

WHITNALL SCHOOL DISTRICT

5000 South 116th Street, Greenfield Wisconsin 53228

Village of Hales Corners, Cities of Greenfield and Franklin, Milwaukee County

Dear Teachers & Staff,

“13 Reasons Why” is a Netflix television series that premiered in March 2017. It is a show that was developed from Jay Asher’s novel and it follows the life of a female high school student who commits suicide. After her suicide, it is discovered that she recorded 13 reasons why she committed suicide on 13 cassette tapes. The rest of the novel and television series follows the protagonist, Clay Jensen, as he listens to each tape and unravels the reasons behind Hannah Baker’s death.

“13 Reason Why” has attracted national attention and extensive media coverage because of its themes around suicide, rape, and bullying. Last year, the Whitnall School District sent out a letter to families about the show’s content and encouraged parent(s)/guardian(s) to have conversations with their child if they chose to watch the show.

It has come to the district’s attention that Season 2 of “13 Reasons Why” will be premiering on May 18, 2018 on Netflix. Media coverage speculates that the show will continue to follow the story of the Hannah Baker’s suicide on a more extensive level, as well as discuss topics such as sexual assault, school shootings, bullying, another suicide attempt, and healing. Prior to each episode, cast members have recorded a video warning viewers that they may not want to watch the series if they are struggling with similar issues. The video also urges viewers to “reach out for help” and “talk to someone” if they need assistance. If individuals choose to watch the series, we highly recommend that it is watched with a trusted adult.

The following are warning signs of an individual exhibiting suicidal thinking:

- Suicidal threats in the form of direct (e.g., "I am going to kill myself") and indirect (e.g., "I wish I could fall asleep and never wake up again") statements
- Suicide notes and plans (including online postings)
- Making final arrangements (e.g., giving away prized possessions)
- Preoccupation with death
- Changes in behavior, appearance, thoughts, and/or feelings.

Suicide is a serious issue and it is necessary to have these conversations because it is important for our students to feel safe and supported. If a student is exhibiting any of these signs, please reach out to your building counselors, social worker or psychologist. For immediate attention please contact building administration or dial 9-1-1.

*****See below for information on classroom discussion and other resources.**

[Source: 13 Reasons Why Discussion Guide \(page 7\)](#)

Starting the Conversation

13 Reasons Why is meant to provoke important conversations and watching the show is an opportunity to talk with people about issues that concern you—whether you experience them yourself or you are worried that a friend or young person may be struggling.

If you are not quite sure how to start the conversation, here are some ideas:

- Do you think the characters in the show are behaving in ways that are similar to people you know? How so? How are they different?
- What do you think about what happened in this episode?
- Did parts of the story make you think about how people who are struggling do not show the full



picture of what they are dealing with to others?

- What did you learn about "so-and-so character's" situation from this episode? For example, what did you learn about what happened to Jessica and sexual assault?
- How does what you have seen change how you view some things that happen in real life?
- Do you think the adults did anything wrong? What could they have done better?
- What would you do if you knew a friend were considering suicide or had been sexually assaulted?
- Who would you go to if you were experiencing any of the situations these teens went through?
- Have you ever felt the way that Hannah, Clay or any of the other characters feel? Which ones?
- Have you ever wanted to tell someone about a sexual assault or bullying but worried that it was tattling?
- How do you know when to offer compassion/support/empathy and when to set clear boundaries?

*****The following are local and national resources for students and families.**

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline
24-hour Crisis Line
HOPELINE Text Line
Milwaukee City Mobile Urgent Treatment Team

1-800-273-TALK (8255)
(414) 647-8200
Text "Hopeline" to 741741
(414) 257-7621

[Information for 13 Reasons Why
13 Reasons Why Discussion Guide
Resources for Talking about 13 Reasons Why
National Association School Psychologists: 13 Reasons Why
American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

[Trevor Project for Youth and LGBTQ
REDgen
Pathfinders Milwaukee: Support Groups
Walker's Point Family and Youth Center](#)