondents: 3

Other (please specify) (0)

#	Other (please specify)	Date
	There are no responses.	

Q4 Did you like the way your teacher handled your return to school after the death?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 0



Answer Choices	Responses	
Yes	100%	3
No	0%	0
Indifferent	0%	0
Total		3

Q5 What did you like that your teacher did during the time leading up to your loved one's death or right after to help you?

Answered: 2 Skipped: 1

#	Responses	Date
1	Kind and willing to help me catch up.	3/9/2013 4:20 PM
2	My teacher told my class way I wasn't coming to class because my dad died.	3/4/2013 2:20 PM

Q6 What did you NOT like that your teacher did during the time leading up to your loved one's death or in the time right after the death?

Answered: 1 Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	Nothing.	3/4/2013 2:20 PM

Q7 What do you wish your teacher had known at the time?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	About the abuse that had happened.	3/9/2013 4:20 PM
2	How sad I really was and that I needed extra hugs.	3/7/2013 1:43 PM
3	My dad died of cancer.	3/4/2013 2:20 PM

QS What do you wish your teacher had done differently?

Answered: 1 Skipped: 2

#	Responses	Date
1	Make the class make some cards or have them sign a card.	3/4/2013 2:20PM

Q9 How did your peers react? Did this upset you or help you with your grief?

Answered: 3 Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	My new friend jade was very kind.	3/9/2013 4:20 PM
2	They had a lot of questions. I wish someone else had answered them for me.	3/7/2013 1:43 PM
3	I don't know because I was gone for a week.	3/4/2013 2:20 PM

**Q10 Were you involved in telling
your classmates that your loved one
passed away? Was this okay with
you?**

Answered: 3 Skipped: 0

#	Responses	Date
1	did not tell them for fear of rejection.	3/9/2013 4:20 PM
2	Yes. I did not like talking about it.	3/7/2013 1:43 PM
3	No. Yes.	3/4/2013 2:20 PM

**Q11 What advice do
you have for other
elementary students
who are going
through what you
went through?**

Answered: 3
Skip
0

#	Responses	Date
1	Don't dwell on it.	3/9/2013 4:20 PM
2	It'll be okay.	3/7/2013 1:43 PM
3	If your scared to tell your class your loved one died know their are other people going thru what your going thru and you can always have your teacher tell them.	3/4/2013 2:20 PM

APPENDIX H: TEACHER QUICK REFERENCE

APPENDIX H: TEACHER QUICK REFERENCE

I have a grieving child in my classroom... Now what?

Based on Survey results from teachers, caregivers and students the following help guide was created:

Do I know...

What relations my students had to the person that died and how close they were?

Who is now caring for the child and did their living arrangements change?

Does the child know how the person died?

Does the child want their classmates to know about the death?

Would they like to be a part of telling their classmates? (Be sure to ask!)

Does the Child have triggers that might set them off while in my class? (Triggers can be anything that causes the child to become emotional. Some examples of triggers may be emergency sirens, holidays,

Are the changes in behavior that I should be aware of in the child since the death?

Has the child become withdrawn?

Have they become aggressive?

Community resources I can share with the family...

The National Alliance for Grieving Children's website offers a map of the United States where you can look to see if there is a grief center in your area.

<http://childrengrieve.org/find-support>

Covenant Hospice (<http://www.covenanthospice.org/>) offers several things for families* including:

Butterfly Bags (a grief kit for kids)

Home and school visits

Support groups

Free counseling (community or family 6 weeks to 13 months)

Bereavement activities and camps

*These post bereavement resources are available to families who had the help of Covenant Hospice before the death as well as those who did not!

What I can do in the classroom...

On The Dougy Center's website they list ways to help a grieving child. Some that would be appropriate in the classroom include answer the questions, even the hard ones, give the child choices whenever possible, listen without judgment, and to take a break.

<http://www.dougy.org/grief-resources/how-to-help-a-grieving-child/>

Be prepared to “coach” the student's peers. They would be aware that their peer may become overwhelmed easily and they should keep their questions to a minimum. A good rule of thumb is to only talk about it if the grieving student is the one to initiate the conversation.

Be mindful of any triggers the child may have. Examples may include emergency sirens, certain activities (i.e. a specific sport at p.e.) or situations that make the child feel overwhelmed.

Adapt class projects or activities if they are centered on a certain family member (i.e. Mother's day and Father's day). Make the lessons more general (i.e. Creating a picture for a special person in your life that helps take care of you, instead of a picture for a mother). Extend invitations to classroom functions to other people who support the child (i.e. ask the child if they would like to invite a grandparent or family friend).

Bibliotherapy is a great tool to use in the classroom. It allows the grieving child an outlet to express emotions without having to expose too much of themselves if they are uncomfortable. Good site to find age-appropriate books to share with children about death are http://rhsweb.org/library/social_issues_books.htm and <http://www.best-childrens-books.com/childrens-books-about-death.html>. (Be sure that the content is appropriate for the child's age and reading level.)

