

Good evening,

For nearly a year we have all been living through a collective trauma together. We have lost so much normalcy, so many day to day routines, and comforts of everyday life. Many of us have lost family members and friends, and lacked customary mourning rituals. We were thrown in, we had to pivot and adapt in so many ways, so quickly ... and for so long. We have been expected to sift through incomplete, contradictory or confusing advice from various agencies and officials. Expected to make sense out of all that ever changing information, alongside our anxiousness as we try to inch towards more normal tomorrows. In our exhaustion, our hurt, so much of this has turned political, and divisive - nationally, and locally. It's led us to appear to be at war with each other. Our two towns are suffering, and deeply divided over what is happening in the school district.

We know that no one has been perfect. How could any of us be? All stakeholders are experiencing undo levels of stress. To add, we've literally had the nation's eyes on our towns in the last few weeks. What **we** strongly believe is that when you peel back the anger and the suffering, everyone's intentions are to do what is right by the children in this town.

Presently, we are facing unprecedented crises all converging at the same time. To meet this moment, it will require radical new thinking, acceptance, collaboration and teamwork. We live in a new reality and we are fortunate enough to have a community of diverse experiences and experts at our fingertips, ready, willing and able to support. We can work collectively, to get through this, stronger than ever, together as a community.

In kind, we have formed the SOMA Community Alliance for Education. Our mission is to partner with parents, community members, the Board of Education, administrators and teachers to promote and support a solutions-oriented, collaborative and transparent problem solving framework that recognizes, and centers around the best interests of the community. We want to engage all stakeholders who are invested in our community to rally around our schools. We want to extend a hand of good faith and restore trust in each other. We appreciate the opportunities we have already had to engage with folks in the community, and have been energized by how this message and mission have resonated.

We also know there are many key players who we have not yet formally introduced ourselves to - we are working as quickly as we can, these are not oversights we assure you. We are looking to collaborate and strengthen the voices of all. We are excited to support our district, our community, and most importantly the children of SOMA as the Alliance moves forward with positive intentions, and collective actions.

Currently, we are focused on building out our team, as well as hitting the ground running. Here are some current areas of need from our vantage point:

1. **Supporting a comprehensive safety plan to provide in-school learning opportunities, especially for highest risk students.** Special services were providing related services, and some self-contained classrooms and evaluations in-person prior to implementation of district-wide hybrid learning. We would like to work with SEPAC, Dr. Alegria, Dr. Taylor and the board to ensure those services are restored as soon as possible, and support communication that is timely and well distributed. Additionally, to provide improved COVID-19 safety plans, we support **testing, and teacher vaccinations.**
 - a. As educators ourselves, we value the incredible efforts of our teachers, paras, service providers, janitors, and all other personnel that make schools run smoothly. We want them to return confidently, feeling safe and valued, as they should.
 - b. We are promoting testing for teachers and school personnel. For example, there is a company called Back to Work Solutions who we have met with -- they provide testing services for staff, students and families on a weekly or as needed basis.
 - c. We are strongly encouraging teacher vaccination through letter writing, and are considering additional actions and organizing around this effort.
2. **Understanding and supporting current facilities needs,** projected timelines for the LRFP, and supporting dissemination to the community.
3. Ensuring that priority exists around mental health and social emotional supports for our students during this time, regardless of instruction type.
4. **Connecting with the entire community to ensure our group represents the educational wants and needs of all of SOMA.**
5. **Sponsoring at least one community town hall** focused on understanding the issues that stakeholders are facing, and potentially another with experts and their recommendations.
6. **Creating workgroups and subcommittees that align with the district's goals** to form easy bridges for communication between district leaders and community leaders.
7. **Dissemination and frequent, transparent communication.** Communication is paramount to success. Our goal is to ensure ease of access of necessary and timely information. We also want to provide the community with a trusted source that will follow up for clarifications or more information when needed. These goals will ease the current burden on the district to focus on execution of many tasks, while restoring trust within the community. In talking with many leaders, we can already see how much action is happening, and how the time to communicate can be so limited. We aspire to change that and open those lines of communication.

We believe these goals, among many others we have in mind, will lessen the burden facing the district during unparalleled crises, restore trust between all invested parties, and inspire our community to move forward with a positive lens towards a better and brighter future.

We are still working on developing a website, and for now, our community members can follow us on Facebook by searching for SOMA Community Alliance for Education, on Instagram @soma_communityalliancefored, or email us directly at EducationAllianceSOMA@gmail.com.

Thank you and looking forward to partnering with all of you.

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