

Dear Members of the State Board of Education,

Thank you for your decision to unanimously audit our graduation rate performance in Prince George's County Public School. Unfortunately, the graduation performance audit confirmed our community's worst fears and had several key findings. Among the most significant were, PGCPs graduated a large amount of students who did not meet state requirements, PGCPs graduated over 150 students who had over 50 unexcused absences and there were over 5,000 late grade changes. The audit found 24 out of 28 schools graduated students who should not have graduated and there is testimony from the 25th school that employees were forced stay in the school until almost midnight altering records days before the auditors arrived. 3 out of 28 schools had exactly or nearly 100% of the sample not eligible to graduate, or no proof to showed they should have graduated.

It is clear that our students and our system deserve better. Our system failed every student that graduated without meeting state requirements and unfortunately those students will be adversely impacted for the rest of their lives. But our students are not the only ones adversely impacted, as there are statements from staff all across district who have felt pressured to pass students who were truant or who did not meet the basic requirements of the course. What we know is that all of these schools, in different parts of the county, did not decide to graduate students who did not meet basic requirements for graduation at the exact same time in the exact same way, independently.

Dr. Maxwell and his administration knowingly graduated students who did not meet requirements for graduation, and did nothing to stop it:

What we can say, as a matter of fact, not opinion, is that Kevin Maxwell and his senior staff knew of that PGCPs was graduating students that did not meet requirements for graduation at the lastest May 4th 2016. On May 4th 2016, the Prince George's County Board of Education Internal Audit issued a report and that report had two relevant findings: **2016.02 Student Records Not Properly Maintained** (Exhibit 1: Page 12) and **"2016.04 BOE Non-Compliance with State Mandates and Graduation Summary"**. (Exhibit 2: Page 3 & 4) A year and a half before our letter to the Governor, PGCPs knew we had significant issues in this area. Dr. Maxwell's administration had ample time to implement the recommendations from internal audit but failed to do so. As a result of their failure to implement the common sense recommendations the class of 2017 saw an increase in the amount of students who graduated without meeting core requirements. Not only did they not act, they actively hid this information from the board of education and the public.

Poor record keeping/lack of process:

The data is clear in 2016: 3.6% of Alvarez & Marsal sample size should not have graduated and in 2017 6% of students should not have graduated. Did our employees become worse at record keeping in 2017 than they were in 2016? The answer is no. Was there poor record keeping, no

doubt. However the poor record keeping was not the primary reason for graduating students in mass that did not meet requirements for graduation.

Central Office Involvement and Pressure:

Boosting the graduation rate was Dr. Maxwell's top academic goal for the school system. He paraded around the county and received a lucrative compensation package largely based on these rates. Principals, Assistant Principals, Guidance Counselors attended meetings where they were told that the graduation rate must improve 3-5% by 2017 (**Exhibit 3: Page 4**). That pressure from the central office was then placed on teachers and other school based staffed. Teachers then contacted Dr. Maxwell's office and other central office leaders to complain. Those complaints were not disclosed to MSDE when Carol Williamson interviewed Dr. Maxwell and several staff regarding this topic (**Exhibit 4: Page 3**). Not only did Dr. Maxwell and his senior officials not disclose to Carol Williamson that employees had reached out to Dr. Maxwell and members of his executive cabinet to complain about grade changes, more egregiously Dr. Maxwell failed to disclose the internal audit document that showed that PGCPSS was graduating students who did not meet requirements (**Exhibit 1: Page 12**) (**Exhibit 2: Page 3 & 4**). We have spoken to several current and former school-based staff who said they felt incredible pressure from the central office to reach their graduation rate goal. One administrator said " We were all in the meeting with our instructional director and I tried to explain to her that we would not reach our graduation goal this year and her response was 'oh you will reach your goal'." Another said: "We were told to reach our graduation rate goal by any and all means necessary, so we did". These employees are willing to come forward to the state board under the condition of anonymity.

Failure to attempt to address results of the audit :

In the Alvarez & Marsal audit there is a "School Summaries" section. In this section is a breakdown of each school's individual audit. At the conclusion of each school's individual audit there is a component labeled "Additional Analysis and Investigation". The concerns in this category span from "Conduct further review of post-graduation and grade and transcript modification." to "Allegations of the senior counselor manipulating student records both before and after graduation, paired with evidence of grade and transcript changes warrants additional analysis and investigation." Alvarez & Marsal concluded that the following schools needed "Additional Analysis and Investigation":

1. Bladensburg High School
2. Central High School
3. Croom High School
4. Crossland Evening High School
5. Crossland High School
6. Eleanor Roosevelt High Schools
7. Gwynn Park High Schools
8. High Point High Schools

9. Largo High School
10. Northwestern Evening High Schools
11. Northwestern High School
12. Parkdale High School
13. Potomac High School
14. Surrattsville High School
15. Tall Oaks High School

As of February 26th 2018, the "Additional Analysis and Investigation" has not started and to our knowledge there are no plans for it to start. When Dr. Maxwell and his staff presented before the state school board they failed to mention their plans for this area because there are none. What message does this send to the teachers, guidance counselors and other employees who bravely came forward with information? They came forward with hopes that their concerns and the audit findings would be taken seriously. It appears that this administration is not doing anything to hold these schools accountable or even investigate what Alvarez and Marsal asked them to investigate.

Accountability:

To date, no one in leadership has been held accountable for their involvement or lack of basic oversight with the graduation rate scandal. Instead three guidance counselors at one school were removed from their building and placed on administrative leave and an assistant principal has resigned at the same school because of the graduation rate issue. Dr. Maxwell sent out a statement that reads in part: "An investigation by the Prince George's County Board of Education's Office of Internal Audit and the recent State performance audit of grading and graduation rates corroborate evidence that some DuVal High School staff made inappropriate decisions to impact the grading and graduation certification processes."

Teachers Union President Teresa Dudley testified at our last school board meeting (2/22/18) saying in part: "The three school guidance counselors at DuVal High School were thrown under the bus, placed on administrative leave, publicly admonished, and then their emails cut off because there was **evidence** in their emails saying that their **directives came from the central office.**" (When an employee is placed on administrative leave they have access to their email accounts until there is a recommendation for termination. However, in this case all of the school counselors had their emails restricted as soon as they were placed on administrative leave.) According to union leaders, there are also a host of emails between the assistant principal and central office that shows coordination and support for everything that she did. We have reviewed only 3 of the emails to this assistant principal from the Deputy Superintendent office. The emails show that not only did central office set the goals for this school, but they also regularly monitored and checked in with school leaders about the performance of the students in the graduation cohort. (**Exhibit 5: Pages 1- 3**). Which means the leaders in central office knew which students were eligible and which students were not eligible the entire time. We understand that there are additional emails that could be helpful in illuminating this point.

