

May 15, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians;

The mini-series *13 Reasons Why*, adapted from a young adult novel, was released on Netflix in April. *13RW* relays the fictional story of a high-schooler, Hannah Baker, who has died by suicide before the story even begins. Hannah chooses to leave behind cassette recordings for the 13 people who she feels are responsible for her death.

The show's release has led to much conversation and social media buzz about teen suicide, especially among middle and high-schoolers. On the surface, this appears positive. Suicide is the second leading cause of death among 15-34 year-olds. Although it can be uncomfortable, having direct, genuine conversations with our kids about suicide is healthy and potentially life-saving.

Unfortunately, *13RW* misses the mark in critical ways to better understand and address the devastating impact of teen suicide. Despite being touted by some as a "life-saving" work, *13RW* could do more harm than good by disregarding best practices in media portrayals of suicide. Many individuals who have personal experience with suicide, as well as suicide prevention advocates, have serious concerns about the way suicide is portrayed in *13RW*.

Parents should be aware that this series is not appropriate for young children, and there are themes and graphic scenes that may not be appropriate for all teens. We recommend that all parents of teens speak openly and directly to them about suicide. But a sensationalized and unrealistic portrayal of suicide is not necessary to have this critical conversation.

(source: Author: [John Ackerman, PhD](#); Published [April 13, 2017](#) in: [Behavioral Health, Kids & Teens, Parenting](#))

We have attached a couple of resources to our webpage www.millardk12.org to assist you as parents in the event you need information to help you discuss this difficult topic with your child. There are many more helpful resources on line that you may wish to access, or you may contact your school counselor.

Thanks for your attention to this important topic,

David V. Styler, Superintendent
Millard School District