

Welcome them back.

Coming back to class after a death can feel scary. A little planning before that first day helps a student feel safe, seen, and ready to learn.

1 in 12 Oregon children will lose a parent or sibling by age 18. (Judi's House/JAG Institute, 2026 CBEM Report)

Before they return:

Check in first

Ask the family what the student wants shared.

Prep the class

Share only what's okay. Talk about kindness.

Make a signal

Agree on a quiet cue for needing a break.

Lighten the load

Adjust deadlines and trim extra work.

Watch for:

- **Slow changes.** Grades, sleep, or friendships that shift over time.
- **Tough lessons.** Units on family, illness, or death may need a heads-up.
- **Quiet kids.** Students who seem fine may be hurting the most.
- **Big dates.** Birthdays, holidays, and the anniversary of the death.

What helps:

- **Say something.** A short "I'm sorry. I'm here." beats saying nothing.
- **Keep routines.** Familiar structure feels safe when life feels upside down.
- **Be flexible.** Offer choices on assignments and seating.
- **Loop in support.** Stay connected with the counselor and the family as the year goes on.

Words that help:

INSTEAD OF

"You need to focus."

TRY

"Want to take five and come back?"

INSTEAD OF

"Not now, not here."

TRY

"We can talk after class if you want."

INSTEAD OF

"You'll be fine."

TRY

"I'm glad you're back. I'm here."

Know a grieving student? We can help.

Cason's Place offers free peer grief support for kids, teens and families in Eastern Oregon. Kids connect with other kids who understand, through play and conversation, while their parent or caregiver meets in a separate adult group.

casonspplace.org • 541-612-0828 • info@casonspplace.org

Twice monthly •
Located in
Pendleton • Always
free • Gas help
available