

Guidelines for teachers and other school personnel for marking the passage of two years since the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School tragedy



#2getherInServiceandLove

As we approach the passage of two years since the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School tragedy, teachers and other school personnel may wonder how best to acknowledge the two-year mark, what to expect of their students, and how they can be of assistance. These guidelines will help you and your school think about how to prepare for the two-year mark and provide advice on how classroom teachers can handle this topic sensitively. When using these guidelines, it is important to keep the following things in mind:

- Students and adults, even if they were not directly impacted, may still have feelings related to the event. The two-year point may remind people of the feelings they had around the time of the initial event.
- Students and adults may become distressed about other troubling events in their lives when they are reminded about the tragedy – even if their own experiences are unrelated.
- There is no one “best way” to acknowledge the two-year mark. But saying nothing in response to students’ questions says a lot: that adults are unaware or unconcerned about students’ difficult feelings or unwilling or unable to help.
- Helping students deal with a difficult event is hard work. Teachers and school staff need to be sure to take care of themselves.

What should we expect to see in our students since another year has passed?

Just as with adults, adolescents frequently experience a recurrence of some of the feelings associated with a tragedy or loss. Given the enormity of the tragedy at Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School and the likely media attention around the event, it is likely that many students will be thinking about the event around the two-year mark, even if they do not live in Parkland/Coral Springs and did not experience personal losses from that event.

Students who appear to be “back to normal” may at times still be feeling sad, scared, anxious, or angry. They may have difficulties that neither they nor adults around them connect to the tragedy. Especially around the time when the passage of the second year is recognized, these difficult feelings and reactions may become more pronounced.

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If adults are going to be of assistance to students, then it is important that we figure out how to have our needs met. It is important for all adults working with students to give some personal thought to how they have been affected by these experiences and what impact this may have on their ability to facilitate such discussions with students. You may find it useful to identify colleagues that you can talk with about any concerns or apprehensions you may have. Providing an opportunity for faculty and staff to talk about their own reactions prior to talking with students may be useful to them personally and will better prepare them to respond to students' needs.

What other advice should we give parents?

Too much attention on the two-year mark can also cause problems. This should be considered both in school and at home. Parents should be advised to limit the amount of television and other media coverage, especially of graphic material that may be broadcast, particularly for younger students. If older students and adolescents do view television, radio, internet or other media coverage, parents should try to watch along with them and use it as an opportunity to discuss not only what they are seeing, but how it makes them feel. Video-recording the broadcast allows parents and students to pause the recording for discussion or if they are feeling overwhelmed. Parents and teachers should work together to ensure that students aren't overwhelmed by the material related to the two-year point.

Where can I find additional information?

These guidelines represent some initial points to consider in planning for the two-year mark. *A Parent's Guide for Talking with Their Children* about the two-year mark is also available. Additional material can be found at the website of the National Center for School Crisis and Bereavement at schoolcrisiscenter.org and the Coalition to Support Grieving Students at grievingstudents.org, including a free booklet for parents and other adults on how to support grieving students, available in English and Spanish, follow the "Order Free Materials" link on the homepage.

LOCAL RESOURCES

For additional local resources, please access the Broward County Public Schools Mental Health Resources site at browardschools.com/recovery.

BCPS STUDENT SUPPORT INITIATIVES & RECOVERY:

Broward County Public Schools remains committed to supporting the ongoing healing and recovery of students, faculty and the entire community.

Employee Assistance Program

754-322-9900

Family Counseling Office

754-321-1590

MSD Wellness Center

754-322-2266

BCPS Mental Health Portal

bcps-mentalhealth.com

SUPPORT WITHIN THE COMMUNITY:

Dial 2-1-1 BROWARD for ALL Services

If there is an emergency, call or text 911

Broward Connection Guide

browardconnections.org

National Suicide Prevention Hotline

1-800-273-8255

suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Substance Abuse & Mental Health National Helpline 1-800-662-HELP

Eagles' Haven

954-618-0350

eagleshaven.org



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