Conclusion:

We have additional information and perspective that we would want to share with you regarding this matter. We hope that there will be further action on your part to ensure integrity in our graduation rate process and all wrongdoers are held accountable for their actions. Please contact us at your earliest convenience

Respectfully,

Edward Burroughs, Member, Prince George's County Board of Education
David Murray, Member, Prince George's County Board of Education
Raaheela Ahmed, Member, Prince George's County Board of Education

Needed: Investigator General for Education in Maryland

Collected by Jerome Dancis

Summary of SB 302. Establishing the Education Monitoring Unit in the State; providing that the Unit is an independent unit; establishing the **Investigator General Selection and Review Commission** in the Unit; requiring the Commission to appoint the Investigator General in accordance with certain procedures; requiring the Unit to investigate certain complaints; requiring the Unit to establish an anonymous electronic tip program; requiring the Unit to submit an annual report by December 15 to the State Board, the Governor, and the General Assembly; etc.

MD SB302 is sponsored by only 1 (out of 33) Democratic Senators, Katherine Klausmeier [D] of Baltimore County and 12 (out of 14) Republican Senators and the governor. It would be useful to persuade Sen. Muse and other Democratic senators to co-sponsor.

I, along with many other concerned citizens provided cogent testimony before the Senate Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee on Feb. 7 in favor of MD SB302 calling for an Investigator General.

The hearing was taped. These presentations are on the website of the Maryland legislature at:

<http://mgahouse.maryland.gov/mga/play/1c6d5b0a-de34-4344-b8f8-150a85d43a58/?catalog/03e481c7-8a42-4438-a7da-93ff74bdaa4c>

MD SB302 starts at 4:20. Here are my take-a-ways along with a timeline:

4:21 Ali Keane, Governor's office. She explained the bill.

4:24 Edward Burroughs, III, member, BOE, Prince George's County. He broke the news about the scandals in Prince George's County. He and Bob Ross petitioned the governor for more investigations.

4:27 Christina Delmont-Small, member, BOE, Howard County. She was a Congressional Investigator for a committee of the U.S. House of Representatives. She spoke on the usefulness of inspector generals.

4:31 Janis Sartucci, Parents Coalition of Montgomery County,

<http://parentscoalitionmc.blogspot.com/>

You may read her 15 cogent bullet points at

http://parentscoalitionmc.blogspot.com/2018/02/statement-in-support-of-gov-hogans.html?utm_source=feedburner&utm_medium=feed&utm_campaign=Feed%3A+

[ParentsCoalitionOfMontgomeryCounty+%28Parents%27+Coalition+of+Montgomery+County%29](#)

(She only got thru the first few at the hearing.)

4:37 Sen. Paul Pinski, Vice-chair of Educational Committee.

The PGCPs Graduation-rate Audit reported no evidence of system-wide intimidation by PGCPs leadership or evidence of system-wide fraud as it relates to these allegations.

Jerry: Perhaps, if the private investigating firm was paid more money and provided more time, it would have found evidence of system-wide intimidation and fraud. Last month, a 2016 email surfaced from central office to Duval High School directing the school to graduate more students. (I make this point after 5:10)

4:39 Barbara Krupiarz, board member of Howard County Special Education Citizens Advisory Committee (SECAC).

Here is the link to the Maryland Public Access **Ombudsman's report on Howard County's significant violations of the Public Information Act (FOIA):**

<http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/OpenGov%20Documents/PAO/Final%20HB%201105%20report.pdf>

Unfortunately, the ombudsman also has no enforcement capability. There is a whole FOIA enforcement branch at the federal level and some states have enforcement capabilities for their state FOIA laws. Once again, there is no accountability in Maryland.

4:42 Gene Ryan Was member, New Jersey state BOE. Now living in Howard County.

4:46 Gene Ryan Data: \$2.8 million in special education services denied at cost of \$777,000 in legal fees. Therefore considered cost effective by Howard County schools. (Jerry: Likely other school systems as well.)

4:51 Julie Gaskins Baltimore City. She mentioned Project Baltimore has been uncovering wrong doing, violation of civil rights and retaliation against staff.

The U.S. Dept. of Education – Office of Civil Rights found many violations including retaliation. Maryland Dept. of Education does not deal with retaliation.

4:54 Catherine Carter of Howard County. Her son's double-vision was not considered a visual impairment, so school refused to provide doctor recommended vision accommodations. Nationally, most school districts are violating federal law.

The next three were less compelling.

4:59 Rubin Shaeffer

5:08 Ella Ennis Vice-president, MD federation of Republican Women

5:05 Sharon Mosel science teacher

5:10 – 5:15 Jerome Dancis

My written presentation was the same as my presentation, "[PGCPS Graduation] **Audit Found Smoke; Now Need Investigation To Find Fires // Time For Maryland To Do An Atlanta Gold Standard Investigation!**" to the MD state BOE Dec. 2017. It is on MD state BOE's website at <http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/stateboard/Documents/12052017/PublicComments12052017.pdf> Search for "Dancis".

I elaborated on the item:

"* The 2017 spending data for Prince George's County includes 27 *identical* records, each an EDUCATION Agency payment of \$726,481.48 for OTHER MISCELLANEOUS SERVICE. None of the records gave a transaction date. This totals almost \$20 million. "

I noted that the state prosecutor's office said that it does not have jurisdiction over school systems. The state prosecutor's office referred this to the Prince George's County School System to investigate itself. Nothing found.

Relatedly, I spoke in favor of a fully elected BOE for Prince George's County at the Feb. 15 hearing of the House Ways and Means Committee. I said that at the January meeting of the Maryland state BOE, state board members observed that the PGCPS Graduation Audit showed that the PGCPS has a **culture of non-compliance with regulations**. They asked the appointed BOE chairman and the appointed CEO (aka superintendent) what was being done to change to a culture of compliance with regulations. The appointed CEO and team chose not to discuss culture.

