



# Suicide Prevention For ALL Students

Angela Avery, M.Ed.  
(she/her)

*Sanford Middle School Counselor, Sanford, Maine*



# Copyright Policy:

All intellectual property rights in and to this ASCA webinar ("the Event"), the content and all materials distributed at or in connection with the Event are owned by the American School Counselor Association ("ASCA") and/or the Event sponsors or speakers presenting at the Event. You may not use or reproduce or allow anyone to use or reproduce, any of ASCA's trademarks, and/or any materials distributed at or in connection with the Event for any reason without the prior written permission of ASCA and the presenting speaker.



# Learning Objectives



After viewing this webinar you will be able to:

- ❑ Summarize recent data, statistics and research related to suicide rates among youth.
- ❑ Identify Tier 1 and 2 supports for suicide prevention as part of a your school counseling program.
- ❑ Develop a comprehensive plan for suicide prevention and ideas to connect *every* student in your building with a trusted adult.
- ❑ Design an outline of events for Suicide Prevention Month in September or future month.



What does it **FEEL** like  
for you to think about  
**students** and **suicide**?

—

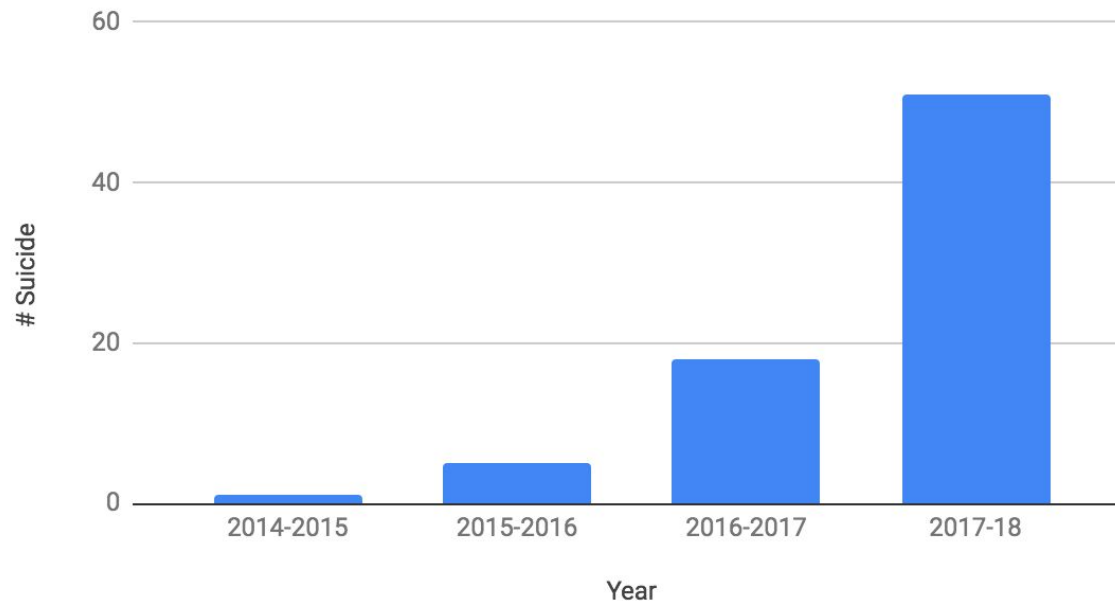
# Proactive vs Reactive

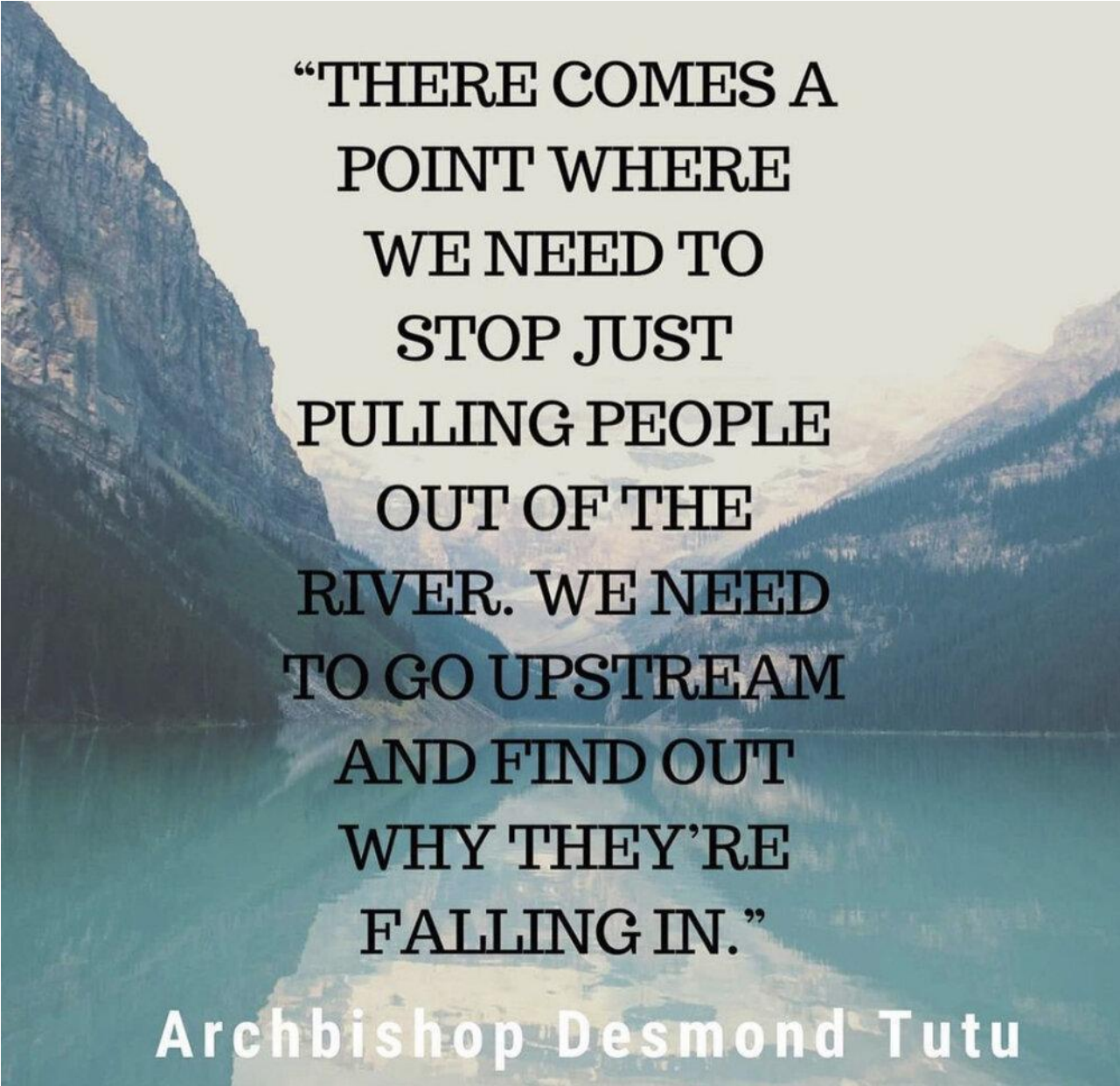


***“Every single person you ever will meet shares a common desire. They want to know Do you see me? Do you hear me? Does what I say mean anything to you?”  
-Oprah Winfrey***



# Suicide vs. Year





**“THERE COMES A  
POINT WHERE  
WE NEED TO  
STOP JUST  
PULLING PEOPLE  
OUT OF THE  
RIVER. WE NEED  
TO GO UPSTREAM  
AND FIND OUT  
WHY THEY’RE  
FALLING IN.”**

**Archbishop Desmond Tutu**



# PRE-Pandemic



56% increase 2007-2017

2nd leading cause of death

**1 in 5 LGBTQ,**

**1 in 3 Transgender attempted**

73% increase Black youth attempts

pending...

**CONNECTION**  
**PURPOSE**  
**HOPE**



# Connection Is Key : Thomas Joiner Interpersonal Theory of Suicide

## Thwarted Belonging

- ◆ Lack:
  - Genuine connection
  - Cared about
  - Understood
  - Contribution to society

## Perceived Burdensome

- ◆ Feel ineffective
- ◆ World would be better off without them
- ◆ Hopeless that this may change in future

Which **SKILLS**  
are you  
**already teaching?**

—

How do you **RESPOND**  
to  
**suicide ideation?**

What are you doing to  
specifically  
**PREVENT**  
**suicide ideation**  
among your students?

---

# Prevention = Proactive :

## *Look Through the SI Prevention Lens*

### → **Core Classroom Lessons**

- ◆ Feelings
- ◆ Coping Skills
- ◆ Friendships
- ◆ Assertiveness

### → **Whole-School Events**

- ◆ Bullying Prevention
- ◆ Trusted Adults

### → **Small Groups**

- ◆ Lunch Bunches
