

Barnum Public Schools

OFFICERS

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Thomas Cawcutt, Elementary Principal
218-389-6976

Independent School District No. 91

David J. Bottem, Superintendent

3675 County Road 140
Barnum, MN 55707
Telephone: 218-389-6978
District/H.S. Fax: 218-389-3259
Elem. Fax: 218-389-9842

DIRECTORS

Colleen Fetters
Jessica Unkelhaeuser
Timothy Peterson

Brian Kazmierczak, High School Principal
218-389-3273

Spring, 2017

Dear Parents and Guardians of Barnum Public School Students,

Concerns have been raised in the media regarding some alarming and inappropriate websites that are potentially dangerous. These websites present instructions for a game that has students complete a series of events, has the participants document and post the progress and ends with students committing suicide. The Internet game called Blue Whale Challenge also goes by the names A Silent House, Sea of Whales, Wake Me Up at 4:20am.

Concerns have also been raised in the media regarding the NETFLIX series called “13 Reasons Why” which is based on a fictional novel by Jay Asher. The series depicts the journey of a high school student who dies by suicide, leaving behind audiotapes detailing the events that she perceives led to her death. Although the creators have promoted the series as a tool to help students recognize their impact on others and to prevent suicide, suicide prevention professionals are becoming increasingly concerned about the graphic nature of the series as well as the misconceptions and misinformation found throughout the series.

Unfortunately for our community, suicide hits close to home. Barnum Schools would like to be proactive as we take mental health and suicide prevention very seriously and we want to ensure parents are aware of the game and series along with the graphic nature of the content. Our administrative teams, school nurse, school psychologist, and counselors are trained in suicide prevention and supportive measures and take every report seriously.

We do not recommend that students with a history of suicidal thoughts, depression or mental health concerns watch “13 Reasons Why” or participate in the web game without parental guidance. If you do allow your student to be exposed to either of these, we recommend you watch it with them and discuss it. Having open conversations about their thoughts and feelings can lead to deeper discussions. Don't be afraid to ask if they have thought about suicide or if someone is hurting them. Raising the issue of suicide does not increase the risk or plant an idea. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity to offer help.

Student safety is our top priority and we hope you will talk to your students. If you have any concerns about the safety and wellbeing of your student, please feel free to contact a building administrator or school counselor so we can address your concerns. School counselors can be contacted:

Barnum High School Counselor: Alycia Dammer, 218-389-3273

Barnum Elementary School Counselor: Nikki Kresky, 218-389-6976

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Additional Resources:

American Foundation for Suicide Prevention: www.afsp.org

National Suicide Prevention Lifeline: www.suicidepreventionlifeline.org

Text4Life, available 24 hours: Text "LIFE" to 61222

[13 Reasons Why Guidance for Educators and Families](#)

In case of an emergency, dial 911

Sincerely,

Brian Kazmierczak
Barnum High School Principal
218.389.3273

Tom Cawcutt
Barnum Elementary School Principal
218.389.6976