



**Executive Summary**  
**AS A RESULT OF THE**  
**SMALL GROUP WORK ACTIVITY**  
**NOVEMBER 30 & DECEMBER 1, 2017**

On Thursday, November 30 and Friday, December 1, nearly 600 community members attended Focus 203, A Community Conversation about Suicide. Suicide intervention expert and Loyola University Chicago professor of Social Work, Dr. Jonathan Singer was the keynote speaker at both sessions. Dr. Singer's presentation focused on building a common understanding of suicide including, myths and facts; risk factors, warning signs, and protective factors; and, resources and interventions for suicide prevention.

Following the presentation, community members participated in a small group activity designed to develop consensus priorities. These included discussing risk and protective factors to prevent suicide, steps we can take now as a community to lessen risk factors and promote protective factors, and sharing what other resources participants would like to see in the community. Each table shared what their consensus priorities were with all those in attendance.

**Activity 1**

***Task A: Risk Factors***

*Of the risk factors presented this evening, which three are the most prevalent in our community?*

After reviewing responses from both Focus 203 sessions, it became clear which three risk factors were most important to our attendees:

**Relationships** - Lack of meaningful relationships and connectedness due to the prevalence of use of social media. Students who lack these relationships lack support. Attendees indicated that use of social media and constant access to it increases social isolation and can make students feel bad. Pervasive social media use creates feeling of social isolation in students.

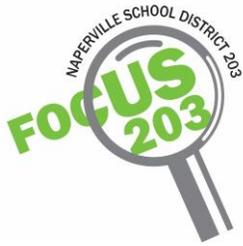
**Individual/Community** - The second most indicated risk factor, Stress and Pressure came from multiple sources: parents/family, themselves, community and academic. Pressure and stress to be a good student, athlete, or child. Importance to remind parents and students that "we want them to do their best, not be the best."

**Individual** - Mental illness, either diagnosed or undiagnosed, was the third most mentioned of the risk factors. This was the second most mentioned risk factor at the Friday morning session.

***Task B: Protective Factors***

*Please generate three actionable ways to boost protective factors related to the risk factors identified.*

**Education** - The top way to boost protective factors indicated by both sessions was to educate students, families, staff and the greater community on suicide risk factors, prevention, mental health and social emotional work already being done and to add more with feedback (data) from our students to inform our work.



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***Task B: Protective Factors, continued***

Many indicated they would like more Focus 203-like sessions at the District level, but especially at the schools. Also, they indicated wanting to know more about the Social Emotional Learning curriculum at the schools.

Participants also requested education on how to address the topic with parents and students without stigma and key messages to use to talk with their children about suicide/mental health.

**Increase Supportive Relationships/Lessen Stress** - Improve the ability for students to connect face-to-face to build relationships with their peers and school staff. Provide support groups for parents. Strengthening relationships between parents and teachers and administrators is important, as is talk about their child's mental health with school staff and parents.

Attendees suggested pressure is coming from "everywhere" and more downtime is needed for overscheduled students. It is important to communicate with students and parents that success looks different for every child. "We want the best for our child, not for our child to be the best." It's ok not to be perfect. Students do not need to be perfect to be successful.

**Access to and Awareness of Resources** - Share information with parents on the community and school resources available to them and students regarding mental health. Work with these organizations and professionals to destigmatize mental health or need of resources to encourage connections for parents and students.

Have outside resources present to students and parents. Increase the resources available at schools and in the community, as well as increase communication about what they are and how to access them.

**Activity 2**

***Task A: Information and Supports***

What additional information do you need to support individuals in our community?

**Education/Knowledge** - Similar to the ways to increase protective factors, participants requested more education and programming for students, families, staff and the greater community on suicide risk factors, prevention, mental health and social emotional work already being done. Also, data from our students, community, hospitals and government agencies to inform our programs and training.

It was suggested that parents and students need to know who to go to for what reason. They need knowledge on whom to contact for services at the schools and in the community. They also indicated the need for additional mental health resources and staff at the schools.

Guidance and conversation starters for parents wishing to speak to their children about suicide and mental health were requested.



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***Task B: Information and Supports - How would you like to receive this information?***

Participants indicated they would like to receive this information the following ways:

- School-based small groups for parents and students
- Focus 203 - type events
- Website - sections with resources and information
- Email communications to all grade levels
- Handouts
- Translation of this information is important