- ◆ Social Skills
- ◆ Anger Management
- ◆ Grief Support

### → **Individual**

- ◆ Minute Meetings
- ◆ New Students
- ◆ Freshmen Check-Ins

# Protective Factors

= Decreasing  
Suicidality

- ❑ Having an important caring other
- ❑ Consistent, loving environment
- ❑ Genetic resiliency
- ❑ Adaptive personality
- ❑ Feelings of mastery (doing well in play and at school)
- ❑ Friendships
- ❑ Religious affiliation
- ❑ Social support
- ❑ Cultural identification
- ❑ An environment with limited stress
- ❑ Hope

# Action Plan

# Reflection

- Which interventions do we provide already for topics like bullying, friendships, coping skills, feelings, etc. that we could add suicide prevention into?
- Do our Web site, offices, bathrooms, email signatures, etc. have information about hotline numbers and support for families who experience SI or depression?

# Tier Level Supports

**Support for ALL Students**

**Proactive**

**Comprehensive**

**Building the Connections and Anchors**

# Student Needs Assessment

I would report to an adult I trust if my friend mentioned wanting to die, kill themselves or hurt themselves. \*

- Always
  - Sometimes
  - Never
- 

I have a trusted adult IN the SMS building who I can talk to if I have a problem. \*

- Yes
- No

# Parent Newsletters

## Outside Resources

If you believe that you or someone you know could be in crisis, please do not hesitate to connect with these local and national resources:

Maine's Statewide Crisis Line: (888) 568-1112 (call or text)

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: 1-800-273-8255 ([or online chat here](#))

National Crisis Text Line: Text HOME to 741741

Trevor Project LGBTQ Crisis Line: 1-866-488-7386 ([online chat here](#) or text TREVOR to 1-202-304-1200)

Curious about what happens when you call or text the Maine Statewide Crisis Line?

[Learn more here.](#)

## SUICIDE WARNING SIGNS



### TALK

Being a burden to others  
Experiencing unbearable pain  
Killing themselves  
Having no reason to live  
Feeling trapped



### BEHAVIOR

Increased use of alcohol or drugs  
Acting recklessly  
Withdrawing from activities  
Looking for a way to kill themselves, such as searching online for materials or means  
Isolating from family and friends  
Sleeping too much or too little  
Visiting or calling people to say goodbye  
Giving away prized possessions



### MOOD

Loss of interest  
Irritability  
Anxiety  
Depression  
Rage  
Humiliation



AMERICAN FOUNDATION FOR  
Suicide Prevention



Whether it's your friends,  
family, or community,  
everyone needs  
someone to lean on.



If you don't know where to turn,  
you can text **HOME** to **741741**.

A volunteer Crisis Counselor with  
Crisis Text Line will be there for you.  
It's free and 24/7.

