



Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Community Partnerships & Well-Being

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Dear Members of the School Committee,

The purpose of this memo is to update you on the purpose of the proposed Mindfulness Director partnership between the Shrewsbury Public Schools and the Mindfulness Director Initiative, based at the Middlesex School in Concord, Massachusetts. MDI's mission is to support schools of all types – public and private, urban and rural, well-funded and under-resourced – in bringing mindfulness to children, teens, and school communities throughout the United States. This partnership would be their first with a public school, after two successful initiatives with private schools in Massachusetts and Texas. I strongly believe that this partnership will further support our district's *strategic priorities and goals*, as well as SPS's *Portrait of a Graduate*, in the following ways:

- *Enhanced Well-Being of All*
 - Create a common understanding of the benefits of the skills, habits, and mindsets of social and emotional learning and develop a shared, systematic approach to explicitly teach, integrate, and assess these competencies
 - Ensure that all staff actively participate in professional development focused on the skills, habits, and mindsets of social and emotional learning that improve students' learning, resilience, and focus
 - Improve support systems and resources to enhance the well-being of students and staff
- SPS's *Portrait of a Graduate* specifically identifies the important of resilience and focus with the ability to:
 - Persevere to accomplish difficult tasks and to overcome academic and personal barriers to meet goals
 - Work effectively in a climate of ambiguity and changing priorities
 - Employ strategies to maintain personal wellness, focus, and intention in their lives

The MDI facilitator would be a contractor working for MDI, whose work would be jointly overseen by SPS and MDI. We are in the process of working on a Memorandum of Understanding between SPS and MDI that the School Committee would be asked to approve as soon as your 9/5/19 meeting, should you wish us to pursue this opportunity, and after review by legal counsel. MDI will fully fund the MDI facilitator position for duration of the 2019-2020 school year. The effectiveness of the program will continually be assessed throughout the school year; MDI is working with the University of Pittsburgh and Brown University on a possible assessment model. By April 2020, both parties would determine whether to continue the partnership; if it continues, a funding agreement would be proposed to determine our level of potential future financial contribution.

The MDI facilitator would offer opportunities to learn about and practice mindfulness with the ultimate goal of comprehensively integrating mindfulness practices with interested members of the school community, including students, staff, faculty, and families. These opportunities would take place

before, during, and after the school day. Research on mindfulness suggests an increase in concentration, emotional regulation, self-acceptance, social skills, care for others, self-esteem, quality of sleep, executive functioning, and well-being. Similarly, mindfulness has been credited with decreasing performance anxiety, ADHD behaviors, emotional anxiety, negative emotions, and depression.

This possible partnership has been vetted with Shrewsbury High School administrators, who are very enthusiastic about the possibility of moving forward. I look forward to speaking with you further regarding this opportunity, and am happy to answer any questions that you have. Thank you for your consideration.