Sequencing Rationale:

School Counseling Suicide Prevention Curriculum

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This curriculum is divided into prevention, intervention, and postvention. This is due to the inherent nature of the topic. It is imperative that prevention come first to minimize the risk of suicide for the student body. However it is unfortunately impossible to eliminate this risk entirely, so intervention and responsive services are necessary if a suicide or suicide threat arises. After such an event, postvention is necessary as a follow up. This helps get the student body back to a level of homeostasis and allows for time for the staff to evaluate the prevention and intervention portions of the curriculum in a structured and effective way. To not include all three of these in prevention curriculum would be folly and would not present a complete picture of how to effectively prevent suicide risk.

It is necessary to divide the prevention portion further into students, staff, and parents. This is necessary to ensure that all stakeholders are informed and prepared. Each of the groups will essentially receive the same information about suicide, but in different formats with some portions of information tailored to the audience. For students, this can be explored through individual counseling, anxiety, depression, and stress guidance and counseling, and classroom guidance. All three of these are outlets to explore suicide prevention. For staff, the most effective way to approach this topic is through staff training that is informed and rooted in the established policy and procedure for intervention and postvention. The intervention and postvention are both areas that can be informed by and collaboratively created with the school counselor. Parents can be reached through newsletters and parent information sessions.

Each of the subunits are necessary to include in the information passed along to all of the stake holders. The material remains essentially the same, but the approach and explanation must be tailored to the audience. These units are warning signs, community referrals and help, how to approach someone who may be suicidal, statistics, risk factors, plan of action, and myths versus facts of suicide.

The second subunit, intervention and responsive services, is based on a plan for how to effectively address a suicide attempt, threat, or successful completion of suicide of a student. The key component here is the identification of students at risk of suicide and then disseminating this information to the proper people. This is the immediate response to a suicide and what to do with the student who is at risk.

The third subunit of a suicide prevention curriculum is postvention. This is the plan for after a student completes suicide. This plan is also rooted in established policy and procedure for faculty. Faculty need to well informed of the plan so that this event can be addressed effectively with minimal harm to the student body. This has four parts: being aware of possible copy cats or suicide pacts, providing support for friends and family within school, stabilizing routine, and evaluating the effectiveness of the postvention, prevention, and intervention for the future.