



Ralph C. Mahar Regional School District
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Scott Hemlin
Principal

Mitchell Hughes
Assistant Principal

Francis Phillips
Dean of Students

October 9, 2024

Dear Grade 8 Parents and Guardians:

The Ralph C. Mahar Regional School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training during the during your child's 8th grade scheduled health education class, as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program encourages students to seek help if they are concerned about themselves or a friend. The SOS Program is the only youth suicide prevention program that has demonstrated an improvement in students' knowledge and adaptive attitudes about suicide risk and depression, as well as a reduction in actual suicide attempts. Listed on Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration's National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, the SOS Program has shown a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40-64% in randomized control studies (Aseltine et al., 2007; Schilling et al., 2016).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
- To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
- To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a trusted adult about their concerns
- To teach students who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

Students will view videos, engage in discussions, and complete assignments in their Health Class. Each day students will complete an exit ticket where they can indicate if they wish to speak to a counselor after participating in the SOS lesson that day.

If you do **NOT** wish for your Grade 8 child to participate in the SOS Program in school, please call or email our School Nurse, Susan Jillson by Friday, October 18th, 2024 to opt your student out of this program. Mrs. Jillson can be reached at 978-544-2542 or by email at sjillson@rcmahar.org.

If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

Scott A. Hemlin
Principal
Ralph C. Mahar Regional School