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Regarding “13 Reasons Why” in Horizon Schools

Dear Parents and Caregivers,

The content of the popular Netflix series, “*13 Reasons Why*”, deals with a number of challenging themes, including suicide, sexual abuse and bullying. Although it is important for our high school students to understand and discuss these issues, the Netflix series depicts them in a very graphic way. Due to the fact that these issues can be traumatic triggers for our vulnerable youth, Horizon School Division will not be showing this series in our classrooms or using the series as an educational tool in any way.

Many of our school libraries have the book that the series is based on – *13 Reasons Why*, by Jay Asher – and there are high school classes in Horizon that study the book. First published in 2007, the book has been reviewed by a committee of the Saskatchewan Teachers’ Federation and is an approved resource. The book contains important themes for discussion in a way that does not depict them as graphically or violently as the Netflix series. This book will remain a resource in our high school classrooms where the content has been deemed appropriate for students.

As a Safe & Caring system, Horizon School Division wishes to provide you with a few resources that relate to this series and its content. If your children have watched the series, it is recommended that you engage them in a conversation about it. A number of resources to help lead that conversation can be found on the following page. If your children have expressed an interest in watching the series outside of school hours, please be aware that the series is rated TV-MA, meaning that it is recommended for a mature audience.

If you or your child have concerns or wish to speak with someone relating to the topics of this series, please know that Horizon has a variety of resources and professionals in place to provide support. Please do not hesitate to contact your school principal or the division office to coordinate further support.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Kevin C. Garinger', is written over a light blue circular stamp.

Kevin C. Garinger
Director of Education/CEO
Horizon School Division #205
“A Community of Learning and Achieving”

KG/lh

Resources for Parents/Caregivers:

["13 Reasons Why" Netflix Series: Considerations for Educators](#) (article on the [National Association of School Psychologists website](#)) excerpt:

"Guidance for Families

1. Ask your child if they have heard or seen the series 13 Reasons Why. While we don't recommend that they be encouraged to view the series, do tell them you want to watch it, with them or to catch up, and discuss their thoughts.
2. If they exhibit any of the warning signs above, 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 the idea. On the contrary, it creates the opportunity to offer help.
3. Ask your child if they think any of their friends or classmates exhibit warning signs. Talk with them about how to seek help for their friend or classmate. Guide them on how to respond when they see or hear any of the warning signs.
4. Listen to your children's comments without judgment. Doing so requires that you fully concentrate, understand, respond, and then remember what is being said. Put your own agenda aside.
5. Get help from a school-employed or community-based mental health professional if you are concerned for your child's safety or the safety of one of their peers."

[TV Review of "13 Reasons Why"](#) (found on [commonsensemedia.org](#)) excerpt:

"Parents need to know that 13 Reasons Why is an intense, dark Netflix drama based on the popular young adult novel *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher and is definitely not a light watch or for younger kids. The disturbing story explores a troubled teen's motivations for committing suicide, opening after the fatal event, with all appearances by deceased Hannah in the reflections of a boy who harbored a secret crush on her. Messages about treating people with respect and not taking others for granted are prominent, but the fact that Hannah blames others for her suicide is problematic and may send the wrong messages to some sensitive teens... While this challenging story could help parents start conversations with teens about issues like bullying, isolation, and depression, the way the series addresses these issues is complex and may be confusing for impressionable viewers."

[Tips for Watching New Netflix Series 13 Reasons Why](#) (article on [save.org](#)) excerpt:

- "13 Reasons Why is a fictional story based on a widely known novel and is meant to be a cautionary tale.
- You may have similar experiences and thoughts as some of the characters in 13RW. People often identify with characters they see on TV or in movies. However, it is important to remember that there are healthy ways to cope with the topics covered in 13RW and acting on suicidal thoughts is not one of them.
- If you have watched the show and feel like you need support or someone to talk to- reach out. Talk with a friend, family member, a counselor, or therapist. There is always someone who will listen."