Overview
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.
Bridging the Gaps in Prevention

Sources of Strength

Strength Focused
Hope Help Strength
Peer Led

Risk Focused
Sad Shock Trauma
Adult Driven

Many other well intended programs
Sources of Strength Model

Supportive Adult Advisors + Diverse Peer Leaders x Strategic Messaging Campaigns = Positive Culture Change

Caring Connected Positive Influence within Social Group Engage Interact Apply Positive Social Norming
Meetings

- **Games**: Some with a teachable moment and others just for fun
- **Sharing**: Storytelling: 10% Adversity  90% Strength
- **Planning**: School-wide activities and campaigns to increase connectivity
Sources of Strength
Wheel

- Medical Access
- Mental Health
- Family Support
- Positive Friends
- Spirituality
- Mentors
- Generosity
- Healthy Activities
5th Grade Social Network

- Isolate
- Central Members
- Bridges
- Peripherals
- Group Members
Interconnected Risks

Mental Health

Substance Abuse

Violence

Suicide

Interconnected Protective Factors
Impact of Sources of Strength

Cluster Randomized Control Trial (NIMH, SAMSHA Funding)
18 Schools; 465 Peer Leaders; 2,700 Students

Peer Leaders
- Increased healthy coping attitudes/norms
- More connections to adults (M +1 connection)
- 4X more likely to refer peer to adults
- Largest Gains for least connected/healthy peer leaders

School Population
- Increased help-seeking acceptability
- Increased perception that adults help suicidal peers
- Largest gains for students with a history of suicide attempts
- First suicide prevention program involving peer leaders to enhance protective factors associated with reducing suicide at the school population level.

Research Partnerships

One of the most heavily researched peer leader programs

- **University of Rochester** - Dr. Peter Wyman Ph.D. - key researcher
- **National Peer Leadership Study** - funded by National Institute of Mental Health - data analysis phase
- **Stanford University** - suicide contagion in schools
- **University of Manitoba** - Swampy Cree - Canada 1st Nation trial
- **University of Rochester** - Wingman Connect Air Force Project
- **Australian National University & Black Dog Institute** - Australian Pilot
- **Sexual Violence Prevention Study** - funded by the CDC, in partnership with the Colorado Department of Public Health, the University of Rochester, and the University of Florida
Adult Advisor Recruitment

1-10 Ratio

1-7 ratio in schools with high levels of trauma or poor adult connectedness

Variety

Admin, Counselors, Teachers, Staff, Security, Food Service, Librarian, Transportation

Time Requirements

45 min-1 hour meeting 2x a month Potential 2hrs extra per month for implementing Peer activities & campaigns

Volunteer

Adult Advisors must want to participate NOT be ASSIGNED
4-6 Week Campaigns

- Getting the Word Out
- I Am Stronger
- Trusted Adults
- Thankfulness Challenge
- What Helps Me
- Sources of Strength Week
Presentations
Art/Walls Displays
Video
Social Media
Other Media
School-Wide Activities