



## Suicide Awareness and Prevention

As part of the Health Agenda 2015, one of the department goals for the Office of Social and Emotional Learning (OSEL) is to have the Signs of Suicide curriculum implemented to all of our 6<sup>th</sup> and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students in Denver Public Schools.

Educating our students about how to take care of themselves and their friends is an important task. Students are most likely to talk to their friends when they are having a problem, and some students entering adolescence will experience a rollercoaster of difficult emotions. Depression (among the most common of mental illnesses) appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Depression--which is treatable--is a leading risk factor for suicide. In addition, self-injury has become a growing problem among youth. While every student will not experience these feelings, any child may find themselves in a position to help someone who does.

To proactively address these issues, Natalie Koncz and Samanda Davis (school psychologist and school social worker, respectively) implemented Signs of Suicide (SOS) during this summer's Ninth Grade Academy. SOS has been developed by the highly regarded non-profit organization and has been used by thousands of schools nationwide since 2000. It has proven successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend and is the only school-based suicide prevention program to show a reduction in suicide attempts in a randomized, controlled study (*American Journal of Public Health, March 2004*).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- To help our students understand that depression is a treatable illness
- To explain that suicide is a preventable tragedy that often occurs as a result of untreated depression
- To provide students training in how to identify serious depression and potential suicidality in themselves or a friend
- To impress upon youth that they can help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns
- To help students know whom, in the school, they can turn to for help, if they need it

### **Results of pre and post-test data:**

Percent proficient (proficiency is 80% or better):

PRETEST: 39%

**POSTTEST: 90%**

Please feel free to contact us with questions or to learn more!

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