**988** SUICIDE & CRISIS  
**LIFELINE**

**24/7 CALL, TEXT, CHAT**

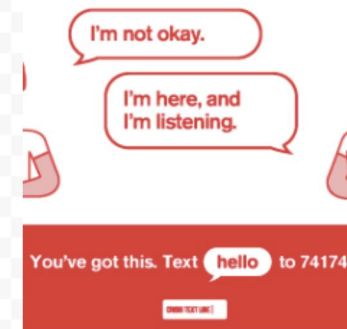
**Need SUPPORT ?**

**It's OK to talk about it. Reach out!**

**IN school:** Go to the counseling office across from the cafeteria to ask to see your school counselor.

**OUT of school:** Take a picture of these hotline numbers in case you need support out of school.

**YOU ARE NOT ALONE.**



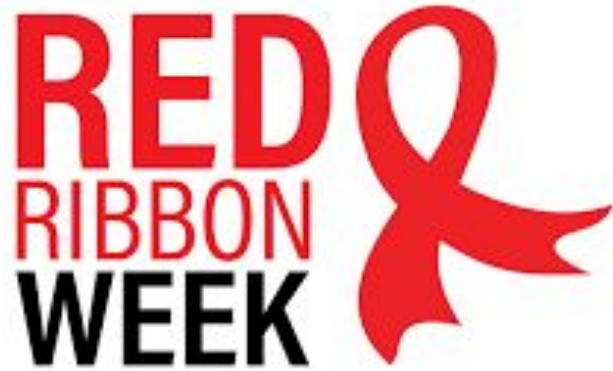
Maine Crisis Hotline

1-888-568-1112

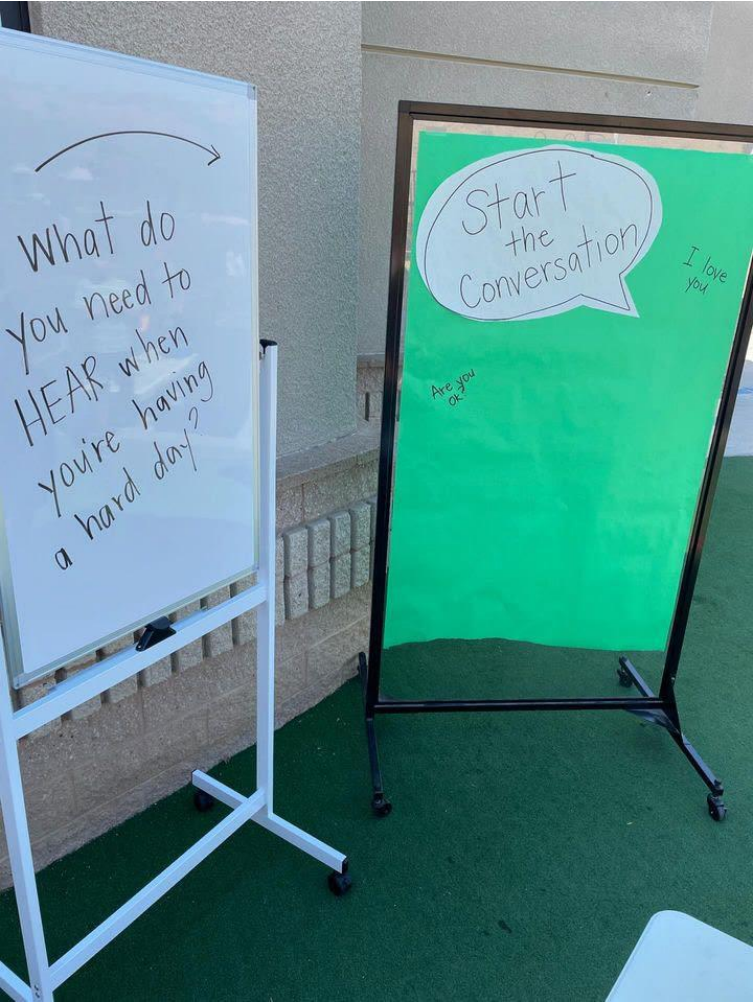
Brought to you by the SMS Counseling Team

**National Hotlines**

# Add to What You ALREADY Do



# Elementary Start the Conversation



*Idea by  
Melissa  
Gillespie  
Instagram  
@schoolcounselormelissa*

# Minute Meetings

- *Do you have a trusted adult in the building?*
- *Have you been bullied this year at school?*
  
- Icebreaker questions → shows you care, shows interest, get to know students
  - ◆ *What would you do if you had all the money in the world?*
  - ◆ *What superpower do you wish you had?*



***Minute Meetings idea by the fantastic school counselor Danielle Schultz!***

# Core Lessons

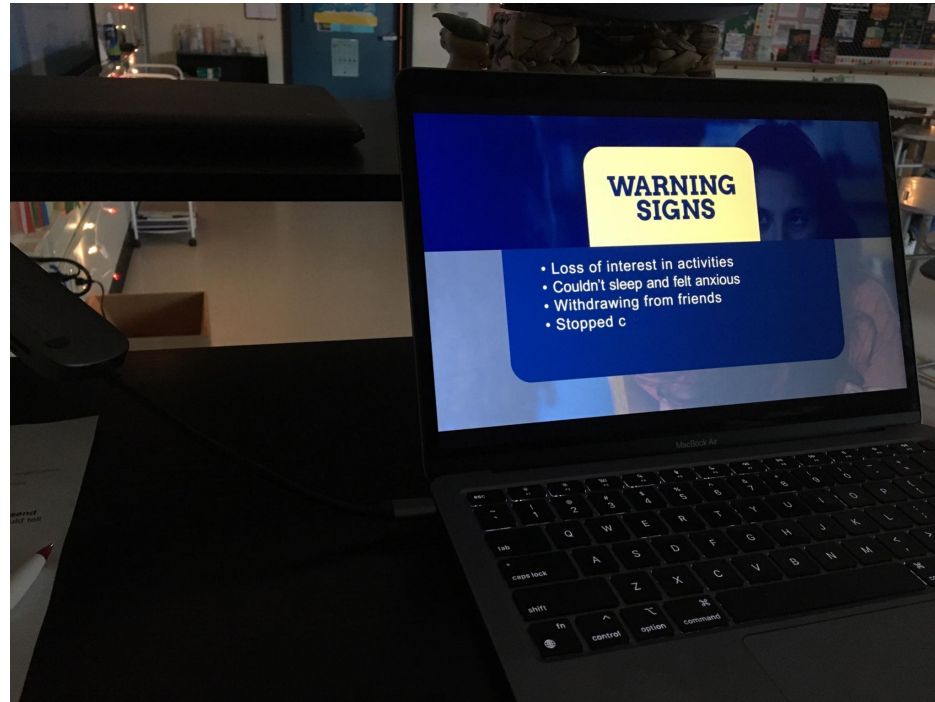
## ALL Students Need

- How to access the school counselor
- Who to report concerns to in building
  - ◆ out of school hours
- What happens when report SI to school counselor? What's the process?
- How to and why help a friend
  - ◆ Rather have a potentially mad friend than an unsafe friend = encourage reporting
  - ◆ Allow confidential reporting



# Tier 1 - Core Lessons

- Resiliency
- Bullying Prevention
- Goal setting, careers, Reach Higher
- Hope
- Perseverance
- Role-play
- Problem-solving skills
- Mindfulness
- Feelings identification
- Help-seeking behavior
- Brain development
- Coping skills
- Transitions -to MS & HS



