

Dear Coventry Middle School Families,

*I am writing today to share concerns about a television series students may be watching. While many consider the video streaming service, *Netflix*, as "*just another TV channel*," it is a paid subscription service and therefore not subjected to the same FCC regulations and content rating system as broadcast TV.

Netflix recently began airing an original series entitled, *13 Reasons Why*, based on the young adult book with the same title by Jay Asher. The novel was intended for young adults; however, *13 Reasons Why* contains mature subject matter including graphic depictions of rape, substance abuse, cyberbullying, bullying, voyeurism, and suicide. *13 Reasons Why* is about a teenager who takes her own life, but before doing so methodically records audio messages for the 13 people she feels in some way played a role in her decision to commit suicide.

This series has been available on *Netflix* since the end of March. Former Disney child star, Selena Gomez, is credited as a producer. With her name attached, *13 Reasons Why* may reach a much younger audience than anticipated. Middle and High School students are likely aware of the series and may have even watched some, or all, of the episodes.

It is important for you to be cognizant of its availability, allure, content, and popularity. The series romanticizes suicide as a viable option, portrays school support staff as being non-responsive to students in need, and does not offer any appropriate responses or advice for students who may be in crisis.

Producers are portraying the series as an "*important dialogue*."

The [National Association of School Psychologists \(NASP\)](#) cautions that its powerful storytelling may lead impressionable viewers to sensationalize the choices made by the characters and/or develop revenge fantasies.

Caring for the well-being of young children and teens is most effective when schools and parents work together. This letter is written with the hope that with informed guidance from parents and trusted adults, students will make healthy decisions regarding their young lives. Series such as this can be thought-provoking but, they can also do harm. It is highly recommended that if your child is interested in the program, you consider watching it with them in order to give the supporting guidance that suicide is never an answer, and the blame for suicide does NOT belong to others.

If you wish to have a dialogue with your child(ren) about *13 Reasons Why*, I have listed the following resources from mental health organizations to assist you in your discussion. I have also included two trailers for the show that you may find useful in becoming fully informed about this series.

- [13 Reasons Why Tip Sheet from SAVE and the JED Foundation](#)
- [13 Reasons Why - JED's Point of View](#)
- [National Association of School Psychologists' Guidance for Families and Educators](#)
- [7 Essential Discussion Questions for 13 Reasons Why](#)
- [Risk Factors and Warning Signs - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [Preventing Youth Suicide Brief Facts](#) (also available in [Spanish](#)) and [Preventing Youth Suicide: Tips for Parents and Educators](#)
- 13 Reason Why [Trailer](#) that provides the basic storyline for the series
- 13 Reasons Why Original [Trailer](#)

As always, if you have concerns about your child or worries about the health and well-being of others, please do not hesitate to contact your child's teacher, school counselor, school psychologist, social worker, or an administrator.

Sincerely,

Tina Norris, Coventry Middle School, Principal
Kimberly Hibian, Coventry Middle School, School Counselor

*original letter correspondence by Dr. Christopher Manno, Superintendent of Bedford City Schools in New York.