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Miriam Underwood
Michael Young

January 2020

A Message to Connecticut Legislators from the Ellington Board of Education

The Ellington Board of Education recognizes the immense challenge legislators face in representing a diverse set of stakeholders with varied interests. Therefore, we endeavor to be part of the solution and demonstrate that ten Board Members of different political parties are able to work together to develop a legislative platform for your consideration.

The Ellington Board of Education has unanimously approved this letter outlining one legislative priority.

Student Safety and Well-Being – Regionally Creative Programming

The safety and well-being of students remain the top concern of all educators. Mental health and behavioral issues present challenges for all students to access equitable learning opportunities. School districts that work in isolation fail to leverage regionally available expertise and resources that are financially and programmatically sound and effective.

Currently, the Ellington Public Schools run an off-site 18-21 age post-secondary program coupled with alternative and expulsion social-emotional health learning opportunities. This creative programming meets the diverse needs of Ellington students and students from surrounding school districts. The programming is self-funding primarily due to low cost tuition rates charged to sending districts that financially benefit them as well.

However, as a medium sized district (2700 students), Ellington's program services a relatively small number of students and is currently unable to meet the demand for additional Ellington and other school districts' students. The challenge to scale up this regional programming lies in startup costs and facility availability.

Limited statewide funding incentives for creative social-emotional health and learning has had a negative impact on the ability of school districts to build or expand upon regional programs that are sustainable.

Recommendation:

- The Ellington Public Schools endorse voluntary, competitive and incentive based state grant funding for creative, high quality social-emotional health and learning regional programming. The grant funding would prioritize initial startup costs for sustainable programming that would reduce the special education financial burden to the State of Connecticut and local education agencies.

Please do not hesitate to contact any of us should we be able to offer assistance with your work in this very important upcoming legislative session.

Sincerely,

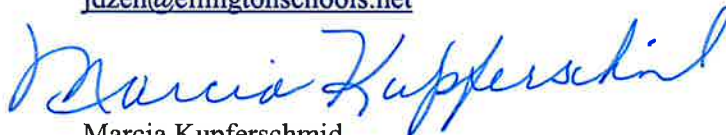
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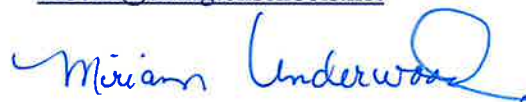
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