# Signs of Suicide



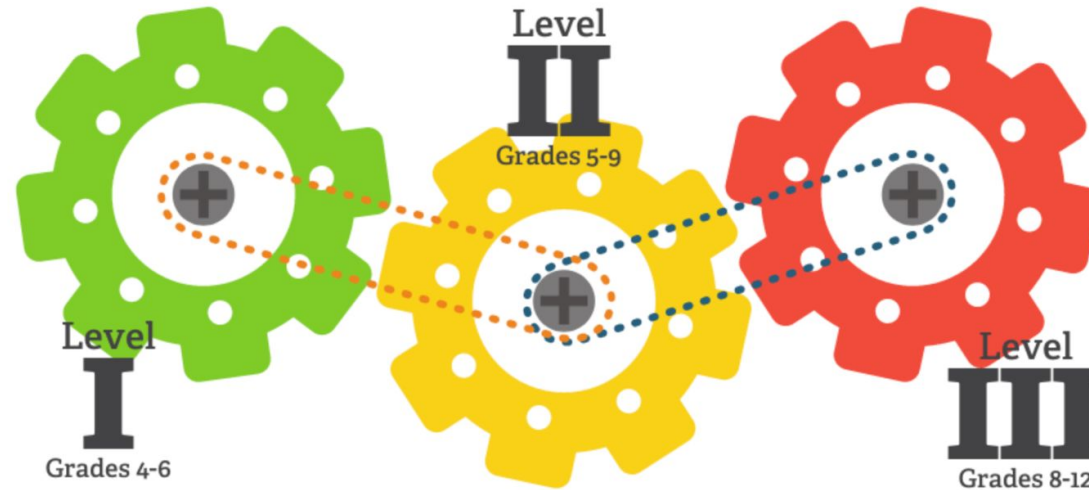
## **Solutions for Middle & High Schools**

Affordable, evidence-based youth suicide prevention education that has demonstrated a 64% reduction in self-reported suicide attempts.

# Sandy Hook Promise



# Erika's Lighthouse



## **We All Have Mental Health**

*Ideal for grades 4-6*

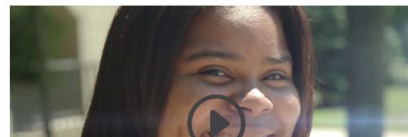
An introduction to mental health by understanding everyday feelings vs. overwhelming feelings with a strong focus on help-seeking and good mental health.



## **Depression Awareness**

*Ideal for grades 5-9*

An introduction to depression by recognizing signs and symptoms with a strong focus on help-seeking and good mental health.



## **Depression Education & Suicide Awareness**

*Ideal for grades 8-12*

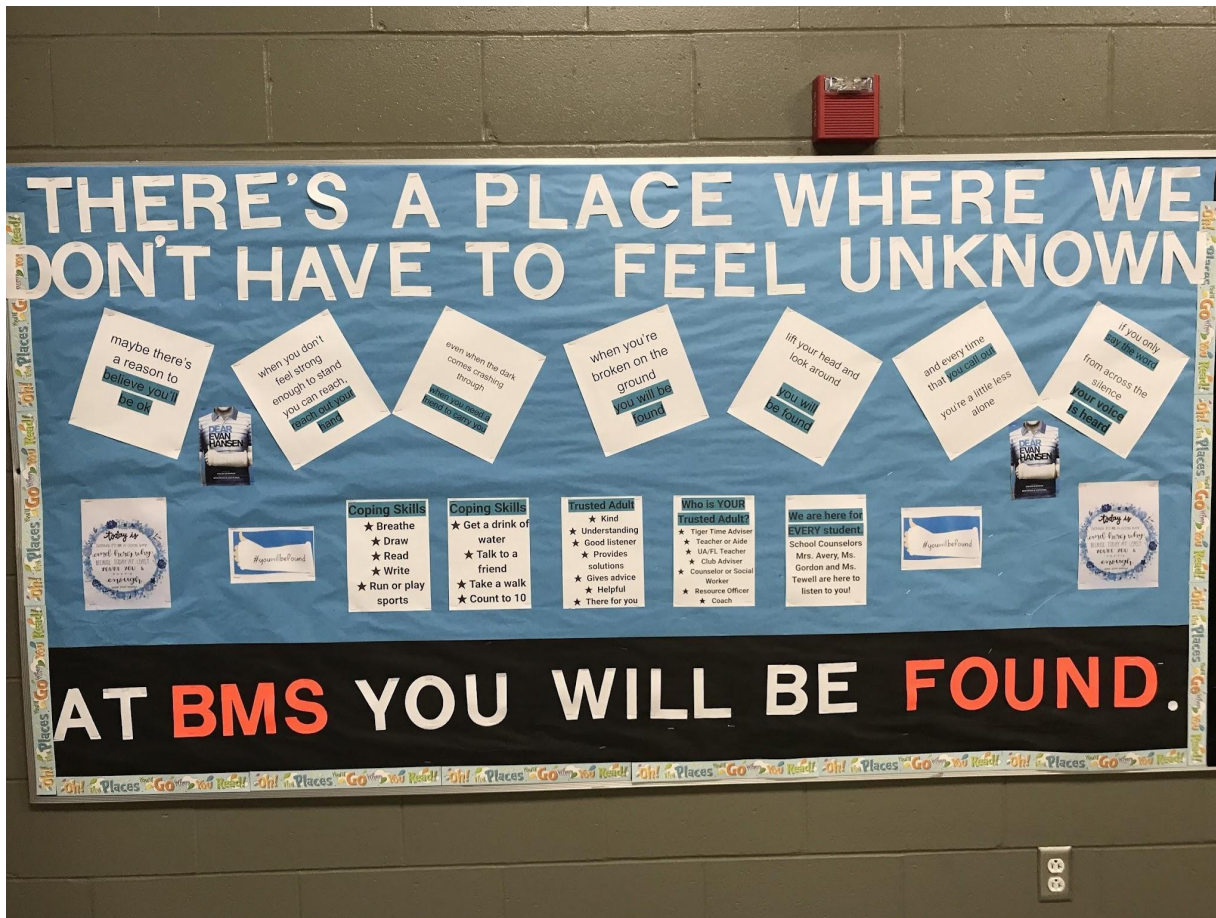
A deeper discussion about depression and suicide along with a strong focus on help-seeking and good mental health.



