

North Haledon Public Schools

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Dear North Haledon School Community:

Usually, I do not bring attention to various television shows and movies, which probably could warrant a second full time job for me since there are many resources at our disposal. Whether through YouTube, Netflix, and the like, it seems as though anyone can have access thus be tuned in to a particular show or movie that may be deemed inappropriate.

I will apologize ahead of time if I have over-stepped the line between home and school. Family is sacred and private. I just believe in this one instance, I may need to shed some light on a particular show that you may (or may not) be aware of.

Netflix released a new series called, "13 Reasons Why." This series has become an instant attraction to young people not only locally and in state, but throughout the nation as well. Youth are binge watching this series and are reacting to it with friends whether through talk or via social media. In the event you are not aware of the series, "13 Reasons Why" is a series about a young girl, Hannah, who takes her own life and sends out 13 cassette tapes to those whom she blames for her death. The series was adopted from a book of the same name. While the show is fictional, the series is extremely graphic and raises significant concerns about emotional safety of those watching.

As a father of three 6th-grade students, monitoring as to what my children watch on television, computer, or other means, is very difficult. And with the ability to "stream" videos, episodes, and the like, it has been nearly impossible. Again, another full time job! Still, as we all do, we try to have conversations with our children using particular moments for learning and to educate. To encourage our children in the engagement of healthy and positive dialog not only within the home, but within the school environment, will only benefit student growth and understanding. And this is the purpose of my letter...community.

Community involves all stakeholders. It is a collaborative mindset with one common ground or bottom line... our children. While your home is sanctuary, please know our school community is here for you. While it is more than "13 Reason Why," this series is bringing to light how much information can be acquired simply from one touch of a screen. Growing up, I can remember sitting at a dinner table and having healthy discussions with my parents. And this may be the case today, but it does seem that due to the technological age, "someone else" has beaten me to my own kids when trying to educate. We all know it is difficult to raise children, but do know we are here to assist as well. As indicated, we are a caring community and our partnership is invaluable.

Very Truly Yours,

Nicholas S. Coffaro, Superintendent of Schools.