

Ms. Susie V. Castillo, Board Member

SUBJECT: GRIEF SENSITIVE SCHOOLS

COMMITTEE: PERSONNEL, STUDENT, SCHOOL AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

LINK TO STRATEGIC BLUEPRINT: INFORMED, ENGAGED, AND EMPOWERED STAKEHOLDERS

As we continue to reflect on the tragic events at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School in Parkland, Florida last month, we recognize that many have been impacted on a personal level. Not only the families and loved ones of the 17 victims who lost their lives, but also the students of Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School are grieving the loss of their peers in the aftermath of this unimaginable tragedy. We have been unfortunately reminded that childhood bereavement can strike any school at any time.

Even outside the context of a school shooting, the vast majority of children experience a significant loss by the time they complete high school. The Coalition to Support Grieving Students is a unique collaboration of the leading professional organizations representing classroom educators, principals, administrators, student support personnel and other school professionals who have come together with a common conviction: grieving students need the support and care of the community. One of their main initiatives is that of Grief Sensitive Schools.

The distinguishing characteristic of a Grief Sensitive School is that it is a school that, through a designated leadership team, has reviewed its existing crisis response plan, policies, and practices to ensure that bereavement support is addressed. This might include changes to procedures for responding to death of a student or staff, relaxing attendance policies for grieving students and staff, introducing commemoration and memorialization practices, anticipating and addressing grief triggers, and the promotion of peer support. In addition a basic level of training is provided to classroom educators and other school staff which can be done through self-directed online training or in-person presentations at no cost to the District. A school designated as a Grief Sensitive School is also eligible to receive a \$500 grant from the New York Life Foundation to support the implementation and development of grief sensitive policies. The initiative is currently being implement by the New York City Department of Education, Los Angeles Unified School District, and in the Clark County School District.

Studies show that a child's unresolved grief can have serious social and emotional impacts, leading to behavioral issues and poor academic performance in school. Recognizing there is always room for improvement when it comes to providing support to grieving children, this item proposes working with the Coalition to Support Grieving Students to implement the Grief Sensitive Schools initiative in Miami-Dade County Public Schools.

This item has been reviewed and approved by the School Board Attorney's office as to form and legal sufficiency.

ACTION PROPOSED BY

MS. SUSIE V. CASTILLO:

That The School Board of Miami-Dade County, Florida authorize the Superintendent to work with The Coalition to Support Grieving Students to explore implementing the Grief Sensitive Schools initiative in Miami-Dade County Public Schools and report back to the Board by the April 25, 2018 School Board Meeting.