Dear Parent:

The State of Texas has mandated school districts provide a comprehensive suicide prevention program at all public junior, middle and high schools (House Bill 1386/Suicide Prevention). This mandate requires prevention efforts with parents, staff members, and students. It is easy to misread depression as normal adolescent turmoil; however, depression, which is among the most common of mental illnesses, appears to be occurring at a much earlier age. Treatment is available for depression. It is a leading risk factor for suicide. To proactively address these issues, Roach Middle School is offering depression awareness and suicide prevention training as part of the SOS (Signs of Suicide) Prevention Program adopted by FISD. The program increases “help-seeking” behaviors for students concerned about themselves or a friend.

Our goals in presenting 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 with training in how to help themselves or a friend by taking the simple step of talking to a responsible adult about their concerns.
- To help students know to whom in the school they can turn to for help.

The main message of the program is ACT: Acknowledge, Care, Tell

- **ACKNOWLEDGE** – Listen to your friend; don’t ignore threats.
- **CARE** – Let your friend know that you care and that they need the help of an adult.
- **TELL** – Tell a trusted adult if you have a concern for yourself or a friend.

This program has several proven benefits. It increases awareness of signs that can lead to suicidal behavior, increases the likelihood that students will seek adult help for themselves or others, and reduces actual suicide attempts. Our school is focusing on the preventative portion, not screening for depression. Your role as a parent is to watch for warning signs.

Below are some signs of concern that can help you, as a parent, know whether your child has the “adolescent blues” or if it’s something more serious?

- Depressed mood (sad, down, grouchy, or irritable)
- Avoiding family or friends
- A decline in grades
- Struggling to complete simple tasks
- Not taking care of physical health or personal cleanliness
- Change in sleeping patterns, weight, and/or appetite
- Feelings of worthlessness and/or hopelessness
- Constant worry about body image
- Drug and/or alcohol abuse
- Thoughts or writing of death, suicide, or wishes to be dead

Moodiness is common in adolescents, but if it lasts more than two weeks, it might be more than “the blues”.

Now that you know the signs and symptoms, you are better prepared to ACT when your child needs you. We will be educating your student through their 1st period classes on Wednesday, Nov. 6th. Excerpts from the video that will be shown are on the Roach website under “Counselors”, “Suicide prevention videos”

**If you do not want your child to participate in the SOS program this week, please complete the form at the bottom of this letter and return it to the Roach office.**

Sincerely,

Mrs. Caspari and Ms. McSherry

I, ____________________________do not wish for my student ____________________________ to participate in the SOS program.

(Please print your name)  
(Please print student’s first and last name)

Parent/Guardian signature ____________________________ Date: __________________