

# Memorial Middle School

A Proud Tradition Of Excellence



120 Wescott Road, South Portland, Maine 04106 | 207-773-5629 | FAX 207-772-4597

**Megan Welter**  
*Principal*  
207-773-5629 x3405  
[welterme@spsd.org](mailto:welterme@spsd.org)

**Steve Chabot**  
*Assistant Principal*  
207-773-5629 x3406  
[chabotst@spsd.org](mailto:chabotst@spsd.org)

March 28, 2016

Charlie Richardson  
Kieve-Wavus  
Leadership School Director  
Nobleboro, Maine

Dear Mr. Richardson,

In fall, 2009, Memorial Middle School sent its first class of 6<sup>th</sup> graders to the Leadership School at Camp Kieve for a 4-night and 5-day residential adventure. We asked the parents of our newest students to make a leap of faith and to trust us and the staff at the Leadership School to care for their children in this time away from home so early in the school year. Memorial Middle School first decided to send our students to TLS because our 6<sup>th</sup> grade class was coming together from 5 elementary schools all over the city and we sought to build a community of learners early in their middle school career. We believed the core values and messages taught at TLS were most closely aligned with our vision for our school community. Our students' experiences and the community that has come together in 2009 and each year since then more than surpassed all of our expectations.

The Memorial Middle School community as well as the larger South Portland community recognize the value of our partnership with TLS and Kieve and have supported our continuing collaboration. Not only have we seen the benefit from our participation in the fall residential program at The Leadership School, but we have also benefited from the experience of having an educator in residence here at Memorial for each of the last four years. For the last two years, our EIR, Will Hackett, has devoted more than 3 months to our students and our school, working as a full-time staff member.

Will was one of the educators working with our 6<sup>th</sup> graders during their time at the Leadership School. In that time, he established rapport with them and made many connections. Students viewed him as a fair and friendly adult whose behaviors and interactions with them could always be characterized as kind and respectful (our shared motto). Upon his arrival at Memorial, students (and staff) swarmed Will in hopes that he would come to their classes to lead activities or help in their classrooms.

We knew how important it would be to establish a clear plan for Will to use his time as our educator in residence most effectively. Prior to his arrival, we assessed the needs in our school. Though Memorial is a relatively small middle school with an enrollment of 415 students, our multi-lingual student population has grown significantly over the last few years. Many of our multi-lingual students have arrived at Memorial in the last 18 months and few were able to attend the residential experience at the Leadership School. For this reason, Will's primary placement at Memorial was with this group of students, supporting their English-language instruction while also introducing them to the lessons of collaboration, teamwork and treating one another with kindness and respect.

Will collaborated with the teachers in these classrooms to plan a number of different team-building activities, successfully building a community characterized by mutual respect and concern for one another. In addition to improving upon their teamworking skills, Will also worked with students in their classes and after school. The exceptional rapport between Will and the students allowed Will to hold high expectations for the students; they

trusted him and knew that he would work with them to achieve the myriad challenges they set for themselves – academically and socially. Will worked with staff at Memorial and the Leadership School to arrange for the students in our multi-lingual program to visit Camp Kieve for a day in March. The students arrived to school early and took a bus to Nobleboro where they were able to see for themselves what it was like to participate in group challenges and climb in the gorgeous rock gym on the spectacular Kieve-Wavus campus. The students returned to Memorial a little tired but absolutely beaming as they told stories of all they did at Camp Kieve. Students are still talking about their experience there even after all of this time.


Will's involvement in the Memorial Middle School community was not limited to working with our multi-lingual students. Will joined different advisory groups each week to lead Kieve "refresher" activities, stressing the importance of processing these different challenges because, as Will says, "without processing, it's just a game." Will supervised students on Memorial's modest rock wall, reminding all of our students of the meaning of "challenge by choice." Recognizing the benefit of having our students participate in activities that would help them remember the lessons from the Leadership School, Will planned a Kieve Refresher Day for our 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> graders, focusing on LEAD STAR and how to behave with kindness and respect. These activities yielded valuable learning not only for our students but for our teachers, as well. As a result of the Kieve Refresher Day, teachers and students report increased use of LEADSTAR cuing as a way to improve our communication in classes, during assemblies and with one another.

Will has made a lasting impression on our staff and our students. Those with whom Will worked said that he was "an adult who was so supportive of me – no matter what." They said that he was easy to talk to, funny, nice and caring. The students also told us that Will was someone who "brought us all together as a group of kids." These reflections remind us how important it is to slow down and be present for our students. The nature of the educator in residence position allows us to devote a highly skilled adult to our students for the sole purpose of connecting with and supporting them in the moment.



Without question, Memorial has benefited not only from our partnership with the Leadership School, but we have also benefited greatly from our time with Will. The presence of an educator in residence has been a daily reminder of the lessons we learned at Kieve – the learning we aim to put into practice every day. We are grateful for the partnership with Kieve and we recognize the many benefits we enjoy as a result of this partnership; the greatest benefit has been the improved sense of community and the shared values established during our time at the Leadership School.

