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Dear Principals,

At the July Board meeting, a high school student raised concerns regarding a transcendental meditation (TM) program taking place at the school, indicating that she and many other students were not comfortable with a segment of the program that she described as a ceremony that she believed to be religious in nature. The TM programming was being provided by the David Lynch Foundation (DLF) through a "Quiet Time" program in connection with a CPS research agreement with the University of Chicago Urban Labs at multiple CPS high schools (Gage Park, Bogan, Hale Williams, Bowen, Percy Julian and formerly at TEAM Englewood). In addition, Telpochcalli Elementary School has been working independently with DLF on Quiet Time program outside of the Urban Labs study.

Since the July Board meeting, the Chief of College & Career Success, along with members of the Law Department met with DLF to obtain more information about the TM practice at the schools. DLF confirmed that the TM programming does include a ceremonial/ritual element at the beginning and DLF was not amenable to removing the ceremony component from their programming. Therefore, the Office of College and Career Success has made a programmatic decision to not continue the program with DLF. This decision has been communicated to DLF and we are working with your network chief to coordinate the pick-up on any program related furniture and materials from your school.

We did not take this decision lightly. Students will still be able to engage in optional, self-guided silent, reflective/meditation time. While the Office of College and Career Success has made a decision not to continue the program with DLF, we believe that quiet, reflective time or meditation programming is an important intervention tool within a broader package of SEL offerings. Based on University of Chicago Urban Labs' finding that Quiet Time significantly reduced violent arrests, as well as suggestive evidence that other meditation and mindfulness programs may confer a wider range of social-emotional and academic benefits, we hope to identify other promising programs in this domain.

Although the David Lynch Foundation will no longer operate the Quiet Time Program in CPS, we encourage you to continue to engage in structured quiet and/or silent reflection with students throughout the school day if you find it benefits your student population. In addition, we intend to issue a centralized solicitation for other potential mindfulness and/or meditation programs at some point in the future.

Please contact your network chief directly if you have any questions regarding this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Michael Deuser". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping tail on the final letter.

Michael Deuser, Ed.L.D.
Chief of College and Career Success
Chicago Public Schools