



Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Community Partnerships & Well-Being

August 28, 2019

Dear Members of the School Committee,

I am writing with an update regarding the proposed Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) that was shared with you at the School Committee Workshop on Tuesday, August 20th. That original memo is enclosed for your reference. The following is in response to your questions and inquiries.

Background

At the meeting on 8/20/19, you listened to the proposal that further outlined the mindfulness efforts in which we hope to engage with MDI during this school year. The purpose of this memo is to provide an update regarding the items we discussed during our initial conversation.

Action Steps

- The Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) was reviewed by all parties, including our school district's attorney and the attorney engaged by MDI. Included in your packet is the final copy of the MOA.
- I am in the process of checking references at the Middlesex School and St. Andrew's School in Austin, Texas in order to learn of their level of satisfaction with the mindfulness director programs in place at those institutions. Thus far, comments from school personnel have been very positive, describing MDI's mindfulness programming as "supportive and responsive to the needs of students, staff, and community members." One reference shared, "Anecdotal data suggests that students have an increased ability to observe and engage in ways that allow them to be more objective and less judgmental of themselves and others." Another noted, "While there are alarming rates of mental health needs throughout society, our students are better equipped to understand the principles of mindfulness; better able to notice what is happening around them; and make better choices with how they respond to those challenges as they arise." For additional information regarding these two schools' mindfulness programs, see [this link](#) and [this link](#).
- Mr. Collins and I requested that MDI share their funding sources and learned that MDI has one major private donor (individual), and several potential individual donors, who include parents of students at the Middlesex School. At this point, they are in the early phase of sponsorships and do not have major corporation donors. MDI's grassroots effort is expected to expand more broadly at the beginning of this school year.

Recommendation

As we discussed at the workshop, the Shrewsbury High School administration is in full support of engaging MDI to try out how this kind of programming could benefit our students, staff, and parents.

I ask for your support for the MDI and wholeheartedly recommend that SPS participates in this initial one-year program offering that can explore its promise and potential at no cost to our district. It is innovative and responsive to the needs of many in our school communities. Shrewsbury Public Schools will be the first public school system to participate in such an exciting, cutting edge endeavor. The risks are low and the potential benefits are high. If you approve this one-year trial, we will closely monitor its implementation and evaluate its impact and report back to you in the early spring with a recommendation of whether to continue beyond this initial period.

Thank you for your time and attention.