



April 26, 2017

Superintendent's Message: "13 Reasons Why"

Dear Parents and Guardians:

It has come to our attention that over the past few weeks many of our students have been watching and talking about an original Netflix series entitled, "13 Reasons Why." Our staff, as well as officials at the Bergen County Department of Education and National Association of School Psychologists have become increasingly concerned about our students viewing this miniseries without a follow-up discussion with their parents or other responsible adult.

In the miniseries, which is based on a young adult novel released a decade ago, high school student Hannah Baker leaves behind 13 taped recordings detailing why she took her own life. Her former classmates are left to piece together Hannah's final weeks in a made-for-television mystery. In watching the series, young people and teens could interpret the message that suicide is a viable and/or romanticized option. The show's content is extremely graphic, with disturbing scenes in each episode, which may be difficult for impressionable minds to watch and process in a healthy way.

The series includes the following shortcomings:

- There is no mention of behavioral health and treatment options
- The notion of suicide is glamorized
- There are no examples of help-seeking by the teens portrayed in the program
- There are several scenes depicting serious trauma, in which the teens do not seek help or resources, including rape, bullying, alcoholism and suicide
- The graphic portrayal of Hannah's actual suicide was unnecessary and potentially harmful to young people facing challenges

Please take a moment to find out if your child has read the book or viewed the series. If so, please use the show as an opportunity to talk about some of its complicated issues and open the door to create a safe atmosphere for your child to discuss his or her feelings and emotions. I have attached information from the National Association of School Psychologists with a list of talking points to help with the conversation. [NASP's 13 Reasons Why](#)

Our guidance / wellness staff are available to speak to if you would like further guidance regarding "13 Reasons Why" or any other wellness related concern for your child. I am including their contact information below:

Erica Franceski, Student & Family Resource Liaison – PHHS
201-358-7020 Ext. 22008

Dr. Steven Myers, Student & Family Resource Liaison – PVHS
201-358-7060 Ext. 24250

Sincerely,

P. Erik Gundersen

Superintendent of Schools

Pascack Valley Regional High School District

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