

FALL RIVER PUBLIC SCHOOLS

"The Scholarship City"

417 Rock Street, Fall River, MA 02720

Matthew H. Malone, Ph.D., Superintendent

May 1, 2017

Dear Fall River Public Schools Families:

Supporting the social and emotional health of all of our students is a key component of our mission and is an integral part of the work we do with your students each and every day. As part of this work, we feel it is important to partner with our families when there are issues that may be of concern. We are writing today to make you aware of a new Netflix series, *13 Reasons Why*, which is raising concerns from mental health experts and suicide prevention advocates about the potential risks to students viewing its complex and graphic episodes.

The series is based on a young adult novel by Jay Asher, originally published in 2011, and centers on a high school student who commits suicide, leaving behind thirteen tapes which detail the reasoning behind taking her own life. The series deals with challenging issues including bullying, cyberbullying, depression, and abuse. In addition, there are graphic scenes of sexual assault, rape, and suicide within the series

Recently, an increasing number of our students are talking about *13 Reasons Why*. The issues that are showcased in this series can be very challenging for some students to understand and process in a healthy and appropriate way. We want to ensure that families are not only aware of the show, but are equipped with resources to help them address these issues with their children.

We encourage Parents/Guardians and families to:

- Ask your student if they have seen the show or discussed it with friends or classmates
- If your student has already watched the show, encourage them to discuss its complex themes with you. Some possible discussion questions include:
 - What was your takeaway from the series?
 - What resources exist in your school to support students who are dealing with these complex issues?
 - What about mental health and abuse do you think was accurate from the show? What do you think was missing?
 - What are some healthy ways to cope when relationships, family, and school get overwhelming?
 - What do you think could have been done to get Hannah support or prevent her from taking her own life?
 - What would you do if you knew one of your classmates or friends was struggling emotionally or thinking about suicide?
 - What do *you* do when you are stressed or struggling?

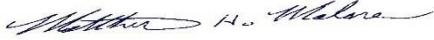
If your student has not watched the show, but expresses a desire to, watch it with them or preview it for them. You are the best person to determine if your student is prepared to handle the content

Our school's student support team (nurses, psychologists, guidance counselors, and adjustment counselors) have been made aware of the impact of this show and are prepared to provide any supports that either you or your student may need. Below are several links which provide additional resources to support conversations with your child about this series, and we have also included a list of our school-based guidance counselors.

If you have a concern or question, we encourage you to contact your student's school counselor (guidance or adjustment) directly.

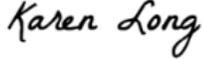
Sincerely,

Dr. Matthew Malone



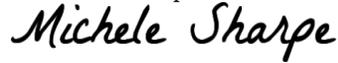
Superintendent of Schools

Karen Long



District Coordinator of Nurses K-12

Michele Sharpe



District Coordinator of Health and PE K-12

Andrew Woodward



Director of Guidance

13 Reasons Why Resources

1. **National Association of School Psychologists**
<https://www.nasponline.org/resources-and-publications/resources/school-safety-and-crisis/preventing-youth-suicide/13-reasons-why-netflix-series-considerations-for-educators>
2. **Jed Foundation**
<https://www.jedfoundation.org/13-reasons-jed-point-view/>
3. **Suicide Awareness Voices of Education**
<https://www.save.org/13-reasons-why/>
4. **Riverside Trauma Center: Parent Materials**
<http://riversidetraumacenter.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/13ReasonsWhy.pdf>
5. **National Suicide Prevention Lifeline**
<https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/>