

# THE BROMFIELD SCHOOL

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Dear Parent or Guardian:

The teen years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions—difficult for teens, 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, and the past decade has seen teen suicide rates double.

In order to proactively address the issue, The Bromfield School is offering screening and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Sign of Suicide<sup>®</sup> Prevention program. It has been used by thousands of schools over the past nine years. It has proven successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention program selected by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Screening Administration for its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices that addresses suicide risk and depression, while reducing suicide attempts. In a randomized control study, the SOS program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness, and help them to assess whether or not they may have symptoms consistent with depression
- 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 teens that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a trusted adult about their concerns

Our plan is to present the training to all of the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> grade students in their Health/Wellness and Physical Education classes beginning the week after February school vacation over 1-2 class periods. For those students who are not enrolled in those courses, they will join their peers during one of their elective classes. During the training the students will watch the Sign of Suicide “Friends for Life: Preventing Teen Suicide” video, discuss the video, and complete the Signs of Suicide Student depression screening form. The depression screening tool that we are using concerns thoughts and feelings which parents/guardians may be unaware their child is having. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression, but does give an indication of whether a young person should be referred for additional mental health screening. The teachers and staff are also undergoing training to be aware of the signs of depression and suicidality and how to effectively respond to students who may approach them for help.

Please sign the attached permission slip allowing your child to take a written screening test for depression and participate in SOS: Sign of Suicide intervention training in school, and return this form to Guidance or their homeroom teacher by **Friday February 14, 2014**. You can also respond to the email version of this form to [dskrocki@psharvard.org](mailto:dskrocki@psharvard.org). If you have questions or concerns about this program please do not hesitate to contact your child’s counselor.

Sincerely,

The Bromfield School Guidance Department

I, \_\_\_\_\_, **give permission** for \_\_\_\_\_  
(Name of Parent/Guardian) (Name of Student)  
to be screened for depression and participate in the SOS Suicide Prevention Program.

(X) \_\_\_\_\_  
(Signature of Parent/Guardian)