

Dear Parent / Guardian,

During this challenging year, school staff are working to teach students about mental health and how to seek help if they are worried about themselves or a friend. We are using a program called *SOS Signs of Suicide*. The program teaches students about this difficult topic and encourages them to seek help.

SOS has been used by thousands of schools over the past few decades. Studies have shown that it effectively teaches students about depression and suicide while reducing the number of students' self-reported suicide attempts.

Through the program, students learn:

- that depression is treatable, so they are encouraged to seek help
- how to identify depression and potential suicide risk in themselves or a friend
- to ACT (Acknowledge, Care and Tell a trusted adult) if concerned about themselves or a friend
- who they can turn to at school for help, if they need it

Students will watch age-appropriate video clips and participate in a guided discussion about depression, suicide, and what to do if they are concerned about a friend. Following the video, students will complete a response slip which asks whether they would like to talk to an adult about any concerns. School staff will conduct brief meetings with any student asking to talk.

Following the video, students will complete a brief depression screening tool. This tool cannot provide a diagnosis of depression but does indicate whether a young person should be referred for evaluation by a mental health professional.

We encourage you to visit www.sossignsof suicide.org/parent for information on warning signs for youth suicide, useful resources, and some of the key messages students will learn.

We are including:

- An infographic for you to reinforce the ACT message at home
- An info sheet with resources

If you have any questions or concerns about your child's participation in this program please contact me, Whitney McCallister at **919-870-4141 ext. 24631 or by email wmccallister@wcpss.net**.

Sincerely,

Leesville Road Middle School Student Support Team