Be an active listener for the child. Be sure they know you hear what they are saying and that you value their thoughts. Reflection is a great way to do this. (To reflect a student you repeat back to them the important information they shared with you.) Along with this be willing to answer any questions the child asks, even the tough ones!

Be sure to follow up. Follow up with the family to be sure they are coping well. Send weekly updates home on the child's behaviors, academic, and social (emotional) progress. Also be sure that other support staff at the school is following up as needed (is the child being seen by the school counselor as often as they need to?)

Keep in mind that like adults, children grieve in different ways. Some children may not express any signs right away.

In the words of one of the caregivers I interviewed: *“Sometimes they just need a little love! They need a little hug and they bounce back!”*

APPENDIX I: UCF IRB LETTER



APPENDIX I: UCF IRB LETTER

University of Central Florida Institutional Review Board
Office of Research & Commercialization
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-882-2276
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance/irb.html

Approval of Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**

To: **Sherron E. Roberts and Co-PI: Caitlin Corrigan**

Date: **October 15, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 10/15/2012, the IRB approved the following human participant research until 10/14/2013 inclusive:

Type of Review: UCF Initial Review Submission Form
Project Title: How to help: A teacher's guide to helping grieving elementary students using children's literature.
Investigator: Sherron E Roberts
IRB Number: SBE-12-08725
Funding Agency:
Grant Title:
Research ID: N/A

The Continuing Review Application must be submitted 30 days prior to the expiration date for studies that were previously expedited, and 60 days prior to the expiration date for research that was previously reviewed at a convened meeting. Do not make changes to the study (i.e., protocol, methodology, consent form, personnel, site, etc.) before obtaining IRB approval. A Modification Form **cannot** be used to extend the approval period of a study. All forms may be completed and submitted online at <https://iris.research.ucf.edu>.

If continuing review approval is not granted before the expiration date of 10/14/2013, approval of this research expires on that date. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

Use of the approved, stamped consent document(s) is required. The new form supersedes all previous versions, which are now invalid for further use. Only approved investigators (or other approved key study personnel) may solicit consent for research participation. Participants or their representatives must receive a copy of the consent form(s).

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual.

On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewski, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 10/15/2012 02:17:25 PM EDT

IRB Coordinator

REFERENCES

- Christ, G. H. (2002). *Healing children's grief: Surviving a parent's death from cancer*. (pp. 56-149). New York, NY: Oxford University Press, USA.
- Cohen, J., & Mannarino, A. (2011). Supporting children with traumatic grief: What educators need to know. *School Psychology International*, 32(2), 117-131. Retrieved from <http://dx.doi.org.ezproxy.lib.ucf.edu/10.1177/0143034311400827>
- Doka, K. (2000). *Living with grief: Children, adolescents, and loss*. Brunner/Mazel a division of Taylor & Francis Group.
- Edgar-Bailey, M., & Kress, V. (2010). Resolving child and adolescent traumatic grief: Creative techniques and interventions. *Journal of Creativity in Mental Health*, 5(2), 158-176. Retrieved from <http://www.informaworld.com.ezproxy.lib.ucf.edu/openurl?genre=article&id=doi:10.1080/15401383.2010.485090>
- Edgington, W. (2002). To promote character education, use literature for children and adolescents. *Social Studies*, 93(3), 113-116. Retrieved from <http://www.heldref.org/tss.php>
- Fiorini, J. J., & Mullen, J. A. (2006). *Counseling children and adolescents through grief and loss*. Champaign, IL: Research Press.
- Goodman, R. F. (2007). Children and grief: What they know, how they feel, how to help. Retrieved 6/18, 2012 from http://www.education.com/reference/article/Ref_Children_Grief_What/
- Haeseler, L. (2009). Biblio-therapeutic book creations by pre-service student teachers:

- Helping elementary school children cope. *Journal of Instructional Psychology*, 36(2), 113-118. Retrieved from <http://web.ebscohost.com.ezproxy.lib.ucf.edu/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=7&hid=21&sid=33d5e0ec-5583-44d8-be0c-86bc30dfa1c1@sessionmgr11>
- Hollar, J. Sr. Children's Support Specialist at Conenant Hospice. (2013, March 21). Telephone interview.
- Johnson, J. (1999). *Keys to helping children deal with death and grief*. New York: Barron's Educational Series, Inc.
- Kessler, D & Kübler-Ross, E. (2005). *On grief and grieving: finding the meaning of grief through the five states of loss*. New York: Scribner.
- Rosenblatt, L. M. (1978). *The reader the text the poem: The transactional theory of the lterary work*. (pp. 71-100). Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Rozalski, M., Stewart, A., & Miller, J. (2010). Bibliotherapy: Helping children cope with life's challenges. *Kappa Delta Pi*, 47(1), 33-37. Retrieved from <http://www.kdp.org/publications/archives/fall10.php>
- Worden, J. (1996). *Children and grief: When a parent dies*. New York: The Guilford Press.
- Zambo, D. (2007). What can you learn from Bambaloo? Using picture books to help young students with special needs regulate their emotions. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 39(3), 32-39. Retrieved from <http://www.cec.sped.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Pu>