

WASHINGTON BOROUGH PUBLIC SCHOOLS

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Dear Washington Borough Community,

This letter was written and designed by cluster personnel to open a dialogue about a television series and a book, both entitled *13 Reasons Why*.

The book and the television series are based on a teenager, Hannah Baker, who commits suicide and leaves behind thirteen tapes for thirteen people she felt had a role in making her life unbearable and led to her fatal decision. However, it is not the book, necessarily, that has educators and mental health professionals across the nation so concerned. The problem lies with the Netflix series which graphically depicts a suicide death and addresses in great detail a number of very difficult topics, such as bullying, rape and drunk driving. The series also highlights the consequences of teenagers witnessing assaults and bullying (i.e., bystanders) and not taking action to address the situation (e.g., not speaking out against the incident, not telling an adult about the incident).

A number of resources, articles and news stories have been included that all chronicle the alarm bells ringing in the heads of many people who work with young people who might be binge watching the series and may have a great deal of difficulty in processing the feelings they experience as a result of the graphic depictions and the serious nature of the subject. Organizations such as the National Association of School Psychologists, the Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicides and educators across New Jersey and the nation are all concerned with the potential harm this television series might pose to our most vulnerable young people who might be struggling themselves, but do not feel they can turn to a trusted adult. In fact, the series shows a guidance counselor who bungles many of the cries for help from the lead character.

The personnel at Washington Borough are deeply committed to helping every one of our students in an age appropriate manner as they mature and encounter many difficult challenges. This letter is not a cry for censorship of the program, but is a plea to talk to our youngsters and let them know that there are caring adults at home, here at school and many, many resources available throughout Warren County to assist those who might make connections to the series and make a tragic choice.

If you would like more information on this topic, please consult the following resources:

The Society for the Prevention of Teen Suicide, www.sptsusa.org

The National Association of School Psychologists, <https://www.nasponline.org/>
(There is a full report and further information on the front page)

Talking Points from Suicide Awareness Voices of Education:
<https://www.save.org/13-reasons-why/>

<http://www.cnn.com/2017/04/25/health/13-reasons-why-teen-suicide-debate-explainer/>

http://www.nj.com/entertainment/index.ssf/2017/04/montclair_and_westfield_schools_

The NJ Department of Children and Families,
<http://www.nj.gov/dcf/adolescent/prevention/>

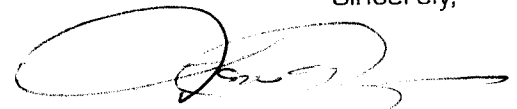
New Jersey System of Care,
<http://www.performcarenj.org/youth/resources/youth-suicide-prevention.aspx>

Mental Health Resources:

Warren County Family Guidance (WCFG):	908-689-1000
WCFG Crisis Intervention 24 hour Hotline:	908-454-5141
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:	1-800-273-TALK
NJ Hopeline:	1-855-NJ-HOPELINE (654-6735)
2 nd Floor Youth Helpline:	888-222-2228 (call or text)

I hope this letter helps open a dialogue and furthers our mission to help our students live the best life they can, each day.

Sincerely,



Lance S. Rozsa
Superintendent of Schools