



MONTGOMERY COUNTY PUBLIC SCHOOLS
SILVER SPRING INTERNATIONAL MIDDLE SCHOOL
An IB World School



313 Wayne Avenue, Silver Spring, MD 20910 Phone: 240-740-2750 Fax: 301-562-5244

March 4, 2020

Dear MD Legislative Representatives,

When a 6th grade student locked herself in a bathroom stall, in significant emotional distress, the adults “in charge” were summoned to the restroom to ensure she wasn’t in danger. School administrators, security staff, and counselors all talked to her in calm, reassuring voices trying to coax her out of the bathroom, to no avail. When a student locks themselves out of view of the adults, we begin to consider all the “what ifs” that could happen which can include self-harm, or even suicide. In 2015, a middle school student took his life in a bathroom at another Silver Spring School. After about 45 minutes of attempting to get the child of the bathroom, our School Psychologist, Harriet Kuhn, arrived with her therapy dog, Kozy Girl. Kozy walked under the stall door, and immediately, the child in distress responded, and within minutes, opened the door so we could connect her with her parents, and ultimately, additional avenues for support. That incident demonstrated, without a doubt, the impact that a therapy dog can have on a school.

Kozy is truly a member of the Silver Spring International Middle School Community. She appears on the student produced morning news program regularly, and is widely known by the nearly 1,100 students at the school. Some students, particularly those with anxiety or depression, have regular sessions with Ms. Kuhn and Kozy, while others will have casual encounters in the hallways with the dog. The universal response is softening and calming of the child’s demeanor. With all of the challenges involved in being an adolescent today, having a therapy dog in school has become essential. I support all efforts to expand access to support animals in schools.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads 'Richard Solomon'.

Richard Solomon

Resource Counselor