

Martha's Vineyard Public Schools

*Excellence and Equity For All Children
Equal Opportunity Employer*

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Region IX Education Cooperative
143 El Paso Road
Ruidoso, NM 88345

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To Whom It May Concern,

On behalf of Martha's Vineyard Public Schools (MVPS), it is with great enthusiasm that I offer this letter to the Region IX Education Cooperative in support of A LONG TALK'S application to provide the cooperative with Anti-Racism-Anti-Oppression facilitation and training. MVPS has had the great pleasure and experience of working with Kyle Williams and his staff from A LONG TALK, in their support of our school staff, school children, and entire school community. In a relatively short period of time, A LONG TALK has become an important part of the Island school community, leading the way in bringing awareness and training in Anti-Racism-Anti-Oppression through their activation exercises and instructional programming. A LONG TALK has worked directly with school staff, students, administration, school committee members, and community leaders, all of which has been and will continue to be of great benefit to the children of MVPS.

When writing about Kyle Williams, Chief Empowerment Officer of A LONG TALK, and his staff, the first thing that comes to mind is the quality of each person. Kyle and his team members have tremendous integrity and compassion for their work. Kyle has built a trust with our MVPS staff and students with whom he has worked. Over the past 18 months, the Martha's Vineyard Public Schools has been fortunate to work in partnership with A LONG TALK in their efforts to coordinate a well-integrated system of programming in our schools that has supported the emotional welfare, social awareness, and education achievements of our students. A LONG TALK's work in our schools has been the product of their direct collaboration with MVPS staff and students in the context of a "no judgment zone" learning environment, where our staff and students are met where they are. A LONG TALK has emphasized with our staff an introspection, empathy, and information approach to Anti-Racism-Anti-Oppression.

A LONG TALK's members have worked with administrators, instructional staff, and students of each MVPS school on the island through our participation in the Community Conversation Activation Exercise. At that level, MVPS participants engaged in 3 – 90 minute sessions of A Long Talk About the Uncomfortable Truth antiracism activation exercise that led to us

“Unpacking our Truth”, “Finding our Voice”, and “Activating our Activism”. The Community Conversation also provided MVPS with inspiration to prioritize social justice in our schools and provided tangible tools that could be utilized immediately such as the 3I Protocol and strategic planning.

Other work with A LONG TALK has involved sessions on awareness by exploring bias in curriculum, media/literature, and communities in which racism may go unrecognized.

MVPS is currently contracting with A LONG TALK through the DESE FC 231 FY2021: Leading Educational Access Project (LEAP) grant for Culturally Responsive Leadership Practice designed to improve outcomes for all students especially, the most vulnerable, inclusive of students of low-income families, English Language Learners, students of color, and students with disabilities.

A LONG TALK’s areas of focus in MVPS includes:

- Developing educator skills and techniques for interrupting bias and supporting student achievement and educational equity;
- Increasing engagement of educators in self-exploration and reflection on personal attitudes, beliefs, and assumptions regarding cultural proficiency, equity, and anti-bias education;
- Creating a more culturally responsive school/district environment inclusive of families and community partners; and
- Building leader/coach and/or teacher capacity to lead a school/district to be more culturally responsive.

A LONG TALK’s consulting responsibilities are rooted in values of student equity, sharing best practices among staff, and a growth mindset in regards to children and staff. Great schools benefit from members who embrace a culture and environment in which everyone who is invested in some manner with the school becomes a steward of that school, establishing a guiding principle in which a genuine positive regard for all pervades the buildings. Kyle Williams and his team from A LONG TALK have committed themselves to our schools and have become stewards of our schools and the children within them.

I am sure your school community will benefit in a transformational manner from your partnership with A LONG TALK as has ours. Please let me know if I might explain further the vast support that A LONG TALK has afforded the children of the Martha’s Vineyard Public Schools. Thank you and please let me know how I might advocate further for A LONG TALK.

Sincerely,



Richard M. Smith, Ed.D.
Assistant Superintendent
Martha’s Vineyard Public Schools