

## Supporting Children through when Presented with Unsettling News

Everyone experiences unsettling news differently. It is important to remember that emotions are fluid and one can expect to feel a range of emotions that span across time. The following information provides additional guidance on how adults can support children who have been presented with surprising news.

### Answering Children's Questions about Unsettling News

- Remember to provide ONLY verified facts.
  - Tell the truth - do not ignore or minimize the situation.
  - Use brief and simple explanations for younger children.
  - Expect to repeat facts. When overwhelmed, people's memory can be impaired and they take longer to process information.
  - Do not give details that students do not ask for, we do not need to overwhelm students further.
  - Avoid sensationalizing or speculating.
- Allow students to ask questions.
  - Let them know when what they have heard is a rumor; dispel myths/false information.
  - Let the students' questions guide the sharing of information.
  - Appropriate responses may include;
    - "These are the facts" (conversations should be fact focused)
    - "I do not know" (It is okay admit you do not know)
    - "I encourage you to talk with your family at home." (some conversations may be more appropriate with guardians, such as topics related to personal beliefs or individual needs)
  - Be mindful of whether these conversations would be better had one-on-one with an adult compared to the large group.
- Balance the information with reassurance about what is being done to keep kids safe. Remind kids that their safety and wellbeing is our number one priority.
- Remember referral procedures in case a student needs more support. Contact your pupil service team or a mental health professional for additional assistance.

## General Tips to Support Children Throughout Their School day

- Keep to a routine as much as possible. Kids benefit from predictability and normalcy in times of uncertainty.
- Be patient. Emotional responses can impede information intake and recall. Remember you may have to repeat key information or answer the same question multiple times.
- Listen and acknowledge feelings in a non-judgemental way. There is no right or wrong way to feel.
- Avoid making assumptions and imposing your own beliefs onto students.
- Be simple and straightforward when discussing news. Keep discussions developmentally appropriate.
- Encourage children to share feelings as and with whom they are comfortable. People express their feelings in all different ways, including writing, drawing, music, and connecting with others through play and/or touch.
  - Be careful of over-identifying (I know exactly how you feel) or too much self-disclosure (discussing in personal detail a situation you went through).
- Remember that not all students may be comfortable talking at school. Do not force children to share their feelings with others, instead provide a safe opportunity where children can discuss their feelings privately.

Here is more information on how to talk to kids about difficult topics.

- [Talking to your Child about Difficult news](#)
- [How to talk to kids about Tough Topics](#)