Dr. Kevin Maxwell's team said that the main reason for late grade changes were parents complaining about grades. (Grades were changed after the deadline for changing grades for 5,000 out of the 15,000 graduates of PGCPS in 2016 and 2017)

5:15 Opposed John Woolums MABE (MD Association of Boards of Education)

Provided written testimony in favor, but did not speak:

* Bob Ross, President, Prince George's County branch of NAACP

* Anne Miller, member, Baltimore County BOE. She is one of the four members of the Baltimore County BOE who are calling for a Special Review Audit by the Office of Legislative Audits. They can do a comprehensive, forensic investigative audits looking for fraud, waste and abuse. Not merely a compliance audit.

* Nicole Landers, RN, Statement attached. Excerpt: "As a working professional I have experienced IDEA violations, lack of safe and appropriate support and loss of rights for my patients. I have also observed a tremendous breakdown in morale among facility and staff across multiple counties

Professionally, I work as Assistant Director of Nursing for an agency that provides nursing care at home and school to medically fragile children. As such, I collaborate with families, the medical team and the educational team routinely. I visit many schools across multiple counties within the state."

* Vicky Cuttoneo, president, PTA Council of Howard County, uncovered mold problems in several of Howard County schools that was being hidden from the public. Evidence to support that claim is in her written statement on SB302.

Relatedly Theodora Scarato:

"New [2018] PGCPS Tests Find Endemic Lead in School Water Supply!"

<https://leadingcpswater.blogspot.com/2018/02/new-pgcps-tests-find-endemic-lead-in.html>

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Relatedly, there is HB103 which would allow a BOE to fire its superintendent. There were good presentations on this at the hearing this past Thursday. One was from the BOE of Howard County. Colleen Morris, representing 6000 employees of Howard County Public Schools, said that the previous superintendent created an atmosphere of fear and retaliation.

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Christine McComas. She is the Howard County parent whose daughter's (Grace) suicide prompted Grace's Law on bullying.

You will see, in the Maryland Public Access **Ombudsman's report on Howard County's significant violations of the Public Information Act (FOIA):** <http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/OpenGov%20Documents/PAO/Final%20HB%201105%20report.pdf> This notes serious violations (and completely unethical and inhumane treatment) she received in trying to obtain her daughter's records from HCPSS.

Christine McComas: "The last almost 6 years has been a nightmare for our family, made that much worse by the actions (and inactions) by the Howard County Public School System under the previous Superintendent."

Can see here: <https://www.gofundme.com/GraceMcComas>

On Feb. 20th, there was the hearing for SB726-Grace's Law 2.0, McComas testified. More here: <https://www.facebook.com/notes/grace-k-mccomas-memorial-webpage/revision-of-graces-lawsb726/2280890111936624/>

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PROMISE LEADER STATEMENTS FOR THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

- Camila Januario – Baltimore County
- Mandy Weinman – Baltimore County, Promise Leader Ambassador for Maryland
- Karen Herren – Howard County
- Linda Towe – Baltimore City

CAMILA JANUARIO

Hello and thank you for the opportunity to be here addressing the Board.

I am a mother of two teenage boys, a junior at Dulaney High School and an 8th grader at Ridgely Middle.

As many parents in our state I am saddened, choked and terrified after another school shooting. I strongly believe that they are preventable and we, as a society need to do better. As a mother and a member of a community which had a high school in lockdown the day AFTER the Parkland tragedy, I come here to ask you to look for solutions to this crisis.

Every year, in schools and communities across the country, there are hundreds of thousands of acts of youth violence, including bullying; physical, mental and substance abuse; gun violence; and other harmful behaviors. I have heard stories of assault inside buses, in the bathrooms and my oldest son has stayed home a couple times this year afraid to go to school.

I don't think I need to touch on the matter of providing more funds to increase the number of mental health professionals for schools, especially in the high schools. You all know how some of our schools are in desperate need of more support and are understaffed.

For example, at Dulaney HS we have a PART TIME psychologist for 1803 students. Schools across the state need more counselors and for some, additional Social Workers and School Psychologists. **The American School Counseling Association recommends a counselor to student ratio of 1 to 250.** At Dulaney High School we have five counselors and would need seven to approach the standard set by the ASCA. I think everyone would agree that more mental health resources are needed for our children.

However, I know that to increase mental health resources at the schools we need to deal with budgets in the State and in the County level, so I will leave this topic to be discussed in the future. Today I am here to ask the board to consider the implementation of the preventive **FREE** programs developed by Sandy Hook promise.

Sandy Hook Promise is a non-partisan nationally recognized nonprofit organization with a mission to prevent all school violence **BEFORE** it happens. Sandy Hook Promise has developed 4 programs to be implemented in schools. The Know the Signs programs teach youth and adults to recognize signs and signals of individuals who may hurt themselves or others, and to intervene to get them help before it is too late. Those programs have the potential to stop school shootings, suicides, gun threats and helped reduce bullying and victimization.

When it comes to violence, suicide and threats, most are known by at least one other individual before the incident. I believe that giving our kids the information and tools to identify and help students in distress is one way we can address the problem. With 1,447 schools in the state, this board has the ability to make a real impact implementing these free programs from Sandy Hook Promise.

MANDY WEINMAN

My name is Mandy Weinman. I am the mother of 2 boys, 7-year-old Benjamin and 8-year-old Dillon, and I am a former Baltimore County Public School Teacher. I am also a Promise Leader with Sandy Hook Promise.

If there had been a chance to prevent the recent school tragedies before the gun ever entered the picture, wouldn't you have wanted to try?

That is what drew me to Sandy Hook Promise. Their mission is to prevent gun violence BEFORE the gun enters the picture. They do this by teaching youth and adults how to recognize the signs, intervene, and get help for individuals who may be at-risk of hurting themselves or others.

- The U.S. Department of Justice reports that 160,000 kids per day do not attend school for fear of being bullied.
- 30% of students who reported they had been bullied said they had at times brought weapons to school.
- In 4 out of 5 school shootings, at least one other person had knowledge of the attacker's plan but failed to report it.
- According to the CDC, suicide is the #2 killer for children between the ages of 10-24. (<https://www.cdc.gov/injury/images/lc-charts/leading-causes-of-death-age-group-2014-1050w760h.gif>)
- 70% of people who commit suicide tell someone of their plans or give some other warning sign.

We want Maryland to be the leader in prevention and in creating a change in this country. We have an opportunity to change the current culture by focusing on the children and what can be done PROactively and preventatively, instead of solely focusing on training the teachers and staff to respond REactively.

Our goal in speaking to you today, is to urge you to have the schools in your counties and cities implement Sandy Hook Promise's NO COST *Know the Signs* prevention programs.

