

Governor Murphy Signs Legislation Requiring Instruction on Grief to be Taught in New Jersey Schools

01/4/2024

Curriculum Will Provide Students with Coping Strategies and Resources for Dealing with Grief and Loss

TRENTON – Governor Phil Murphy today signed [S3330/A5015](#) ([https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/r6jjsk/nrddit/ry5aa7_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!LH_0T-3mdkPKdhQsDe-wRBNT5Nrx5k89k-s8Zl06re0sWRzv-WyXzeiWMdFQzedOszUOuxTOcGikZnGIT65Tg7OughnD\\$](https://urldefense.com/v3/_https://t.e2ma.net/click/r6jjsk/nrddit/ry5aa7_!!J30X0ZrnC1oQtbA!LH_0T-3mdkPKdhQsDe-wRBNT5Nrx5k89k-s8Zl06re0sWRzv-WyXzeiWMdFQzedOszUOuxTOcGikZnGIT65Tg7OughnD$)), which requires school districts to provide instruction on grief as part of the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education. Under the bill, New Jersey's public schools will be required to provide instruction for students in grades 8 through 12, on, at a minimum, the physical, emotional, and behavioral symptoms of grief; coping mechanisms and techniques for handling grief and loss; and resources available to students, including in-school support, mental health crisis support, and individual and group therapy.

"Grief can be a debilitating experience that lasts a lifetime when not addressed properly," **said Governor Murphy**. "Having lost my parents, other family members, dear friends, and loved ones, I understand the pain grief can hold on a person. It is my hope that prioritizing the teaching of grief and loss in schools will provide students with the tools and resources they need to cope with the challenges of life."

Additionally, the Department of Education will be required to provide school districts with age-appropriate resources concerning grief. The bill will take effect immediately and requires the State Board of Education to adopt standards pertaining to grief concurrent with the five-year review and update cycle of the content areas.

The prime sponsors of this bill are Senator Jon Bramnick and Assemblyman Reginald Atkins. Other primary sponsors of the bill include Senator Joseph Cryan, Assemblywoman Linda Carter, and Assemblyman Sterley Stanley.

"Today codifies a pivotal moment in New Jersey's commitment to holistic education," **said Dr. Angelica Allen-McMillan, Acting Commissioner of Education**. "The enactment of legislation integrating grief instruction into the New Jersey Student Learning Standards in Comprehensive Health and Physical Education, is another stride in addressing the emotional needs of every student. Providing the resources to navigate grief empowers youth to be compassionate and resilient, fostering a more compassionate and supportive learning environment, while also preparing New Jersey students for success."

"Loss of a parent or sibling can have a significant impact on mental health. Hopefully by providing information about the impact of loss and grief, young people will have a better understanding of the grieving process," **said Senator Bramnick**.

"Far too often, people don't know what to say to someone who is grieving or how to support a friend or loved one who has suffered a loss," **said Assemblyman Reginald Atkins**. "Now, thanks to A-5015, students will receive the instructional tools and grief support they need to comfort their family and friends through difficult periods. I'm proud that the Governor has signed this important legislation and I know that it will benefit students beyond the classroom."

"The youth mental health crisis is real and it is troubling," **said Senator Cryan**. "Their exposure to stress, loss and trauma has increased in recent years, making them more vulnerable to the negative consequences that can impact their lives. Making them aware of the symptoms of trauma, informing them of available resources, offering coping techniques and giving them the opportunity to express their grief can make a real difference in their health and wellbeing. In fact, it can save lives."

"Confronting grief can be difficult at any age, but particularly for middle and high school students who are already dealing with the pressures that come with being a teenager," **said Assemblywoman Linda S. Carter**. "This legislation is designed to ensure that students in eighth grade and high school are taught age-appropriate coping mechanisms and provided vital resources that will help them process their grief or loss."



“Requiring schools to integrate grief into the curriculum acknowledges the profound impact that addressing emotional health can have on academic and personal development,” **said Assemblyman Stanley Stanley.** “By giving students the tools to navigate the complex emotions that surround grief and loss, we are not only ensuring they can be more resilient but also equipping them with skills to navigate life’s challenges and uncertainties.”

“The passing of the grief bill is an act of partnership and is a significant step towards supporting our children by normalizing grief in our communities. According to the Childhood Bereavement Estimation Model (CBEM), 1 out of 13 children in the state of NJ is expected to experience the death of a parent or sibling before the age of 18. It’s crucial for us to provide spaces and opportunities for our children throughout the state to have a better understanding of their experience and the experience of others in a supportive environment. We want our children to know they are not alone in their grief. Imagine is ready and honored to partner with the Department of Education, school districts, teachers and parents/caregivers to support this shift in our state and to serve as models for other states to join the movement,” **said Lindsay Cullinan Schambach, Executive Director, Imagine.**

“Childhood grief is a real issue, and 1 in 12 children experience the death of a parent or sibling by age 18,” **said Mark Durham, Executive Director, Good Grief.** “Children often experience isolation after the death of a mother, father, sister or brother, and grief education programs teach resiliency skills to handle loss and adversity. We applaud Governor Murphy for signing this important legislation and are grateful to Senator Bramnick for his leadership on this issue.”

Governor Phil Murphy

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