Wake Forest Middle School

Dear Parent or Guardian: Date: 9/16/24

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride 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. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth.

To proactively address these issues, Wake Forest Middle School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program has proven to be successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention program listed by SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices that addresses suicide risk and depression, while reducing suicide attempts. SOS has demonstrated an improvement in students' knowledge and adaptive attitudes about suicide risk and depression. It has also shown a 64% reduction in self-reported suicide attempts.

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

This topic is part of the healthful living standard course of study. The goal is to educate your child and to give them guidance on how to get help for themselves or a friend. The program has several video clips that illustrate real life situations that middle or high school students may experience. The video clips show the students how to correctly and safely deal with each scenario. This program includes a self-scoring depression screening. We are attaching a copy of this brief screening for adolescent depression so that you can do this survey with your child. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression, but does indicate whether your child should be referred for evaluation by a mental health professional. You know your child best and if your child is sensitive to this topic, please contact your child's counselor. For more information please visit www.mindwise.org/parents

Sincerely,

Dr. Christopher Bradford, Ed.D., Principal
Wake Forest Middle School

Questions to the seventh grade counselor:
Jamie Gordon, MA, LCMHCA, NCC at jbgordon@wcpss.net or 919-554-8440, ext. 22430

If you do **NOT** wish for your child to participate in the SOS Middle School program, please sign below and return it to Student Services by Friday, September 27. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

I do not want my child_____ (child's name) to participate in the SOS program

*Parent Signature:*_____