There are four programs which can be implemented.

- The *Say Something* program is geared to students in grades 6-12. It teaches kids how to recognize signs and signals, especially on social media, from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others – and then to “Say Something” to a trusted adult or report it through the free, anonymous system BEFORE it's too late.
- The *Start with Hello* (SWH) program teaches children in grades K-12 how to be more inclusive and connected to one another. It works to create connectedness and community by minimizing social isolation, marginalization and rejection – BEFORE an individual chooses to hurt themselves or others.

- *Safety Assessment & Intervention (SAI)* is a national evidence-based program that teaches adults in schools and youth organizations how to identify, assess and respond to threats of violence or at-risk behavior BEFORE a tragedy takes place, and to identify and treat the underlying problem in that youth's life that led to him or her to make the threat.
- Lastly, the *Signs of Suicide (SOS)* program is an evidence-based program that teaches students how to identify the signs of depression and suicide in themselves and their peers, and encourages help-seeking behavior.

2 weeks ago was Sandy Hook Promise's call-to action week in which 4400 schools across the country signed up to participate in *Start with Hello*. Up to that point, Sandy Hook Promise had trained 2.5 million individuals in all 50 states on their *Know the Signs* programs.

Currently, Sandy Hook Promise has reported over 30,000 students in Maryland have already been trained in *Start with Hello* and *Say Something*. Nationwide, these programs have stopped multiple school shootings, suicides, threats, bullying, and self-harm – and have helped connect students with vital mental health and intervention services.

It is my hope that through these prevention programs, we will be able to arm our teachers and students with powerful tools and change the path our country is currently taking.

So, I ask you again, if there had been a chance to prevent the recent school tragedies before the gun ever entered the picture, wouldn't you have wanted to try?

KAREN HERREN

Good morning. My name is Karen Herren. I am a former lawyer, a Promise Leader with the Sandy Hook Promise organization, and a mom to 2 boys in Howard County.

Clearly, many things have gone wrong in our society to lead us to a place where gun violence takes the lives of some 33,000 people in this country each year. While our schools cannot fix this problem alone, they can work to help shift the culture. As adults, we wish that we could shoulder the entire burden of keeping our kids safe. But it is not enough. We need to equip our kids with the tools they need to help protect themselves and to prevent these tragedies. We must teach them how to identify, intervene, and help at-risk youth.

We can start at the elementary level to change our culture to one of inclusiveness and helpfulness. I helped begin a Start with Hello program at Northfield Elementary School in Ellicott City in 2015. At NES, volunteers and staff host monthly lunches where kids are encouraged to spend time getting to know children that they do not already know or do not know well. We've done this with funny conversation starters, games, and raffles among other things. We talk to the kids about what it might look like when someone feels alone or isolated. At the elementary level, exclusion is not frequently a purposeful thing. Kids get caught up in what they are doing or the friends they already know. We teach them to be cognizant of others who often just need someone to say hello to them each day. My 6th grader is part of a class that completed two years of Start with Hello during elementary school. I have heard repeatedly from his middle school teachers this year just how nice this class is. Start with Hello can be modified for all grades.

But in light of the Florida shooting, I want to emphasize the Say Something program. Neither of my children has received adequate instruction on what to do if someone they know says or does something that indicates possible violence. I asked my teenager what he would do if a friend texted that she wanted to hurt herself. He honestly had no idea. These topics are difficult for many kids, but they are necessary.

Say Something addresses more than the school shooter scenario. It addresses violence in general including suicide and self-harm. Implementing Say Something would give students the knowledge to protect themselves and to help others. Obviously, this would be part of a larger overall school safety program. But, we cannot only focus on stopping violence once it happens. Sandy Hook's programs focus on keeping these events from ever happening at all.

In closing, we urge this board to recommend, facilitate, and assist all Maryland schools in implementing these no-cost programs. Coordinate with Sandy Hook Promise professionals to schedule Say Something training for our middle and high schools and encourage implementation of Start with Hello at all levels.

Thank you for your time and attention to this critical issue.

LINDA TOWE

Good morning! I appreciate you taking your time to listen to our presentation regarding a marvelous, time tested organization that is making positive changes throughout the United States.

I am the Executive Director of a non-profit organization, Project T.O.O.U.R. (Teaching Our Own Understanding and Responsibility). We started our organization in 1997 because we realized that the only way to make positive changes was to find out what challenges existed in families, in neighborhoods and in schools. The one thing we found out was that there were many challenges that needed to be addressed. No one organization has the ability to solve so many issues. As we grew, we saw the value of working with many organizations and gleaning the best from each of them. The best way for me to explain this is to say that we learned to make a magnificent bowl of stew.

We have been extremely successful working with organizations and the Federal, State and local governments. By bringing groups like the Baltimore City's Citizen Emergency Response Team, building strong informed residents in neighborhoods, bringing in the Boy Scouts (who now accept our young ladies), 4-H, University of Maryland Master Gardeners, interns from our local universities, our own Youth Volunteer Council of Greater Baltimore and many other groups and our most important component being discussed today, the programs from Sandy Hook Promise, we have made a huge positive impact with youth and their families.

We sponsor the Foster Grandparent Program. When I first told them about the Sandy Hook Promise programs they were excited. One of them had experienced her granddaughter committing suicide. A couple of them had family members who had grandchildren, neighbors and friends who were dealing with bullying. They all agreed that our children and families needed to learn to be kinder to each other. Sandy Hook Promise became the meat and potatoes of our stew.

Because of the Sandy Hook Promise programs, we have been able to start a youth peer mediation group. I am not bragging, but they are awesome. Some of our projects have helped adults find a kinder way to communicate and understand the dangers of social media and the importance of getting

weapons out of their homes or at least secured. They were amazed that they could make a difference by talking to their political leaders while understanding that they needed to have the facts and follow protocol.

Adding Sandy Hook Promise programs throughout the schools in Maryland will be one of the most cost efficient, informative, well organized proactive programs that Maryland has seen in years. With a strong volunteer base of people who want to make a difference at their schools or in their communities the Sandy Hook Promise is the model to follow.

Our schools have programs that cost huge amounts of money and they do not include the bigger picture which looks at prevention and includes the family and community.

I have talked to our Foster Grandparent, 4-H, Youth Volunteer Council of Greater Baltimore, Boy Scout leaders and people who just enjoy working with us and they are committed to doing whatever they can to get Sandy Hook Promise programs into the Baltimore City area schools. I believe that every jurisdiction will understand and feel the same way once they get the information and support to make these programs work. Thank you for your time and consideration.



