

Dear 7th grade parent or guardian,

Your 7th grader just participated in two days of prevention programming with WISE through their health class. For decades, WISE has worked with Upper Valley school districts to facilitate education with the shared goal of ending gender-based violence. WISE programs are research-based, aligned with state statutes for sexual violence prevention education in schools, and informed by over 50 years of advocacy for survivors in the Upper Valley.

The first day of programming reintroduced students to the real-life practices of consent. The lesson aimed to build their expectations for safe and respectful touch and emphasized their responsibility for understanding another person's comfort level. They learned that asking for permission is the bare minimum. When it comes to having healthy relationships, we have ongoing conversations with our partners to understand what they need to feel safe and comfortable. In addition to verbal language, we pay attention to body language and tone of voice.

During the second day of programming, the students participated in an activity that helped them think critically about what makes certain behaviors harmful. We read through short scenarios, and students would decide whether the behavior was harmful or not by moving to respective sides of the room. At the end of the activity, students summarized that they made decisions about where to stand by reflecting on whether or not the person was being treated like a full human being and if their feelings were considered. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identifies "empathy and concern for how one's actions affect others" as a protective factor against sexual violence perpetration. Finally, the students worked in small groups to brainstorm potential strategies for intervening in harmful situations involving their friends and classmates. We agreed that we are all responsible for making our community a safer place for everyone.

Parenting for Prevention

Take any and every opportunity to reinforce the message that each person is in control of their own body. Apply consent to interactions outside of and in addition to those that are sexual.

- Ask for permission before touching.
- Allow children and teens to say "no" to physical contact (e.g. hugging relatives) and model respecting someone's no
- Have conversations when siblings violate each other's physical space and reinforce the idea that one's body belongs only to oneself.

Use the media to talk about consent in TV shows and movies.

- How do you see (or not see) people getting consent?
- If they are not getting consent, why are they able to get away with that in the media?
- How does the media make consent seem confusing?
- What can we do to counteract these harmful messages?

For more information about consent and sexual violence:

- Read, Driver's Ed for Sexual SuperHighway: Navigating Consent www.scarleteen.com/article/abuse_assault/drivers_ed_for_the_sexual_superhighway_navigating_consent
- Watch, Body Sovereignty and Kids, youtu.be/EvGyo1NrzTY
- Watch, Understanding Consent, youtu.be/raxPKklDF2k, Tea Consent, youtube.com/watch?v=fGoWLWS4-kU or Cycling Through Consent, youtu.be/-JwlKjRaUaw