October 2015

Dear Parent(s) or Guardian(s):

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions – difficult for teens, their parents, and educators. It is easy to read depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, 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.

To proactively address this issue, Luther Jackson Middle School is conducting a depression screening on Monday and Tuesday, November 16-17, 2015 as part of the SOS Signs of Suicide® Prevention Program. The program has proven to be successful at increasing help seeking by students concerned about themselves or a friend.

Our goals for this program are:

- 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.

*Please note that the purpose of this program is not to tell whether students are depressed, but rather to inform students and families about whether they may have symptoms that need further evaluation.*

If you do NOT wish your child to take a written screening test for depression, please complete the form on the reverse side of this letter, and return it to Luther Jackson Middle School Student Services office. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program. **Also, we will present this screening tool to parents/guardians on Wednesday, November 4, 2015 at 2:30PM in Room 202.** Please join us to this event to learn more about the depression screening process.

We appreciate this opportunity to partner with you, our community, as we work to ensure a safe and productive school year for all of our students. Please contact your student’s school counselor if you have any questions or concerns about the program.

Sincerely,

Tanya Shuford
Director of Student Services
Luther Jackson MS
Luther Jackson Middle School is conducting a depression and suicide screening on November 16 and 17, 2015 with all 8th grade students. This free, voluntary and confidential screening is offered to help students assess whether or not they have symptoms consistent with depression, and to identify students at-risk of suicide. The screening will occur during your student’s Health and Physical Education class. Students may be opted out of this screening at a parent/guardian’s request.

If you do not want your student to participate in this screening process, please complete this form and return it to the Student Services office at Luther Jackson Middle School by Friday, November 6.

I do not give permission for my student, ________________________________, to complete the depression/suicide screening at Luther Jackson Middle School conducted by the Student Services staff.

_____________________________    ______________________________
Signature of Parent/Guardian    Date