GOALS AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE MARYLAND STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION

GOAL

- Have the board strongly urge statewide implementation of the Sandy Hook Promise Know-the-Signs prevention programs.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Our recommendation for the Maryland State Board of Education is to advise, facilitate, and assist with the implementation of Sandy Hook Promise's NO COST programs in their districts.
- Our recommendation for the local BOEs is to:
 1. Pick a goal date to have all the schools within the district trained.
 2. Have the point person from the district contact Sandy Hook Promise offices to obtain training materials and coordinate training.
 3. Advise the schools is to:
 - i. Pick a point person to oversee the process and attend the district-wide training.
 - ii. Pick a date to begin implementation of school personnel training.
 - iii. Pick a later for date for student engagement.
 - iv. Implement the program(s).

OVER THE LAST 25 YEARS...

research has revealed that in most acts of gun violence, at least one friend was told in advance that an act of violence might take place.



In **4 out of 5** school shootings, the attacker had told people of his plans ahead of time.



7 out of 10 people who complete suicide told someone of their plans or gave some type of warning or indication.

Imagine if one of those people took action. How many tragedies could be prevented? How many lives would be saved?

Young people show warning signs and share information before they become violent, attempt suicide or make threats. The problem is not everyone knows how to recognize these signs or how to take action.

With Say Something, students, teachers, parents and entire communities are learning how to interpret warning signs and signals and take immediate action. Our hope is to help build a culture of looking out for one another and reporting possible threats of violence when someone sees, reads or hears something - especially within social media.

Social media posts are a primary source of signs, signals and threats from youth, followed by conversations happening in hallways, in the lunchroom and in classrooms. In fact, in a recent study:

- **37% of threats** were sent electronically using text messaging, email or other online resources
- **28% of threats** were posted over social media

ABOUT SANDY HOOK PROMISE

Sandy Hook Promise (SHP) is a national, nonprofit organization based in Newtown, Connecticut. SHP is led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook School on December 14, 2012. We strongly believe that gun violence is preventable - whether the violence is based on self-harm or harm to others - and assert the best way to prevent tragic actions is to identify, intervene and get help for people who may be at-risk.

We know that the vast majority of people we are helping will not become violent. While our prevention programs will help that small percentage that can do so much damage, we are also helping many, many other students and children who need assistance.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

About Sandy Hook Promise and our other school and community-based prevention programs and training, please visit: sandyhookpromise.org

Make the Promise and together we can protect children from preventable gun violence.



Sandy Hook
PROMISE

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SAY SOMETHING™

PARENT GUIDE
for PARENTS OF YOUNG ADULTS
IN GRADES 6-12

WHAT IS...

SAY SOMETHING™



SAY SOMETHING

teaches youth and teens, grades 6-12, how to recognize signs & signals—especially on social media—from individuals who may want to hurt themselves or others. Say Something teaches them how and why to go to a trusted adult to get help.

Students and their peers are actively involved in communities offline and in social media, but sometimes they don't understand what they are seeing.

SAY SOMETHING teaches students, educators, parents and community leaders to:

1. **LOOK** *for!* **WARNING SIGNS**
SIGNALS & THREATS
2. **ACT IMMEDIATELY.** *take it SERIOUSLY.*
3. *say something*
to a **TRUSTED ADULT**

HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP...

- **Make Say Something part of your family culture.** Make an intentional effort to ask questions about each other's day and include questions about each other's experiences online.
- **Talk to your child about warning signs, signals and threats.** Share what warning signs, signals and threats might look like as well as experiences you have had and ask your child to do the same.
- **Model best practices.** Parents are important role models. Think about your own habits and make sure to display good digital citizenship.
- **Be observant and keep an eye on your child's communication.** Talk to your child about Say Something and learn to recognize signs in your own child's expressions and what issues they may be communicating.
- **Build your digital literacy skills.** Become familiar with features on popular social media sites that allow you to report threatening or worrisome behavior. Learn about steps you can take with your child to get help. Ask your child to share what they know with you.
- **Share strategies with your child to ensure they "Say Something" and take Immediate action.** Discuss the pledge with your child and ask how you can help them maintain their pledge to "Say Something."

Sometimes students are afraid to speak out because they think they will be considered a snitch or be alienated or physically hurt. This is why Say Something teaches children the difference between telling on someone and saying something to get help.

Caring for each other is a value we promote in school and beyond, both in face-to-face interactions and online.

We are sending this brief guide to parents because we hope that the conversation will continue at home and throughout the community.

- **Discuss the difference between saying something and telling on someone.** Explain that telling on someone is purposely trying to get someone in trouble but saying something is getting someone help.
- **Share your story.** Tell your child a story about a time that you took action and it made a difference. What happened? How did you feel afterwards?
- **Be there for your child.**
 - Remind your child that you are always there for them if they need someone to talk to.
 - Help your child identify other trusted adults in school, the community and church and plan to take immediate action.
 - Let your child know that if they come to you with a concern, you will take the concern seriously. Assure them you will act immediately to get help.

RESOURCES: For more resources on this topic, visit the following websites for additional tips and more information:

Common Sense Media: Parent Concerns

Nemours: Teaching Kids to be Smart about Social Media

CDC Injury Prevention and Control: Division of Violence Prevention.
www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/index.html

National Association of School Psychologists (NASP) Preventing Youth Suicide:
Tips for Parents & Educators

AT EVERY SCHOOL AND IN EVERY COMMUNITY...

there are young people who suffer silently because they feel left out, alone or invisible.



Social isolation is an individual's perceived or real separation from a group of peers. It is a feeling that you don't fit in, that you don't belong, or that you have been left out. The separation may be the result of a rejection from others, or from the person's own withdrawal from others. Social isolation can happen in person or online.

Social isolation can become a serious issue. Young people who experience social isolation can become a victim of bullying, violence and/or depression.

As a result, many pull further away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or may choose to hurt themselves or others.

There is a difference between social isolation and healthy alone time. Not all alone time is bad. Healthy alone time is when you choose to be alone to clear your mind, take a break from "socializing," give time to focus on and recharge yourself, and/or work through problems or possibilities without any outside influence. Some people are introverted, and need more healthy alone time than others.