With my sincerest gratitude,



Megan Welter

**RSU #20**  
***Searsport District Middle/High School***

"Navigating for the Future"  
24 Mortland Road  
Searsport, ME 04974

(207)548-2313 - Main Office  
(207)548-2354 - Fax  
(207)548-2315 - Guidance  
(207)548-2476 - Fax

**Chris Downing**, Principal/Superintendent  
**John Williamson**, Dean of Students  
**Leana Seekins**, Office Admin. Assistant  
**Emma Barrett**, Secretary

**Carol Fuller**, HS Guidance Counselor  
**Judy Cohen**, Student Assistance Counselor  
**Courtney Eastman**, Elem/MS Counselor  
**Christine Guerette**, Guidance Admin. Assistant

February 22, 2016

Charlie Richardson  
Kieve-Wavus  
Leadership School Director  
Nobleboro Maine

Dear Mr. Richardson,

Searsport District Middle and High School has had an ongoing relationship with Kieve-Wavus since the early 1990's. For over 2 decades we have benefited from the experiential education that the Leadership school has provided to our Middle and High School. In recent years we have expanded that relationship to include the Educator in Residence Program. I feel moved at this point in time to inform you of the full value of the experiential programing that Kieve-Wavus has provided us over the years.

This is the third year that we have had the privilege of having an educator in residence here at Searsport Middle/High School. This program is an excellent addition to our regular 3 day 2 night 8<sup>th</sup> grade program held at Kieve and our 2 day outreach immersion sophomore awareness program all 10<sup>th</sup> graders experience. I would like to communicate to you what the EIR (this year it's Brian Sperry) brings to our school and how it benefits our school, our students, our faculty, and our community.

First let me say that SDM/HS is a small school in midcoast Maine that has a high percentage of free and reduced lunch students. It is an economically challenged rural community fraught with issues of poverty, addiction, incarceration, broken and dysfunctional families, teen pregnancy, and poor parenting. So our students live in a needy environment. Young people are hungry for real human connection that encourages participation, fun, challenge, teamwork and success. This is what the Kieve-Wavus programs on campus and off campus provide to our students. . . The opportunity to be part of something that helps them understand and expand their inner selves while being part of a group trying to accomplish something together. It allows people to tap into their best selves, to express their leadership, to be part of something bigger than themselves.

This year Brian Sperry has been an amazing addition to our school. His talents for engaging and relating to young people in Middle and High School is in the extraordinary range. Brian brings his authentic self to our school and is involved in numerous endeavors and projects. He has reactivated, expanded, and grown a small High school/Middle school mentor/mentee program tripling it's

participants while providing ongoing contact and feed back to mentors and mentees. As he became familiar with our student body Brian easily approaches youngsters that seem to need a mentor and matches them up with an older student that seems to be a good fit. Brian spent time recruiting, training, and having ongoing conversations with mentors and mentees. He knows when to report on a situation that may be dangerous and keeps a close tab on the mentors making certain they let him know if there are worries with their young person.

Brian is organized, prepared, self initiating and has made himself available to the whole middle/high school. Brian has a rather busy schedule and is leading many advisory activities in grades 6-12. Also doing some mentoring and tutoring to several older teens some of whom have difficult negative behaviors. Brian is making a difference with all the students he works with. He not only is working with the middle and high school students. . . he is also leading interactive activities with staff during faculty meetings and working in the after school program as well. I have received rave reviews about Brian's ability and efficacy in all areas of his work. Having an educator in residence expands and improves on the accomplishments of our goals at SDM/HS. It is sad that Brian needs to leave at the end of March. He quickly assimilated into our milieu, gave it his all, and so he will be greatly missed not only by students but by faculty and by me. The EIR position is much like that of a farmer. . . He plants the seeds of positive participation, cultivates what he can, and leaves his seeds to grow independently into their personal best.

To summarize I would say that Kieve-Wavus provides us with essential enrichment, improved relational skills, insight awareness, and positive influence all wrapped in fun activities, interesting challenges, and personal growth experiences. It seems the combination of the philosophy of Kieve combined with the personal talents of it's educators provides us with a winning combination. The students look forward to working with Kieve-Wavus both at school and off campus in Nobleboro.

I would like to officially thank you for the many years of collaboration and service you have provided to our school. There is no doubt in my mind that our student body and faculty have been positively influenced by connecting with the programs Kieve-Wavus has given us. I would also like to shout out a huge thank you for the flexibility regarding funding during this rather dry, desperate, season of budgets that are never enough.

Working with you over the years has made me a better person and I believe our school community a better more accepting place where young people's hopes and dreams are held in high regard and all people are valued.

I thank you on behalf of our students, our school, and our community.

Best Regards and Gratitude,



Judy Cohen LMSW  
student assistance/ social worker  
548-2315 guidance office  
322-2247 Cell

cc: Chris Downing, principal/superintendent  
Brian Sperry