



Van Dyke Public Schools
Office of Superintendent

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Superintendent of Schools

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Dear Van Dyke Community,

I have been talking with other parents, colleagues, and friends about a critical issue surrounding the popular Netflix series *13 Reasons Why*. Therefore, I am reaching out to you with a *cautionary* note and resources to help you negotiate through conversations regarding this series. This is a Netflix series that was based on a book of the same title. This is a **FICTIONAL** story of a youngster who has died by suicide after making 13 tapes that were sent to other students and a school counselor that she believed were “responsible” for her death.

This series **VERY** graphically depicts not only suicide, but rape, drug use and drinking, and cyber-bullying in a normalizing way. The producers believed they were doing a good thing drawing attention to suicide and bullying; however, it is not done with best practice in mind. Further, it does not address the mental health concerns that this girl was experiencing; she experiences a great deal of personal and family stress along with faulty perceptions. Our youth should know that mental health issues are very treatable, and that there is no shame in seeking treatment for those issues. Our community has resources, including crisis centers, clinics, and hotlines, that can be of great help to our students each day.

Several professional organizations, including the National Association of School Psychologists, have expressed concern, developed [considerations for educators](#) and parents, [talking points](#), and a [webinar](#). Please take time to review these and be prepared for discussion with the youth in your life. This is not a show that I would recommend to young people in your life, but if they mention it to you or if you overhear discussion, please be ready to dispel all the misinformation and glorification this show has put out. Consider also mentioning how dangerous this show is for other vulnerable people in your children’s lives.

As a parent and advocate for our students, you can be the trusted adult who provides a safe space to talk and be heard; this can be the best opportunity for someone to share their feelings and what they are going through. Being direct and asking specific questions after listening can help to identify when a student is in need of help.

If you know of someone struggling with thoughts of suicide or another crisis, they can contact the Macomb Crisis Center at (855) 927-4747 or the National Suicide Prevention Lifeline at 1(800)273-8255. They may also text START to 741-741 for confidential crisis assistance. Please do not hesitate to contact me with questions.

Sincerely,

Piper Bognar

Mrs. Piper L. Bognar
Superintendent

Every Student, Every Day, No Matter What

-Van Dyke Public Schools is an Equal Opportunity Employer-