ABOUT SANDY HOOK PROMISE

Sandy Hook Promise (SHP) is a national, nonprofit organization based in Newtown, Connecticut. SHP is led by several family members whose loved ones were killed in the tragic mass shooting at Sandy Hook School on December 14, 2012. SHP's sole purpose is to educate and empower parents, schools and community organizations on how to prevent gun violence BEFORE it happens by providing mental health & wellness early-identification and intervention programs, gun safety storage practices and advocating for sensible state and federal violence prevention policy.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

About Sandy Hook Promise and our other school and community-based prevention programs and training, please visit: sandyhookpromise.org

Make the Promise and together we can protect children from preventable gun violence.



Sandy Hook
PROMISE

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START with
Hello

**PARENT
GUIDE**

FOR PARENTS OF STUDENTS
IN GRADES 2-12



WHAT IS...



START WITH HELLO

is a prevention program that teaches children and teens how to be more socially inclusive and connected to each other. Start With Hello asks students, educators, parents and other community leaders who interact with children to take steps in class, the lunchroom and/or other times in their day to be inclusive and connected.

YOU CAN START WITH HELLO IN 3 SIMPLE STEPS:



WE NEED YOU! HERE'S HOW YOU CAN HELP...

FOR ALL AGES

- **Make Start With Hello part of your family culture.** Make an intentional effort to greet each other with hello and ask questions about each other's day.
- **Practice active listening.** During car rides or at dinner challenge each other to use eye contact and truly listen.
- **Model best practices for your child.** Say hello to strangers on the street and make conversations at stores or restaurants.
- **Share your story.** Tell your child a story about a time that you reached out to someone who was alone and in need. What happened? How did you feel afterwards?
- **Be there for your child.** Talk about what your child can do if they ever feel lonely at school. Remind your child that you are always there for them if they need someone to talk to.
- **Talk about good and bad kinds of being alone.** When does being alone feel good? When does being alone feel bad?

Fostering inclusion and community is an important life skill and with practice, simple to do every day. There is no age limit to reaching out to and helping others!

Your school or community organization may already be taking part in Sandy Hook Promise's Start With Hello activities. If they aren't, why not bring Start With Hello to them? All the materials and training are provided at no cost and are extremely easy to implement. Also – kids love it! We believe Start With Hello will be both meaningful and fun for your child. But it can also be fun for you! We hope you can use the ideas in the brief guide to continue the conversation at home and beyond into your community.

FOR GRADES 2-5

- **Act it out!** Pretend to be an isolated student at your child's school and have your child practice reaching out and saying hello. Act out different scenarios, then switch roles and try it again.
- **Create a poster.** Draw or paint a poster with your child to remind your family to "Start With Hello" and hang it up in your house.
- **Learn how to say hello in different languages.** Challenge your child to try a different language each time they say hello!

French – Bonjour	Spanish – Hola
Italian – Buon Giorno	German – Guten Tag
- **Make it a game!** Create a family wide contest to see who can say hello to the most people each day. Keep track of each person's "hello count" and celebrate the winner at the end of the week.

FOR GRADES 6-12

- **Share strategies for starting conversations.** Create your own conversation starters or try using the following: How is your day going? What did you do over the weekend?
- **Discuss cyber bullying.** Talk about what respect and social inclusion looks like on social media and discuss what to do if they witness cyber bullying.



Organization and Program Overview



Organization and Program Overview

Our Organization and Mission

Sandy Hook Promise (SHP) is a nonprofit organization led by several family members who lost loved ones at the Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting on December 14, 2012. Based in Newtown, Connecticut, SHP’s mission is to prevent gun violence *BEFORE* it happens by teaching youth and adults how to recognize the signs, intervene and get help for individuals who may be at-risk of hurting themselves or others.

Our Challenge

Each year, in schools and communities across the country, there are hundreds of thousands of acts of youth violence, including bullying, physical/mental/substance abuse, gun violence and other harmful behaviors that result from and/or contribute to lack of mental well-being, disruption of learning and safety, physical ailments, mental illness, and, at its extreme, loss of life via suicide or homicide.


In a majority of these acts, the individual displays many warning signs or signals *BEFORE* taking any action. Unfortunately, the youth and adults who observe these signs or signals do not always recognize what they are seeing and/or do not report what they observed. In fact,

- ~1,000,000 students are harassed, threatened or subject to other forms of cyberbullying
- 37% of threats of violence, bullying, etc. are sent electronically. 28% used social media
- 80% of school shooters tell someone of their violent plans. 69% tell more than one person
- 70% of people who die by suicide tell someone of their plans or give some other warning sign

Schools and youth organizations are a touch-point and petri dish of current and future violent behavior and actions. There is an opportunity to influence youth and create culture changing programs and practices to improve mental health & well-being, school climate and safety and, ultimately, lives.

Our Approach

Train youth and adults, at no cost, in our “*Know the Signs*” programs. These programs teach how to identify, intervene and get help for at-risk individuals *BEFORE* they hurt themselves or others. There are 4 *Know the Signs* programs, two for youth and two for adults. Schools and youth organizations can choose 1 or more programs to meet their school needs. For maximum impact and outcome, all 4 programs should be implemented.

	<p style="text-align: center;">Say Something™</p> <p>Say Something teaches youth how to recognize signs and signals, especially within social media, from individuals who may be a threat to themselves or others and Say Something to a trusted adult <i>BEFORE</i> it is too late.</p> <p>Say Something is an evidence-informed program developed in collaboration with leading violence prevention researchers and educators. Training is delivered in-person or can be digitally downloaded and self-led. Requires 50 minutes to deliver.</p>
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	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Start With Hello™</u></p> <p>Start With Hello (SWH) teaches youth how to be more inclusive and connected to one another. SWH works to create connectedness and community, by minimizing social isolation, marginalization and rejection, BEFORE an individual chooses to hurt them self or others.</p> <p>SWH is an evidence-informed program developed in collaboration with educators and leading violence prevention researchers. Training is delivered in-person or can be digitally downloaded and self-led. Requires 50 minutes to deliver.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Safety Assessment & Intervention™</u></p> <p>Safety Assessment & Intervention (SAI) teaches adults in schools and youth organizations how to identify, assess and respond to threats of violence or at-risk behavior BEFORE a tragedy takes place. SAI not only addresses the threat itself, but also helps identify and treat the underlying problem(s) in the youth's life that led to him/her making the threat.</p> <p>SAI was developed by Dr. Dewey Cornell at the University of Virginia and is an evidence-based program. SHP has partnered to help scale and deliver SAI to schools and youth organizations. Training is delivered in-person only. Requires 6 hours to deliver.</p>
	<p style="text-align: center;"><u>Signs of Suicide (SOS)™</u></p> <p>Signs of Suicide (SOS) teaches youth, educators and administrators how to identify, intervene and get help for youth who may be depressed or suicidal.</p> <p>Screening for Mental Health created this heavily evidence-based program. SHP has partnered with them to drive training into schools and community organizations nationwide. Training is delivered in-person only. Requires 50 minutes for student training and 2 hours for teacher/administrator training.</p>

SHP's 75+ national certified trainers can deliver the "Know the Signs" programs in classrooms or in full auditorium presentations. Handouts, curriculum-based resource guides and posters, wristbands and other materials are provided to help reinforce and sustain learning. SHP also provides parent guides for the two youth programs (and offers evening meetings to train parents upon request).

