

WS2 Handout 21 (Slide 108): Sample Classroom Meeting Script and Outline

The following provides an example of the script and classroom meeting outline that might be provided to a classroom teacher following a crisis event.

I have some very sad news to share with you. John Collins, a third-grade student here at ABC Elementary School, died in a car accident last Saturday afternoon. The family is planning the funeral and it will probably be on Thursday afternoon of this week. We will let you and your parents know when we have more information about this. When something like this happens, people often have a lot of questions, and I would like to answer any questions you may have. I will answer by telling you the facts, or by saying “I don’t know,” or telling you to ask your parents or wait for me to get back to you. I also want to let you know that different people react to this type of event in different ways, and that is OK. Some people cry, others have trouble eating or sleeping, some people find it hard to do work, and others don’t have much of a reaction at all. If you want to talk to someone about your feelings or reactions regarding John’s death, tell me and I can make sure to excuse you to the library where adults are available to help. Does anyone have any questions?

When answering questions, please remember the following:

1. Provide ONLY verified facts.
 - a. Tell the truth (don’t ignore or minimize it).
 - b. Use brief and simple explanations for younger children.
 - i. When discussing death, avoid euphemisms (“went to sleep and did not wake up,” “went away,” or “lost”) that may be taken literally and cause fear or misunderstanding.
 - c. Expect to repeat facts.
 - d. Do not give details that students do not ask for.
 - e. Avoid sensationalizing or speculating.
2. Allow students to ask questions.
 - a. Let them know what is a rumor, and dispel rumors.
 - b. Let student questions guide the information shared.
 - c. Tell them you will give one of three responses:
 - i. The facts
 - ii. “I don’t know”
 - iii. “Talk to your parents”
3. Balance the information with reassurance about what is being done to keep them safe. Remember the referral procedures in case a student needs more support (insert names and contact information of people on call for students.)

Note. Adapted from *School Crisis Prevention and Intervention: The PREPaRE Model*, by S. E. Brock et al., 2009, Bethesda, MD: National Association of School Psychologists. Adapted with permission. Also see “Talking to Children About Death,” Hospice, <http://www.hospicenet.org/html/talking.html>