



SCHENECTADY CITY SCHOOLS

1445 The Plaza • Schenectady, New York 12308

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www.schenectady.k12.ny.us

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April 3, 2009

Dear Parents/Guardians:

A student at Schenectady High School died Thursday evening by suicide. Schenectady High School has now experienced the loss of four students to suicide this year. We continue to have serious concerns regarding teen suicide. We are continuing to take many preventative steps at Schenectady High School. Community professionals and clergy are working with us to deal with these issues.

Please reach out to one of the resources listed below if you see **any of the following signs/symptoms in your child**: talks about committing suicide; has trouble eating or sleeping; experiences drastic changes in behavior; withdraws from friends and/or social activities or hobbies; loses interest in hobbies, school, personal appearance; gives away prized possessions or appears to be “saying goodbye”; has attempted suicide before; takes unnecessary risks; has had recent severe losses of friends or family.

At Schenectady High School we have implemented and revised plans for responding to this tragedy. The plan, evolving from professional experience and the advice of mental health professionals in the community, focuses on ways we can help our students and their families.

Presently, students at Schenectady High School are meeting weekly in the “Speak Out!” group. Students, more now than ever, are referring friends they are worried about. These students are taking positive action in preventing suicide such as fundraising for suicide prevention.

Your child may be affected by this most recent tragedy even if he or she did not know the student well. We encourage you to talk to your child about what has happened. Discussing thoughts and feelings about death is important toward helping your child work through his or her grief. We, as a district, are balancing our duty of keeping you informed while being cautious not to, in any way, “glamorize” the act of suicide.

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As a parent/guardian you may have questions about how to answer the questions and meet the needs of your child during this time. If you feel that your child or family is in need of any additional support or more information, please contact your child's guidance counselor (370-8200) or any of the agencies listed below.

Please attend any of the following suicide counseling and awareness meetings. Parents and students are welcome to attend. Structured activities and food will be provided. We are looking to get community input about keeping our children healthy, both physically and emotionally. We hope these positive events will further pull our community together during these difficult times to make our children safer.

Boys & Girls Club of Schenectady, Craig Street
Saturday, 4/4/09 - 10:00 a.m. – 5:00 p.m.
Sunday, 4/5/09 – 1:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m.

Schenectady High School, Flagpole Entrance
Saturday, 4/4/09 – 10:00 a.m. – 1:00 p.m.

Sincerely,

Gary B. Comley
Associate Superintendent
GBC/aeo

Lynn Rafalik
Director of Pupil Personnel Services

Child Guidance Center
Northeast Parent and Child Society
530 Franklin Street
Schenectady, NY 12304
Phone: 518-381-8911
Contact: Joe Gallagher, Director

BOCES-CAPIT
School based Masters level social workers and
school counselors
in each elementary, middle and high school
Phone: 518-464-3944
Contact: Laura Combs, LCSW, CASAC, CPP

Ellis Hospital
1101 Nott Street
Schenectady, NY 12308
Crisis Center
Phone: 518-243-4306
Outpatient Service
243-1300 – Dr. Stephonie

**Family and Child Service of Schenectady
Counseling Program**
246 Union Street
Schenectady, NY 12305
Phone: 518-393-1369/Fax: 518-393-3601
Contact: Maria Sunukjian, Exec. Director

National Foundation for Suicide Prevention
1-800-273-8255

Samaritans
869-4673

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