# Great Kindness Challenge



- Bullying Prevention
- Whole-School Kind Acts
- Promotes Inclusion
- Celebrate Differences
- Add to checklist: ask for help and report a concern about a friend



# SUICIDE & MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS

- Suicide Prevention Week  
**9/8/24 - 9/14/24**
  - ◆ Yellow, or purple and turquoise
- World Suicide Prevention Day - **9/10/24**
- Mental Health Awareness Week **10/6/24 - 10/12/24**
  - ◆ **#EndTheStigma**
- World Mental Health Day **10/10/24**
- Mental Health Awareness Month - NAMI - **May 2025**

# Peer to Peer

- Sources of Strength
- Aevidum
- Text Talk Act
- No Place For Hate
- Hope Squad

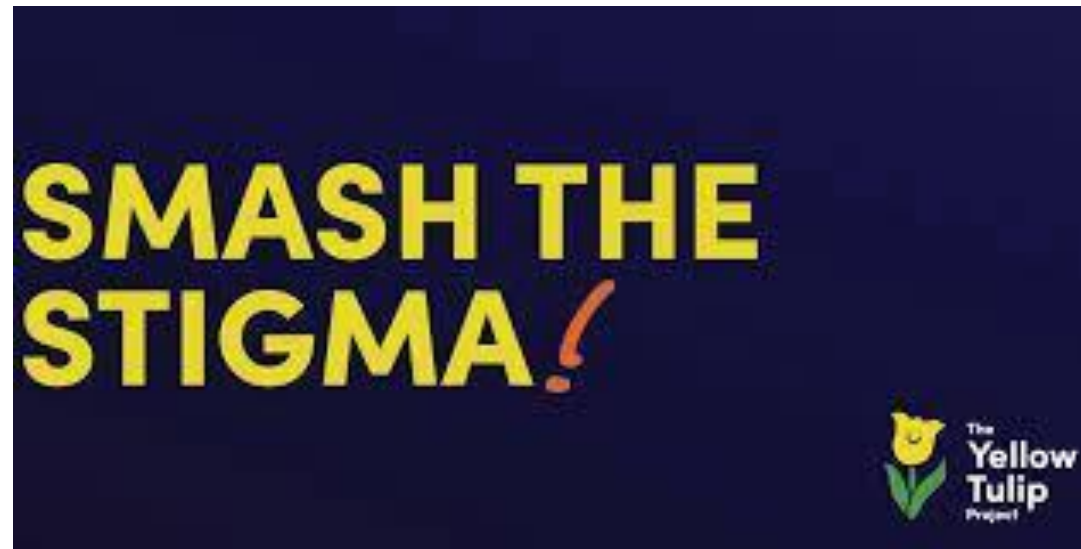
**H**  **OPE**  
**S Q U A D**



## Sources of Strength is...

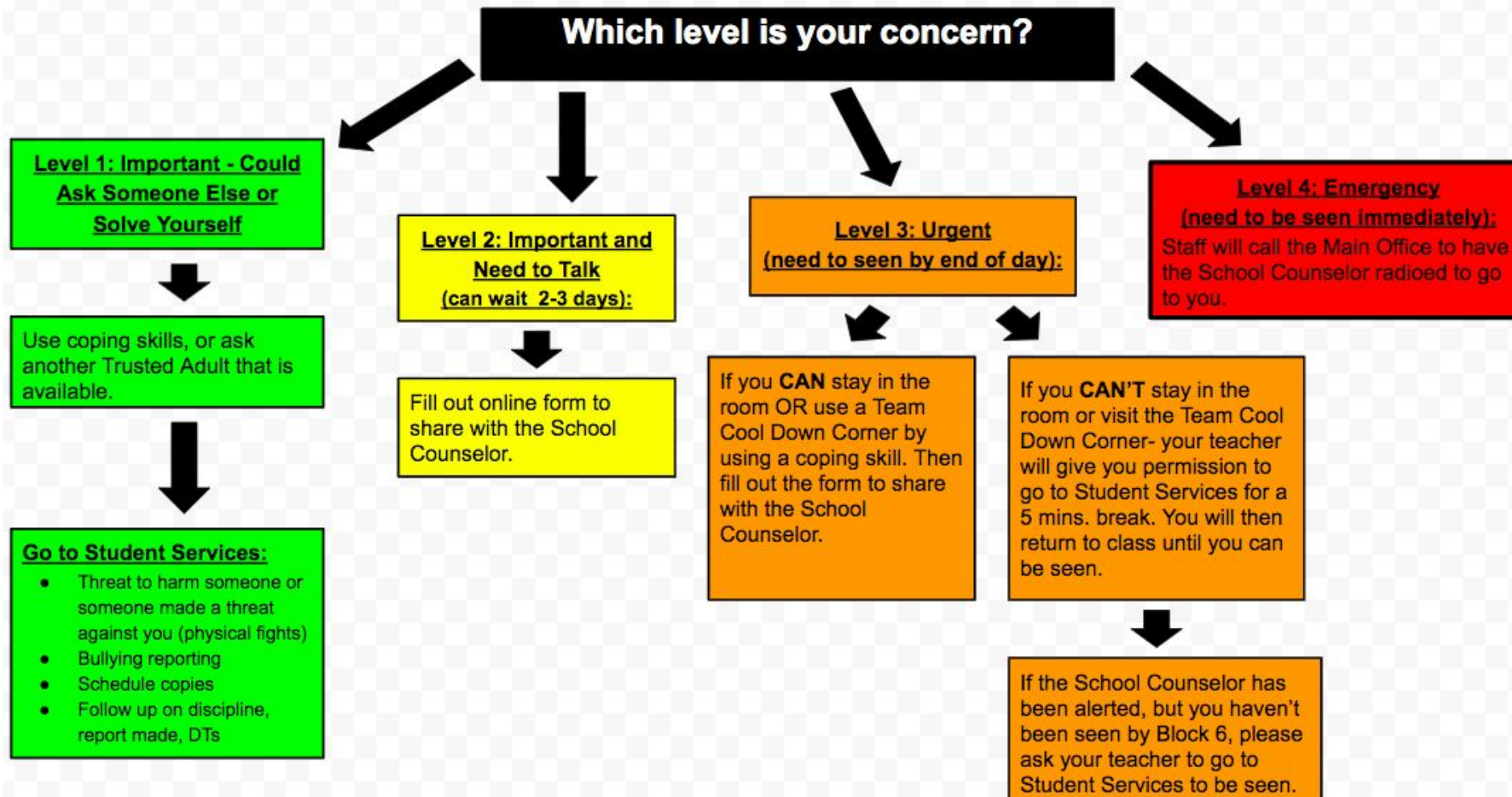
A best practice youth suicide prevention project designed to harness the power of peer social networks to change unhealthy norms and culture, ultimately preventing suicide, bullying, and substance abuse. The mission of Sources of Strength is to prevent suicide by increasing help seeking behaviors and promoting connections between peers and caring adults. Sources of Strength moves beyond a singular focus on risk factors by utilizing an upstream approach for youth suicide prevention. This upstream model strengthens multiple sources of support (protective factors) around young individuals so that when times get hard they have strengths to rely on.

