



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Kids Helping Kids: Curriculum Makes Impact in Youth Suicide Prevention

OLYMPIA — Most educators would agree that a good education prepares a young person for the realities and challenges of the world. Schools now have a proven new tool to help them achieve that goal.

With funding from the Washington State Department of Health and the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction, the private non-profit Youth Suicide Prevention Program (YSPP) of Washington State has developed and pilot-tested a unique classroom-based curriculum for students in grades six through eight.

LOOK, LISTEN, LINK, delivered by middle school teachers in four lessons, is designed to empower young people to identify and manage their own stress and to recognize the factors that lead to depression. Given that depression is strongly correlated with suicide, the curriculum also teaches skills on how to confidently intervene with friends who may be at risk.

Results from the 2008-09 school year pilot study conducted in 32 different schools throughout the state with more than 700 middle-school students reveal:

- As a result of the lessons, students were significantly more knowledgeable about stress and depression; and
- Most importantly, students reported feeling much more comfortable in their ability to talk with depressed friends and link them to a trusted adult.

Carrie Hatfield, a health teacher at McMurray Middle School on Vashon Island, said, “Shortly after teaching the curriculum I had several students come forward to talk to me and our counselor about personal concerns. As their teacher, it was difficult for me because I felt like I

For More Information

- [Youth Suicide Prevention Program](#)
- [LOOK, LISTEN, LINK](#)
- [Healthy Youth Survey](#)

was causing them pain. But I realized that I was helping them identify and work through some of their emotions and they were doing exactly what the curriculum instructed - 'linking' to a trusted adult."

After participating in the LOOK, LISTEN, LINK lessons in her classroom at Cedar Heights Middle School in Kent, one 7th grade student said, "We need to look at our friends to see if they appear sad or stressed out and then we need to link them to help so they can feel better. If you don't then it might just get worse."

According to the most recent Washington State Healthy Youth Survey, almost 25% of 8th graders reported feeling depressed and 14% said they had seriously considered killing themselves. A significant number of sixth graders also reported suicidal thoughts and attempts. Yet less than half of them said they were likely to seek help.

"It's essential for our young people to understand what depression is and how to get help for a friend" said Sue Eastgard, author of LOOK, LISTEN, LINK and YSPP director. "This curriculum provides a chance for young people to practice *giving* help and *getting* help."

As the evaluation highlights, pre-teens and teens can definitely learn how to recognize depression in their friends and that going to an adult for help can save a friend's life.

About OSPI

The Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI) is the primary agency charged with overseeing K-12 education in Washington state. Led by State School Superintendent Randy Dorn, OSPI works with the state's 295 school districts and nine educational service districts to administer basic education programs and implement education reform on behalf of more than one million public school students.

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For more information, visit the OSPI Web site at <http://www.k12.wa.us>.

About YSPP

The Youth Suicide Prevention Program is a not-for-profit organization whose mission is to reduce the incidence of youth suicide in Washington State by building public awareness, offering training and supporting communities in taking action. For more information, visit the YSPP website at www.yspp.org

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