

I ask that this argumentative essay, which I wrote for my Junior English class, be presented to the House from the point of view of a student, someone who has experienced being suicidal, and someone who has been left behind.

My school, Hiawatha High School, presents a perfect example as to why suicide prevention must be taught in schools. My personal experiences, having been suicidal myself, losing my best friend, Kyler Wayne Jones (son of Betty Brennan and Rick Jones), and witnessing many other teens deal with being suicidal is enough evidence to prove that prevention needs to be taught in schools. I hope the House takes this into consideration and as a credible written testimony.

Thank you so much for your consideration.

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English 1A

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### Suicide Prevention Education in Schools

Imagine yourself talking to a student, a fellow classmate or friend. They tell you life is too hard for them, they feel hopeless, and they just want to die. Does this mean anything to you? Should you do something? Do you know what to do? This is a situation that is too common in high schools today. Most students and teachers don't know how to handle a suicide-related crisis at school because they haven't been taught to do so. It's time that our schools are educated on suicide prevention, because teen suicides occur way too often.

Suicide prevention should be taught in schools to students and teachers because teen suicide and suicide attempt rates are too high. According to The Jason Foundation, within grade levels 7-12, there are 5,400 suicide attempts per day by teens in the United States; suicide is the second leading cause of death for ages 12-18; and "more teenagers and young adults die from suicide than from cancer, heart disease, AIDS, birth defects, stroke, pneumonia, influenza, and chronic lung disease, COMBINED" ("Facts & Stats - The Jason Foundation"). Some people argue that it's unrealistic to lower these rates, but suicide is preventable. Teachers and students can take a major part in suicide prevention if it is taught to them. The National Suicide Prevention Lifeline claims "suicide is preventable" (National Suicide Prevention Lifeline). Jeff Yalden, motivational speaker and mental health specialist, writes "suicide can be prevented through education and public awareness." ("Myths & Facts"). If students and teachers know the warning signs of suicide, we can prevent it!

Jeff Yalden also claims, “suicide is preventable and there is hope” (“Suicide”), but most people don’t know the warning signs and how to recognize them. How can we prevent suicide if we aren’t educated on it? Knowing and recognizing warning signs is the first step. Because teen suicide rates are so high, students and teachers must be educated on prevention. Teens spend a lot of time with their fellow classmates and teachers, and because four out of five teens who attempt suicide show warning signs, they are likely presented to those fellow classmates and teachers. Betty Brennan, a first-hand witness to a teen suicide tragedy testified to the Kansas Legislation in support of suicide prevention education for teachers. Brennan, who lost her son Kyler Wayne Jones to suicide on February 26, 2014, testified, “Was there something that his teachers could have seen that I didn’t?” (Brennan). If they are educated to recognize the warning signs, the first step to suicide prevention in schools is complete. It is argued that talking about suicide will only make it worse by putting the thought into the minds of teens, but talking about it is, “one of the most helpful things” (“Common Misconceptions”), because most people who attempt suicide don’t fully understand the consequence for not only themselves, but for others as well.

Since most people are uneducated on recognizing the warning signs of suicide, they also need to learn how to react when they are shown. The most common response to a warning sign of suicide is no response at all. No response is not the proper way to handle this sort of situation, immediate and appropriate action must be taken. If students and teachers aren’t educated on how to take action, prevention once again becomes less likely. Anyone thinking about suicide must receive help as soon as possible. If students and teachers are educated to respond by getting help, those at risk can receive the proper help to prevent them from committing suicide.

Now that you've thought about what the student, classmate or friend has said, you realize you don't know what to say or do. You don't respond at all. Before long, this person is gone. Would it be different if you were taught what their words mean and how you should react? If students and teachers are educated on suicide prevention, we can stop this epidemic. Suicide prevention must be taught in schools, we've lost too many to suicide and we can't lose any more.

Works Cited

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