



# Shrewsbury Public Schools

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Assistant Superintendent  
Community Partnerships & Well-Being

December 12, 2019

Dear Members of the Shrewsbury School Committee,

I am writing to update you regarding the current partnership between the Mindfulness Director Initiative (MDI) and the Shrewsbury Public Schools. This memo and accompanying slide deck are intended to provide you with initial results of collected data and other pertinent information regarding student, staff, parent, and community programming through MDI since September, 2019. I look forward to sharing more with you in person at the upcoming School Committee meeting on Wednesday, December 18<sup>th</sup>. At that time, I will be joined by co-presenters including Mr. Todd Bazydlo, SHS Principal, Mr. Marc Waxman, Co-founder of the Mindfulness Director Initiative, and Mr. James Frank, Mindfulness Director.

## **Background**

At the School Committee meeting on 9/4/19, you listened to a presentation by Mr. Todd Bazydlo and me that outlined the mindfulness efforts in which we sought to engage with MDI during this school year, and the rationale for this programming. Since that time, the Mindfulness Director Initiative, and specifically, Mr. James Frank, has supported interested students, staff, families and community members with the practice of mindfulness by offering a diverse set of optional offerings, opportunities, and supports, fulfilling and surpassing the initial goals of the collaboration between with Mindfulness Director Initiative and the Shrewsbury Public Schools.

## **Action Steps Completed:**

Since the start of the school year, the MDI/SHS Collaboration has allowed for:

- 8-week Mindfulness Courses attended by approximately 10 staff, 15 students, and 50 parents:
- Professional development provided to SHS staff as well as the Shrewsbury District Media team, Beal Early Childhood Center, Information Technology staff, and Sherwood Middle School staff
- Regular meetings with AP and Honors Biology classes to offer basic mindfulness practices
- Support for Studio Art classes: Mindfulness and Free-Drawing as an exercise in stress-reduction and creativity
- Support for AP and Creative Writing English and Junior Honors English classes: Introduction to Mindfulness
- Individual sessions with senior English: Mindfulness and Games
- Support for music classes: World Drumming and Mindfulness
- 3-session mindfulness class for music department: Performance Anxiety
- Consultation with Health classes: Stress-Reduction and Mindfulness Practices
- Support for individual teachers with strengthening their own mindfulness practice

MDI and Shrewsbury High School coordinated an assessment of the 8-week Mindfulness Courses that have been offered. The research protocol was designed and implemented by, and results prepared in collaboration with, Sarah Hopkins, MS, Class of 2010 Shrewsbury alumna. Sarah is a third-year doctoral graduate student, studying clinical psychology in PhD program at Suffolk University. Her research areas and experiences include the following:

- The impact of social relational and group processes on social and emotional adjustment in youth and college students
- Current clinical training at Boston University's Center for Anxiety and Related Disorders (CARD)
- Graduate lecturer specializing in undergraduate general psychology

The research questions asked of participants in who engaged in mindfulness programming over the past several weeks focused on three areas:

1. Satisfaction with the Mindfulness Program
2. Participant Expectations
3. Program Helpfulness

I am pleased to report that results were overwhelmingly positive in all three areas, as indicated below:

- 100% of students, 87% of parents, and 86% of staff reported being satisfied with their experience participating in the Mindfulness Program
- Of those students, parents, and staff who were satisfied with their experience, 84% reported being very satisfied with the experience
- Across all student, parent, and staff participants, the average level of satisfaction endorsed was 4.53 out of 5.

Additionally, Mr. Frank engaged the entire SHS community during an Advisory period, at which time students and all faculty were invited to participate in the practice being offered. A survey was provided to the SHS community following this experience. Results of the survey will also be shared during the 12/18 School Committee meeting.

#### **Overall themes**

- The program was found to be useful, applicable to daily life
- Participants endorsed mindfulness as a powerful tool, when practiced
- General positivity towards experience

#### **Anecdotes**

- "It's helped me to be less stressed in particular situations" - student
- "I'm really glad the school is trying it. It has been helpful" - student
- "I think it is a very important course that teaches critical coping skills for life. I think it works well when teaching students how to be aware/accepting of their thoughts and emotions" - student
- "This program is an apt and necessary addition to our community" – staff member

#### **Future Directions for Continued Assessment:**

- Mental health, wellbeing variables
  - Perceived stress across domains
  - Individual and group-level cohesion
  - Sense of belonging

- Mindfulness-related factors
  - Self-awareness
  - Present-moment focus
- Academic factors
  - Multitasking, attention, concentration
- Change in psychosocial variables
- Key components *of social-emotional learning*

I look forward to continuing our conversation on December 18<sup>th</sup>.

Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

Jane O. Lizotte