

School administrators, faculty and staff continuously search for the means to deal more effectively with the needs of all students. While our main focus remains academic achievement, students often bring with them to school daily other issues that affect their abilities to attain sustained success. Many students are in situations and relationships with family, friends and peers that can at times present overwhelming problems that appear to have no resolution in sight. At that point, some kids turn to other means, most of which are self destructive, to cope with these circumstances. One increasingly difficult to understand methods is committing suicide.

Statistics would indicate that nearly every school district in the United States has the potential to become involved with the problem of teen suicide. In our local community and within our region, we have discovered that teen suicide crosses all school boundaries, socioeconomic status, urban and rural environments. Most schools have in place within existing curriculum guides information regarding the causes, results and impact of suicide. Many also have access to community-based education/awareness programs. Some communities have in place crisis intervention initiatives with help centers and referral procedures. While these approaches have made significant strides in addressing the suicide issue, they are limited in terms of resources, capacities, financial support and personnel to effectively deal with the problems. It is our opinion that a preventative program is needed to assist in eliminating this option for students seeking answers to better fit into their community, culture and society.

In our investigation of the most successful teen suicide prevention programs, the Columbia Teen Screen program emerges as the best strategy to identify youth at risk for mental illness and suicide. Our school supports this process and is committed to installing the procedures required as necessary for an effective implementation. Working closely with Madison Center and CONNECT, Inc., it is our strong belief this program will be extremely successful in not only detecting students with mental illness problems but combating teen suicide in general.

SAMPLE LETTER
FROM BUILDING
PRINCIPAL