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April 28, 2017

Dear Families,

It has come to our attention that there are increasing concerns and questions regarding the trending Netflix series “13 Reasons Why,” specifically regarding this series highlighting suicidal ideation. This has the potential to impact youth who are vulnerable, have a history of trauma, are victims of related content or may be struggling with suicidal ideation. The overall content is very heavy and we know there are cases across the country where this has increased suicide risk. Imitation behaviour has also been seen.

There are steps that you can take as parents/guardians to help ensure the safety of your child. Here are some suggestions we have regarding this issue:

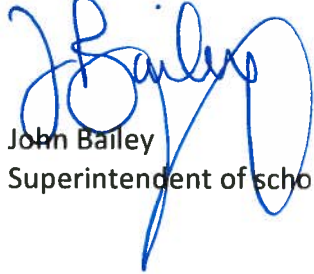
- We do not recommend that vulnerable youth, especially those who have any degree of suicidal ideation, watch this series. Its powerful storytelling may lead impressionable viewers to romanticize the choices made by the characters and/or develop revenge fantasies. They may identify with the experiences portrayed and recognize both the intentional and unintentional effects on the central character. Unfortunately, adult characters in the show, including the second school counselor who inadequately addresses the character’s pleas for help, do not inspire a sense of trust or ability to help.
- If your child is watching the show we strongly encourage you to engage in thoughtful conversations with them about the show. Doing so presents an opportunity to help them process the issues addressed, consider the consequences of certain choices, and reinforce the message that **suicide is not a solution to problems** and that help is available. This is particularly important for adolescents who are isolated, struggling, or vulnerable to suggestive images and storylines. Research shows that exposure to another person’s suicide, or to graphic or sensationalized accounts of death, can be one of the many risk factors that youth struggling with mental health conditions cite as a reason they contemplate or attempt suicide.
- If your child or youth exhibits any of the warning signs above, don’t be afraid to ask if they have thought about suicide or if someone is hurting them. Raising the issue of suicide does not increase the risk or plant the idea. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity to offer help.
- Ask your child if they are concerned about any of their friends or think any of their friends or classmates exhibit warning signs. Talk with them about how to seek help for their friend or classmate and not to take on the responsibility of trying to help their

friend without telling an adult first. Instead, guide them on how to respond and report when they (have concerns regarding any of their friends wellbeing) see or hear any of the warning signs.

- Listen to your children's comments without judgment. Doing so requires that you fully concentrate, understand, respond, and then remember what is being said. Put your own agenda aside.
- Please contact your school's administration or Family School Liaison Counselor should you have any questions or are concerned for your child's safety or the safety of one of their friends or classmates. Our counselors can assist you in engaging in supportive conversations with your child as well as ensuring your child has someone to talk to.

We value a positive relationship with our families and view ourselves as partners with you in the life of your child. We are here to offer assistance and support.

Sincerely,



John Bailey
Superintendent of schools