Pallium's Compassionate Schools Initiative

“As educators, we claim to prepare our students for life. We need to prepare them for death as well.”

(Ratner & Song, 2002, p. 15.)

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Death of a student:
- Available in French & English
- Module on how to cope with bereavement
- Activity includes visiting a cemetery
- Parent supports available: workshop and resource binder

Manitoba
- Module on how to cope with bereavement
- Improve quality of life
- To contribute to general education as a basis for personal development

1 school board
1700 students

Quebec
- Improve the care of the dying
- To challenge the societal-cultural norms around death

3 school boards
15,000 students

Activity includes visiting a cemetery

Goals
- Improve quality of life
- Increase preparedness and enhance coping skills
- To challenge the societal-cultural norms around death
- To improve the care of the dying


Type of School
- English
- French
- Indigenous

Number of Students
- 1300 students
- 15,000 students
- 1700 students

To create proposals for schools

Type of School
- English
- French
- Indigenous

Number of Students
- 2200 students
- 5000 students
- 1900 students

Dying to Know: Situating Death in Education

This is relevant in Canada today as per recommendations from the decision on Carter vs. Canada from groups such as the Canadian Society of Palliative Care Physicians calling for an increase in education in schools about death and the dying process (http://www.cspcp.ca/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/CSPCP-Federal-Panel-Submission-Oct-22-2015-FINAL.pdf)

- Death of a family member
- Death of a student
- Car/bus accident
- Suicide
- Terminal illness
- School shootings

Other regions interested in implementing this curriculum:
- British Columbia
- North-West Territories
- Nunavik Ministry of Education

Suggestions from workshop: “Dying to Know: Situating Death in Education”: Steps to supporting our school communities.

Idea: Make sure school libraries have a robust selection of books that explore dying, death, loss and bereavement.

First Step: Speak with the school librarian and if resources are lacking see if a funeral home might be interested in supporting the purchase of additional books.

Tools: Canadian Virtual Hospice KidsGrieve2 & Q&A webinars

Idea: Encourage classrooms to adopt a pet with a short lifespan (e.g. fish) to provide an opportunity to learn about loss in a safe environment.

First Step: Develop this idea to include guidelines and information for teachers.

Tools: Zippy’s friends curriculum

Idea: Host a “Die-ologue” or Death Cafe at the school.

First Step: Approach a school with the idea and be really clear about how this material would be shared.

Tools: DeathCafe.com

Idea: Facilitate field trips to funeral homes and long term care (LTC) facilities.

First Step: Work with funeral homes and LTC facilities to create proposals for schools.

Tools: Zippy’s friends curriculum

Big, Bold Ideas

Type of School
- English
- French
- Indigenous

Number of Students
- 2000 students
- 5000 students
- 1900 students

Zippy’s Friends
- Available in French & English
- Module on how to cope with bereavement
- Activity includes visiting a cemetery
- Parent supports available: workshop and resource binder

Type of School
- English
- French
- Indigenous

Number of Students
- 2000 students
- 5000 students
- 1900 students

Passport: Skills for Life
- Available in French & English
- Module on death & bereavement
- Parent supports available: workshop and resource binder

To contribute to general education as a basis for personal development and responsible social participation

(From the International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement (1992))

Members of school communities know that all natural cycles of sickness and health, birth and death, and love and loss occur every day within these educational institutions. Most school communities recognize that care for one another at times of crisis and loss is not simply a task solely for health and social services but is everyone’s responsibility.

The compassionate school initiative will target schools of all levels to galvanize their capacity to develop educational communities that have the knowledge, skills and resources to support their members as they face the reality of dying and death, their own and of those they love.

What is a Compassionate School?

A Compassionate School is a place of learning that incorporates death education into its’ curriculum, school policies and approaches to providing a supportive community for students, teachers, staff and parents.

1 school board
116 schools
15 school boards

2 school boards
3 schools

2 school boards
3 schools

1 school board
20 schools

2 school boards
116 schools

2 school boards
17 schools

1 school board
20 schools

Curriculum Options

Ontario
Quebec
Manitoba

1 school board
2 school boards

1 school board
3 schools

1 school board
20 schools

Zippy’s Friends curriculum

Contact Pallium Canada.

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