# Hope Day & Yellow Tulip Project



# Triage Needs More Effectively

## How to See a School Counselor SOP Flow Chart



# Action Plan Reflection

- What programs, routines, or traditions exist in our school that could foster relationships? Where could we add these?
- How do we teach the ideas of hope and resiliency to all students?
- What jobs or leadership opportunities exist in our school that could help foster a sense of purpose for our students?

## Tier 2 : Support For At Risk Students

- Call home every time.
  - No Trusted Adult → follow up
  - Check-In/Out Adult Mentors
  - Identify Gap Populations: Which kids are not getting your services, program, attention?
  - Substance Abuse Counselors
  - Small Groups: Build Skills
  - Peer mentors
  - Truancy support - find out their why
  - Focus Groups for Student Counseling Advisory Council- Add kids with SI to this group. Get their ideas = they matter.
- Identify at risk populations. Give them a space to connect and be themselves.
    - ◆ LGBTQ
    - ◆ ELL & Refugees
    - ◆ Homeless
    - ◆ Alt Ed
    - ◆ Transient
    - ◆ Truant

# be direct.

ask it different ways

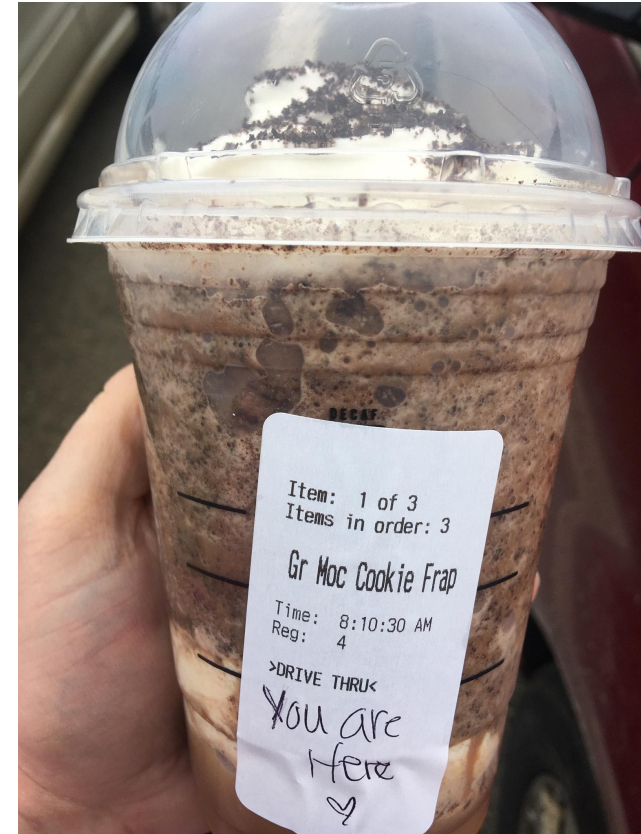
rephrase the questions

call home EVERY time

# Someday Wishes

*“If you could have one wish come true to have the BEST school day ever, what would you want to happen that day? It needs to be something I can make happen, not super expensive, and you DO have to go to school.”*

- Miss math class to attend art
- Starbucks delivery
- Lunch in the counselor’s office with friends
- Gym time
- Positive call home
- Mentor kids in a former teacher’s class
- Play a game
- Takeout lunch delivery
- Fire truck visit
- Special guest reader in class



# Jobs → Purpose

## WHY?

- Contributors vs Ineffective / Burden
- Give them a reason to show up on Monday Morning
- Recognize and praise their skills and abilities

## → JOBS

- ◆ Morning Meeting Greeters
- ◆ Hallway Helpers
- ◆ Write on the board
- ◆ Morning announcements reader
- ◆ Help younger students
- ◆ Set up Counseling Program events
- ◆ Deliver certificates to homerooms.

# LGBTQ Supports

**LGBTQ youth are 3-7x more at risk of suicide than other youth**

41% of LGBTQ young people seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year—and young people who are transgender, nonbinary, and/or people of color reported higher rates than their peers.

41%

Share:



*“If someone says I’m not a girl, it’s like why bother?”*

*If they say I don’t know myself, then what’s the point of living?*

*Then I give up.*

*I know I’m a guy. If I don’t get called a guy, it makes me not feel like it.*

*It means I’m not enough.*

*So why try?*

*That’s my thought process every day.”*

**-8th Grade Student**



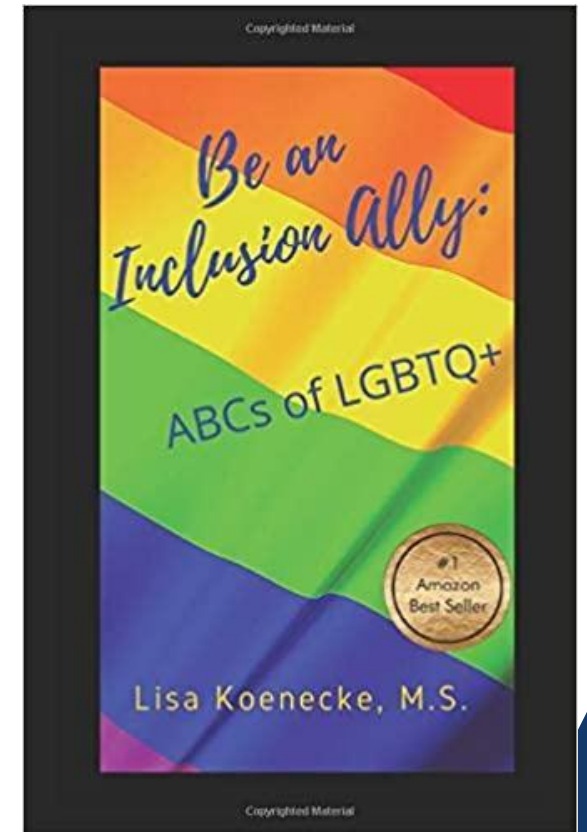
using correct name +  
pronouns is SUICIDE  
PREVENTION.

