

Wiesbaden Middle School

Nov. 5, 2008



Alexia Venglik, Principal
Ken Younkin, Assistant Principal

Student/Parent/Teacher Conferences on Friday, 7 Nov. Conferences are scheduled in students' seminar classes. Elective teachers will be available in their classrooms. Hope to see you there!

Reminder: The clinic will be at WMS on Friday with the flu vaccination. Consent form attached.

Important program for parent review:

Dear Parent or Guardian,

The adolescent years are marked by a rollercoaster of emotions-difficult for youths, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression – which is treatable - is a leading risk factor for suicide.

To proactively address these issues, the WMS counselors will be presenting a depression awareness and suicide prevention training through the SOS Middle School Program. This program has been developed by the non-profit organization that created the SOS Signs of Suicide Program for High Schools, used by thousands of schools nationwide since 2000. The Centers for Disease Control recently released its *Middle School Youth Risk Behavior Survey* conducted in 2003. Across states, the percentage of students who reported that they had seriously thought about killing themselves, ranged from 18% of sixth graders to 28% of eighth graders. Eleven

percent of 6th graders and up to 17% of eighth graders reported that they had made a plan about how to kill themselves. Most alarmingly, the percentage of youth that reported that they had actually tried to kill themselves ranged from 7% among sixth graders to 11% of eighth graders.

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 suicidality 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 responsible adult about their concerns,
- To help students know whom, in the school, they can turn to for help, if they need it.

During conference day on Friday, parent newsletters with information about depression and its related risks will be available as well as an opportunity to preview the video that will be used with the students. The video will be shown in Room 134 at 9:00 and 1:30.

If you have any questions or concerns about this program please do not hesitate to contact your child's counselor, Ms. V for 6th grade, Dr. N for 7th/8th grade.

Sincerely,

Alexis Venglik
WMS Principal

Some Important Dates to Remember:

Nov. 11 – Veterans' Day – No School

Nov. 12, 13 - WMS Health Screening

Nov. 27-28 – Thanksgiving Holiday – No School