

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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 **Pallium Canada** is very interested in working with the educational system using a public health approach to promote the development of compassionate schools and increased access to death education. This 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.

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.



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 (Feifel 1977, Knott 1979, Attig 1992, Wass 2004)
- To contribute to general education as a basis for personal development and responsible social participation (The International Work Group on Death, Dying and Bereavement (1992))

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
- Death of a teacher
- Car/bus accident
- Suicide
- Terminal illness
- Death of a pet
- School shootings

“Death neither obeys the school timetable nor appears on it... it enters the classroom without knocking.”

Curriculum Options

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	Province		
	Ontario	Quebec	Manitoba
English	1 school board	3 school boards 17 schools	
French	1 school board 2 schools	15 school boards 116 schools	1 school board 20 schools
Indigenous		2 school boards 3 schools	
Number of Students	1300 students	15,000 students	1700 students

Passport: Skills for Life

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



Type of School	Province		
	Ontario	Quebec	Manitoba
English	1 school board (catholic)	2 school boards 2 schools	
French	1 school board (catholic) 3 schools	7 school boards 20 schools	1 school board 20 schools
Indigenous		2 school boards 3 schools	
Number of Students	2200 students	5000 students	1900 students

Other regions interested in implementing this curriculum:

- British Columbia
- North-West Territories
- Nunavik Ministry of Education



Big, Bold Ideas

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.



Idea: Offer workshops for teachers on death education, how to speak with children about dying and grief so that they feel better prepared to support their students
First Step: Approach school boards for inclusion in professional development days
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



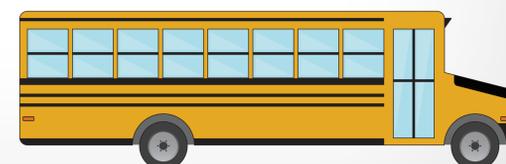
Idea: Host a “Die-alogue” or Death Cafe at the school. These could be done with students and also in the evening for parents of students
First Step: Approach a school with the idea and be really clear about how this material would be shared.
Tools: DeathCafe.com



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

Interested?

Contact Pallium Canada.



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