*“Just ONE accepting  
adult  
can REDUCE the  
risk of a  
suicide attempt  
of a LGBTQ youth  
by 40 percent.”  
-The Trevor  
Project*

Transgender and nonbinary youth who reported having pronouns respected by all or most people in their lives attempted suicide at half the rate of those who did not have their pronouns respected.

# LGBTQ Support

- GLSEN Safe Space Kit
- Be An Inclusion Ally by Lisa Koenecke
- The Trevor Project



# Black & Asian Youth

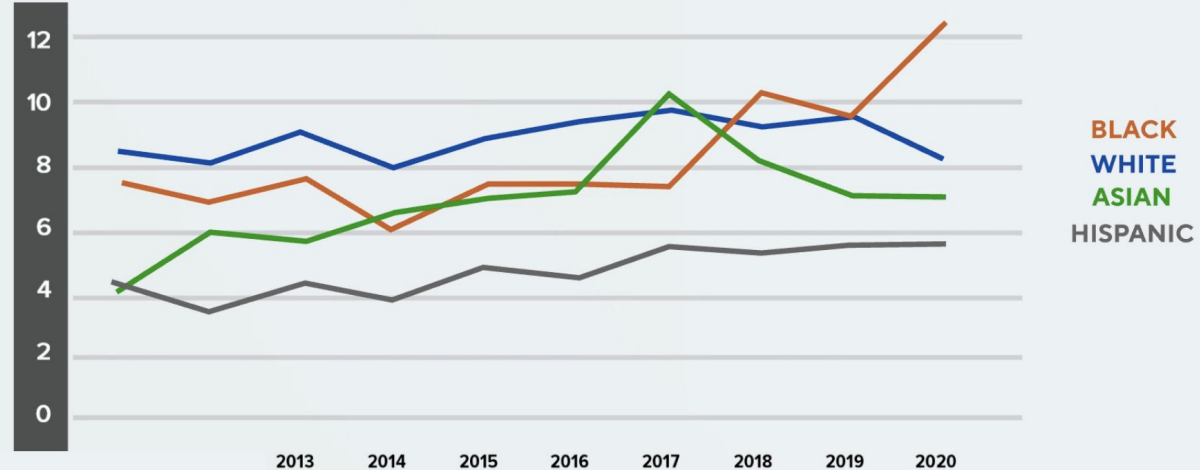
## Learning For Justice Interrupting Racism

*“Between 1991 and 2017, suicide attempts among Black adolescents increased by 73%.” - APA*

Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.  
Representation matters.



Suicide Rates (Risk) among Youth (Ages 10-24) by Race/Ethnicity in CA, 2011-2020



**CBS NEWS**

ats: CDPH, Death Statistical Master File (DSMF); 2014-2020 deaths: CDPH, CA Comprehensive Master Death File (CCMDF); CA Dept. of Finance P-3 Population Projection File (2010-2060)

***What are we doing  
to decrease racism,  
increase equity and inclusion  
for our BIPOC youth - and help to improve  
their mental health and access to support?***

# Action Plan

# Reflection



- Which at-risk groups exist in our school?
- Who are we counselors not as connected to?
- Which at risk groups in our school do our staff need more education about in order to better support them?
- Do we know how these at risk groups feel about safety and belonging in our school? Have we talked to them this year? In the last few months?
- Do we have opportunities for these at risk youth to come together and form their own distinct sense of belonging?

# Self-Care

## COMPASSION FATIGUE

"The expectation that we can be immersed in suffering and loss daily and not be touched by it is as unrealistic as expecting to be able to walk through water without getting wet."

— Dr. Naomi Rachel Remen

•EMPOWERSOCIALWORKER•

- Educate Yourself
- Ongoing daily self-care
- After SI self-care
- DOCUMENT
- Consult
- Don't be the only person
- Do all you can today.
- Do what you can do in your role. Others have different roles.
- Prevention works. But also reminder: If they make that choice, you could not stop them.



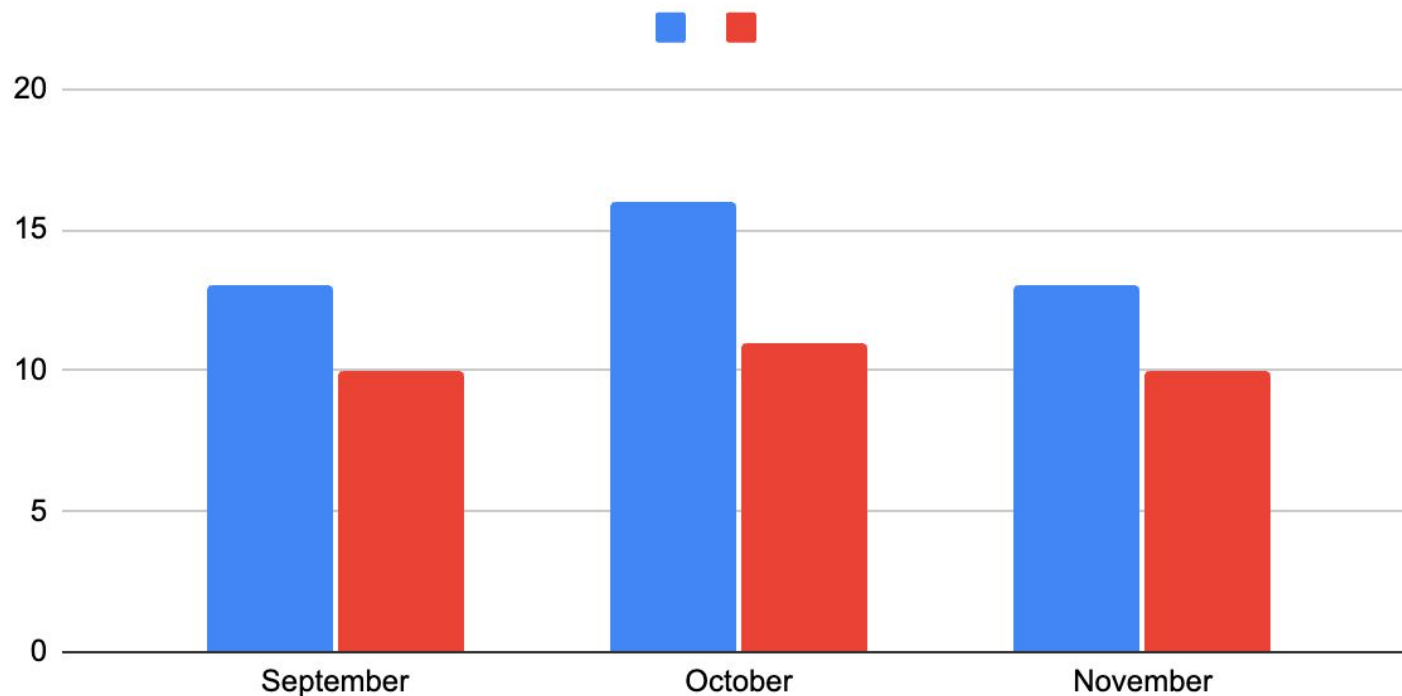
***Ground yourself  
so that you can be  
part of their anchor.***

