


[Career Connections](#)
[Real Estate Search](#)
[Photo Reprints](#)
[Read & React](#)
Current Conditions

Sky: Overcast

Temp: 45°

Wind: 13 mph

[Get a Complete Forecast](#)

KENOSHA NEWS.com

5800 7th Ave. • Kenosha, Wisconsin • 53140-4194 • 262-657-1000

Home

[Homestyle Tips](#)
[Photo Gallery](#)
[Web Extra Photos](#)
[Through the Lens Photo Exhibit](#)
[Career Connections](#)
[Police Call Log](#)
[Current Gas Prices](#)
[Downloadable Forms](#)
[Mr. Boffo - New!](#)
[Site Login](#)

Customer Care

[Subscribe](#)
[Subscription Info](#)
[Manage Account](#)
[Make a Payment](#)

Local News

[Local Stories](#)
[Local Sports](#)
[Local Weather](#)
[Finance](#)
[Life](#)
[Opinion](#)
[Obituaries](#)
[Get Out](#)

More News

[AP Video Headlines](#)
[World News](#)
[US News](#)
[Wisconsin News](#)
[Illinois News](#)
[Business](#)
[Sports](#)
 [Football](#)
 [Hockey](#)
[Entertainment](#)
[Strange Stuff](#)

Real Estate

[Search Homes](#)

Classifieds

[Place a Classified Ad](#)
[Announcements](#)
[Employment](#)
[Financial](#)
[Farm & Land](#)
[Merchandise](#)
[Rentals](#)
[Real Estate](#)
[Transportation](#)

Other Information
TeenScreen under fire in Unified suicide fight
Chris Barncard KENOSHA NEWS


Nov 15, 2006

Months before a depression/suicide screening could begin in Kenosha schools, debate on the efficacy and appropriateness of the program is in full swing.

Supporters and detractors of Columbia University's TeenScreen addressed a Kenosha Unified School Board committee Tuesday, holding up the program — designed to identify suicide risk factors in children age 11-18 — as both a necessary opportunity for a group under-served by mental health care professionals and as lawsuit bait overreaching a school district's place in the community.

John Kucak, Unified coordinator of student support, told the School Board's Curriculum and Program Committee that TeenScreen — a computer-based questionnaire that would be administered to Unified eighth-graders as part of their health class unit on mental health issues — was a worthy response to Unified's seven confirmed teen suicides since September 2005.

"This is a tried-and-true method for identifying kids; otherwise, we would not consider it," Kucak said.

TeenScreen requires consent from a parent and the assent of the student taking the 10- to 15-minute questionnaire which deals, in part, with moods, anxiety, substance abuse and physical health.

Students whose answers do not indicate risk factors for suicidal thoughts have a short meeting with a TeenScreen team member immediately following the screening.

**Who says an adult
can't have a do-over?**



Sa
Ne
Te

[News Dealer Locations](#)
[Subscription Rates](#)
[News Submission Policy](#)
[Advertiser Info](#)

News Library

[Kenosha Archives](#)
[Online Edition](#)

Contact Us

[Voice of the People](#)
[Suggest a Story](#)
[Get Out](#)
[Newsroom](#)
[Sports Dept](#)
[Website Comment](#)

Picture of the Day



A single yellow leaf hangs on a branch in the Chiwaukee Prairie Nature Preserve.
 KENOSHA NEWS PHOTO
 BY KEVIN POIRIER

 eCLIPS

Click 'em...

Students identified as at risk by the screening meet with a volunteer mental health professional — also immediately after screening — who assesses the results and the child. If the professional finds the student to be at risk, parents are notified for a meeting and offered a referral to mental health care providers in the area.

"This is a screening program that has very successful results," said Cindy Johnson, Kenosha County director of nursing and a TeenScreen proponent. "To receive access to care is really difficult given insurance situations and costs. TeenScreen is a very good way for children to get an assessment."

But TeenScreen, which is being explored by Unified in association with Congregations United to Serve Humanity, has loud critics around the country. Amy Grimely, interim president of the newly formed Kenosha Parents Union, has examined that criticism and believes TeenScreen is not effective and questions its motives.

"I do believe the school district has a problem," Grimely said. "I do not believe this is the answer."

Grimely said there is no evidence the program prevents suicide and that it falsely labels a number of children as being suicidal. She also said the program was designed by drug companies with the intent of getting more children to take prescription drugs.

She was also disappointed to hear that Unified had been considering the program since 2004 without opening a dialogue with parents.

"They should have been blowing trumpets, saying, 'This is what we are doing,'" said Grimsely, who pointed to a lawsuit in Indiana that challenges TeenScreen as a reason for Unified to be cautious.

John Nordquist, publisher of the Daily Kenoshan, a community Web site, said TeenScreen reaches too far into students' lives.

"To be saying you need a psychiatrist or you are suicidal, that's not for a school to say," Nordquist said.

While representatives of the National Alliance on Mental Illness and CUSH supported the program and the Parents Union, Daily Kenoshan and a group called Freedom 2000 railed against it, Pierce said the School Board would not likely take up TeenScreen again in January and look for alternatives in the meantime.

Board members on the committee gave TeenScreen little chance.

"I don't even know if this can pass," board member Gilbert Ostman said. "I don't know how you're going to get by the controversy."

"I'm not sure how much legwork was done in looking into TeenScreen, and where their funding comes from. From what I've seen, I don't like the roots of this," board member Pam Stevens said. "There is no chance I would allow this in this school district."

Unified would be better off working on a program teaching students to identify the signs of suicide in each other that the district recently started using in its high schools, Grimely said.

"This is where I would focus our efforts, not on a program that is controversial around the country," she said.

KENOSHA NEWS
The local thought that counts

**Downloadable
Forms**

- Birth Announcement
- Engagement Form
- Wedding Anniversary
- Military Service
- Birthday Form
- Employment Applications

Click Here



[Home](#) | [Place Ad](#) | [Manage Subscription](#) | [Search Ads](#) | [Local News](#) | [Sports](#) | [Life/For the Record](#) | [Opinion](#) | [Privacy](#)

© 2004-2006 Kenosha News Online All rights Reserved

This document may not be reproduced without the express written permission of the Kenosha News Online