Martin Gifted and Talented Magnet Middle School

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The adolescent years are marked by a roller-coaster ride of emotions—difficult for youths, their parents, and educators. It is easy to misread 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 these issues, Martin Gifted and Talented Magnet Middle School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training 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 and is the only school-based suicide prevention program listed by SAMHSA for its National Registry of Evidence-Based Programs and Practices that addresses suicide risk and depression, while reducing suicide attempts. In a randomized control study, the SOS high school program showed a reduction in self-reported suicide attempts by 40% (BMC Public Health, July 2007).

Our goals in participating in this program are straightforward:

- 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

This topic is part of the healthful living standard course of study. The goal is to educate your child and to give them guidance on how to get help for themselves or a friend. The program has several skits that illustrate real life situations that middle or high school students may experience. The skits show the students how to correctly and safely deal with each scenario. You know your child best and if your child is sensitive to this topic, please contact your child's counselor.

Sincerely,

Martin Gifted and Talented Magnet Middle School/Lacey Peckham

If you do **NOT** wish for your child to participate in the SOS Middle School program, please sign below and return it to Martin Gifted and Talented Magnet Middle School. If we do not hear from you, we will assume your child has permission to participate in this program.

Sincerely,

Katie Rowell, 7th Grade School Counselor

*I **do not** want my child_____ (child's name) to participate in the SOS program*

Parent Signature: _____