# Proactive vs Reactive

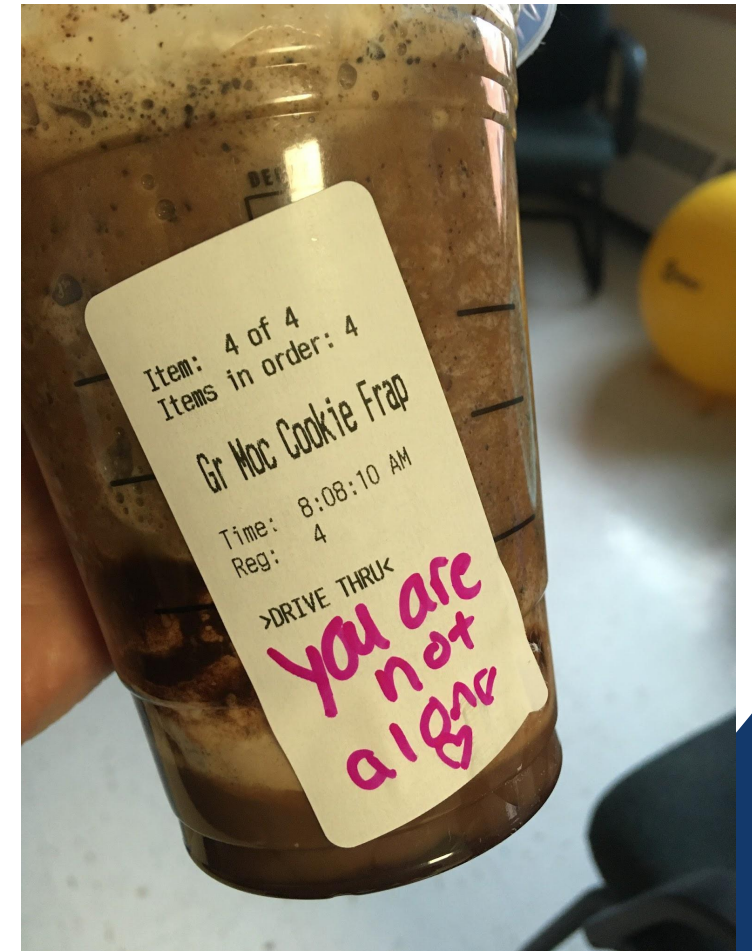
- 2019 = 57% decrease 1 year
- 2024 = 27% decrease 3 months



SMS Suicide Ideation - Fall 2022 v. Fall 2023



Suicide Ideation: BLUE - 2022 / RED - 2023





**We all need to feel  
SEEN & CONNECTED.**

How are **YOU** helping  
your staff to  
see and connect with  
**EVERY STUDENT?**

**CONNECTING Kids, Saves  
Lives.**

**DO ONE THING.**



# Key Take-Aways

- Talking about suicide and mental health concerns with youth is helpful, not harmful. It should be our top priority.
- Move from reactive suicide ideation responses to proactive, upstream prevention.
- Together we CAN save lives by providing students with CONNECTION \* PURPOSE \* HOPE \*
- You're ALREADY doing some prevention work- let's add to it! Try one thing.





# Thank You & Contact

**Angela Avery, M.Ed.**

[aavery@sanford.org](mailto:aavery@sanford.org)

X (Twitter) - [@AngelaAverySC](https://twitter.com/AngelaAverySC)

Instagram - [@schoolcounselorproject](https://www.instagram.com/schoolcounselorproject)

# Resources



## ASCA Research Articles:

- ◆ *Research-Informed Adaptable Model for the Prevention of Suicide in Schools (RAMPSS)* by Shannon Lynch McFarlin & Kimberly McGough (2021)
- ◆ *Developing a Comprehensive School Suicide Prevention Program* by Paul Granello & Brett Zyromski (2019)
- ◆ *School Counselors and Unified Educator-Counselor Identity: A Data-Informed Approach to Suicide Prevention* by Carrie A. Wachter Morris, Kelly L. Wester, Connie T. Jones & Saron Fantahun (2021)
- ◆ *Interpersonal Predictors of Suicide Ideation and Attempt Among Early Adolescents* by Emily Sallee, Kok-Mun Ng & Abraham Cazares-Cervantes (2021)

- [NAMI](#)
- [Jason Foundation](#)
- [American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)
- [SAMHSA.gov](#)
- [Suicide is Preventable](#)
- [Elyssa's Mission](#)
- [Sweetser Free Trainings](#)
- [CDC School Connectedness Project](#)
- [Model School District Policy](#)
- [ASCA Information Gathering Tool- Suicide Concern](#)
- [Tennessee Suicide Prevention Network](#)
- [CDC package research 2018](#)
- [Hey Ugly](#)
- [HRC - Growing Up LGBT in America Youth Report](#)
- [Directing Change CA](#)
- [Action Alliance](#)
- [SOS Solving Our Stress - ASCA Webinar](#)
- [ASCA Webinar - Carolyn Stone and Wendy Rock, Ethics Chairs](#)