SHP requires student programs - *Say Something*, *Start With Hello* and *Signs of Suicide* - to be embedded into a student club (and/or assigned an adult champion) to ensure learning is being reinforced and sustained via school-wide club activities, in-school advertising and other on-going activities. In states and school districts where SHP Program Coordinators are located, we will also follow-up to help support the school, club and adult champion.

Contact Information

- To request *Know the Signs* Programs training, please contact Paula Fynboh, our National Field and Program Director. Her email is paula.fynboh@sandyhookpromise.org OR email programs@sandyhookpromise.org
- To request a family member for a speaking engagement, please contact Alexa Tomassi at alexa.tomassi@sandyhookpromise.org with an overview of your event.



Teaching Youth and Teens How to Recognize the Signs & Signals of At-Risk Behavior and Potential Threats in Social Media

WHAT IS THE PROBLEM	<p>Over the last 25 years, research has revealed that in 7 out of 10 acts of gun violence, a friend(s) were told that an act of violence would be committed or may take place. In one study, it was reported that in 4 out of 5 school shootings, the attacker had told people of his plans ahead of time.</p> <p>The problem is that no one is taking action with this information to stop the act of violence before it starts. Imagine if one of those people took action. How many tragedies could be prevented? How many lives would be saved?</p>
WHAT IS THE PROGRAM	<p><i>Say Something</i> is an education and awareness program that provides tools and practices to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Recognize the signs & signals of a potential threat – especially in social media - Teach and instill in participants how to take action with a trusted adult - Drive awareness and reinforce the need to Say Something
WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE	<p><i>Say Something</i> teaches and empowers youth, grades 5 – 12, how to recognize signs and signals, especially in social media, of an individual who may be a threat to themselves or others and reinforce the need to be an “upstander” and Say Something to a trusted adult BEFORE a tragedy takes place.</p>
WHO WILL BENEFIT	<p><i>Say Something</i> will benefit youth, educators, administrators, community based organization leaders and parents. By building a culture of “looking out for one another,” being an “upstander” and reporting possible threats of violence when someone sees, reads or hears something (especially within social media), entire communities will become safer and lives will be saved.</p>
TRAINING CORE LEARNING	<p><i>Say Something</i> informs and educates about observable warning signs (written, spoken, photographed, in video) that are often present in behavior that could lead to someone hurting themselves or others as well as educates individuals on how to safely and anonymously report potential threats. Additionally, the program provides tools on how best to promote and reinforce <i>Say Something</i>.</p>
HOW TO GET STARTED AND COST	<p>Contact programs@sandyhookpromise.org</p> <p>Sandy Hook Promise will work with individuals, schools and community-based organizations to offset 100% of the training cost in order to reach and impact as many lives as possible.</p>



Start With Hello

Promoting Social Inclusion and Community Connectedness

<p>WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?</p>	<p>Social isolation is the feeling of being left out, lonely and treated like you are invisible. At every school and in every community there are children who feel like they have no friends and quietly suffer through each day.</p> <p>Young people who are isolated can become a victim of bullying, violence and/or depression. As a result, many further pull away from society, struggle with learning and social development and/or choose to hurt themselves or others.</p>
<p>WHAT IS THE PROGRAM</p>	<p>Start With Hello (SWH) teaches children and teens how to be more socially inclusive and connected to each other. SWH asks students, educators, parents and other community leaders who interact with children to take steps in class, the lunchroom and/or on the bus to be inclusive and connected. Simply,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SEE someone alone - REACH OUT and help - START WITH HELLO <p>SWH is delivered in-house by SHP trainers or can be digitally downloaded. Training and digital toolkit and resource guide provide step-by-step guidance for students, teachers and community leaders to deliver events, activities and actions that instill the SWH concept and overarching message of inclusion and community.</p>
<p>WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE</p>	<p>Students ages 8-18, teachers, youth organizations and community leaders.</p>
<p>WHO WILL BENEFIT</p>	<p>SWH will have an immediate impact and benefit to children, faculty, administrators and community organization leaders involved with the program. Long-term, entire communities will benefit as generations move to greater inclusion and connectedness.</p>
<p>CORE LEARNING</p>	<p>The importance of inclusion and the tragic results that can result when people are excluded. Children, teachers and community leaders are given tools on how to break the ice, break down barriers and get to know one another (interpersonal interaction) as well as how to create and sustain an inclusive culture / community.</p>
<p>HOW TO GET STARTED AND COST</p>	<p>Contact programs@sandyhookpromise.org</p> <p>Sandy Hook Promise will work with individuals, schools and community-based organizations to offset 100% of the training cost in order to reach and impact as many lives as possible.</p>



Safety Assessment & Intervention

An Evidence-based Prevention Program to Evaluate and Resolve Threatening Behaviors before They Escalate into Violence

