Ryan's Story: Student Presentation Overview for Parents

About the Presentation

Your child's school has scheduled a special assembly featuring John Halligan and **Ryan's Story**, a powerful bullying and suicide prevention presentation that has reached over 1 million students across the United States, Canada, and Latin America since 2005.

The Story Behind the Message

In 2003, John Halligan lost his 13-year-old son, Ryan, to suicide following experiences with bullying and cyberbullying. Rather than let tragedy define his family's legacy, John transformed his grief into a mission to prevent other families from experiencing similar loss. What began as advocacy for Vermont's groundbreaking Bully Prevention Law (ACT 117, 2004) and mandatory suicide prevention education law (ACT 114, 2006) has evolved into a nationwide movement reaching over 2,500 schools.

What Makes This Presentation Different

Unlike clinical or statistical approaches to bullying prevention, Ryan's Story offers:

- **Authentic storytelling** from a father's perspective, sharing the unfiltered reality of what happened to Ryan
- **Emotional connection** that creates lasting impact through vulnerability and honesty
- **Focus on forgiveness, healing, and prevention** rather than blame
- **Practical guidance** on kindness, accountability, empathy, and transforming bystanders into upstanders
- **Age-appropriate content** suitable for grades 5-12, universally relevant across all grade levels

Core Messages Your Child Will Hear

The 60-minute presentation emphasizes:

- The profound impact of words and actions, both online and in person
- The responsibility we all share to create safe, supportive communities
- The transformative power of kindness and compassion
- The potential devastation of hurtful words and actions on-line
- The importance of speaking up and seeking help
- That every student is "loved beyond belief"

Alignment with Best Practices

Ryan's Story aligns with guidelines from: - Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) - American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) - National Association of School Psychologists (NASP)

Proven Impact

Schools report measurable shifts in student behavior and culture following the presentation. Former students—some 10-16 years later—have reached out to share how Ryan's Story changed or even saved their lives. The presentation's power lies in its authenticity: this is not a hypothetical scenario but a real family's experience, told with raw emotional honesty balanced by hope and practical guidance.

Supporting Your Child

Your school will provide supplementary materials, discussion guides, and worksheets to help students process the core messages. School counselors and mental health staff will be present during the assembly and available afterward to support any students who need to talk.

As a parent, you can: - Ask your child what they learned and how the presentation made them feel - Reinforce the message that they can always come to you with concerns about bullying, mental health, or peer struggles - Discuss the importance of being an upstander rather than a bystander - Review warning signs of depression or suicidal thoughts together - Remind your child that seeking help is a sign of strength, not weakness

About John Halligan

John has appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, *Primetime with Diane Sawyer*, and PBS *Frontline*. He spoke at the United Nations Cyberhate Seminar (2009) and has received the FBI Director's Community Service Award and The Learning Channel Give a Little Award. He has published two books about Ryan's story and continues to dedicate his life to preventing bullying and suicide.

Additional Resources

For more information, discussion guides, and supplementary materials, visit:
https://www.ryanpatrickhalligan.org/documents-for-schools

For questions about the presentation, contact:
John Halligan
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This presentation is part of your school's commitment to creating a safe, supportive, and compassionate learning environment for all students.