<p>WHAT IS THE PROBLEM?</p>	<p>Every day in the United States there are more than 300 shootings resulting in injury or death.¹ SHP believes that gun violence can be prevented by identifying and helping individuals who display at-risk behaviors.</p> <p>Research has found that nearly all mass shooting attacks and many other shootings were carried out by individuals who made threats or engaged in threatening behavior that friends or family members observed.² We can prevent violence if we recognize threatening behavior and intervene to provide assistance before a personal crisis escalates into a shooting. Prevention should begin early, before guns are involved.</p> <p>SHP believes schools and community organizations should be trained to identify and assess individual threats, signs and signals and stop (gun) violence before it starts.</p>
<p>WHAT IS THE PROGRAM?</p>	<p><i>Safety Assessment & Intervention (SAI)</i> establishes and trains multidisciplinary teams within schools and community organizations to identify, assess, and respond to threats of violence, including: (a) identifying threats, signs, and behaviors leading to a violent act, (b) determining the seriousness of the threat, and (c) developing intervention plans that protect potential victims and <i>address the underlying problem or conflict</i> that initiated the behavior.</p> <p>SAI was developed by Dr. Dewey Cornell, a forensic clinical psychologist and Professor of Education at the University of Virginia. SAI is based on the Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines that have been evaluated in more than a decade of rigorous, controlled studies demonstrating their effectiveness. Recent studies show that SAI multidisciplinary teams have responded to thousands of student threats, distinguishing serious threats from minor misbehavior and taking appropriate steps to prevent violence.³ As a result, <i>SAI's Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines</i> have been recognized by the federal government's National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices.⁴</p> <p>Dr. Cornell and his colleagues have trained thousands of school and community-based multidisciplinary teams in this method. SHP is partnering with Dr. Cornell to establish and scale this program nationwide.</p>
<p>WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE?</p>	<p>Training is available for K-12 schools and community organizations. A school or community organization selects and sends its proposed team to this 6-hour training session. Typical multidisciplinary teams are made up of educators, school administrators, counselors, psychologists, social workers, community organization leaders, and resource officers.</p>

<p>WHO WILL BENEFIT?</p>	<p>At-risk youth will benefit from early intervention to identify problems and concerns, and most importantly, helping them access help. Threatening behavior is often a symptom of frustration, anger, or conflict that needs attention. Additionally, school and community-organization staff will benefit from increased safety and improved climate as well as legally defensible practices and procedures.</p> <p>Published research and reported findings show the following benefits:³</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Violence reduction • Decreased bullying and aggression • Fewer out-of-school suspensions and school transfers • Reduced racial disparities in school suspensions • Increased willingness of students to seek help for threats of violence • Decreased staff anxiety about violence • Increased use of school counseling • Increased parental involvement • Students reported greater willingness to seek help for threats of violence
<p>TRAINING CORE LEARNING</p>	<p>Schools and community organizations will be able to establish multidisciplinary safety and support teams to identify, assess, and respond to threats of violence. Teams learn to use a decision tree to resolve most threats with only 1-2 team members, and to engage the full team for more serious threats.</p> <p>Research has shown that multidisciplinary teams can be trained with a one-day intensive workshop followed by adherence to a detailed threat assessment and intervention manual.³</p>
<p>HOW TO GET STARTED AND COST</p>	<p>Contact us at programs@sandyhookpromise.org</p> <p>Sandy Hook Promise will work with schools and community-based organizations to offset up to 100% of the training cost in order to reach and impact as many lives as possible.</p>

Footnotes:

- 1 Centers for Disease Control and Prevention statistics for nonfatal injuries are available at <<http://webappa.cdc.gov/sasweb/ncipc/nfirates2001.html>> and statistics for deaths are available at <<http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/injury.htm>>
- 2 The FBI and Secret Service studies (see below)
- 3 Studies listed below
- 4 Virginia Student Threat Assessment Guidelines is listed in the National Registry of Evidenced-Based Programs and Practices (NREPP), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA).
<http://www.nrepp.samhsa.gov/ViewIntervention.aspx?id=263>

Footnote 2:

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- Nekvasil, E., Cornell, D. (in press). Student threat assessment associated with positive school climate in middle schools. *Journal of Threat Assessment and Management*.



An Evidence-Based Prevention Program to Help Youth Who May Be Depressed or Suicidal

<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT IS THE PROBLEM</p>	<p>Suicide is the second leading cause of death for American teenagers and many adolescents suffer in silence. Those who reach out for help tend to confide in their friends and peers, who are often unequipped to intervene. By teaching middle and high school students to recognize the warning signs of depression and suicide, we are building their capacity for empathy, social responsibility, and social activism, leading to safer schools and communities, and providing them with vital knowledge they can use for the rest of their lives.</p> <p>Suicide is preventable; everyone has a role in saving lives. Youths have a tremendous amount of influence in each other’s lives, and we can leverage power that by teaching students the warning signs of depression and suicide. In doing so, youths are empowered to ACT, building safer schools and communities.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WHAT IS THE PROGRAM</p>	<p>At its core, the SOS Signs of Suicide Prevention Program (SOS Program) relies on three easy-to-remember steps, denoted by the acronym ACT:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Acknowledge that you are seeing warning signs and that it is serious • Care let your friend know how much you care about them • Tell a trusted adult that you are worried about your friend <p>The SOS program uses an educational curriculum to teach students to recognize the symptoms of depression and suicide, and can be implemented by existing school personnel within one class period. The main teaching tool is a video that shows dramatizations and real life stories of hope about the right and wrong ways to react when a friend exhibits certain behaviors. The program includes a mental health self-assessment that screens every student for depression and suicide. The program also includes training and educational materials for faculty, staff and parents.</p> <p>An enlightened student body means earlier detection and increased help-seeking behavior. Research has shown that the SOS Program, which is listed on SAMHSA’s National Registry of Evidence-based Programs and Practices, improves students’ knowledge and adaptive attitudes about suicide risk and depression, and reduces actual suicide attempts by 40%-64% in randomized controlled studies (Aseltine et al., 2007 & Schilling et al., 2016).</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">WHO SHOULD PARTICIPATE</p>	<p>The SOS Program is designed for all middle and high school students. Additionally, school faculty and staff, parents, and community members receive training as trusted adults who have a critical role in reducing stigma, promoting help-seeking and responding to youth in need.</p>

<p>WHO WILL BENEFIT</p>	<p>Evidence-based suicide prevention programming benefits the entire community. Students and school staff learn critical and potentially life-saving skills, parents are encouraged to advocate for their children’s health, and the community becomes more resilient overall.</p>
<p>TRAINING CORE LEARNING</p>	<p>Students learn:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Age-appropriate, fact-based information about suicide and the associated mental health concerns of depression, substance use, and self-injury • Messages of hope that encourage help-seeking because mental illness, like physical illness, requires treatment • Clear steps to take when worried about themselves or a friend (ACT: Acknowledge, Care, Tell) <p>Schools receive guidance on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Best practices in suicide prevention including universal student education and depression screening • Training for faculty and staff on warning signs, risk factors, and how to support a student in need • Strategies and tools for engaging parents in suicide prevention in-person and online
<p>HOW TO GET STARTED AND COST</p>	<p>Contact programs@sandyhookpromise.org</p> <p>Sandy Hook Promise will work with individuals, schools and community-based organizations to offset 100% of the training cost in order to reach and impact as many lives as possible.</p>