

## **Executive Summary:**

**Proposal :** The Special Education Department with the support and cooperation of the Elementary and Secondary Education Departments proposes the purchase and implementation of the researched based “WhyTry” program for elementary and middle schools.

**Overview:** The WhyTry Program is a strength-based approach aimed at helping youth overcome their challenges. The program is directed at improving outcomes in three areas: truancy, behavior, and academics. Youth are taught social and emotional principles through a series of ten pictures with each one teaching a specific principle. The visuals are reinforced by music and physical activities.

**WhyTry in Elementary Schools -** One benefit of the WhyTry visual and hands-on approach is that the program can be easily adapted for different developmental levels. The program includes a set of simplified lesson plans and activities for use with elementary-age students. It is currently being used in hundreds of elementary schools and continues to gain popularity as an early intervention for helping children deal with the increasing challenges they face.

**WhyTry in Middle High School -** The WhyTry Program has proven to be highly effective at impacting negative student behavior in grades 6 through 8. Developmentally, middle students are in a transition stage. Anything that can be done to remediate and reinforce basic social and emotional skills at this developmental stage can pay dividends down the road. The WhyTry curriculum can be incorporated into an existing course, added as a new course, used for advisory periods, or even incorporated into homeroom. WhyTry is an engaging program that students look forward to and continue to talk about after the course ends.

**Actions to Date:** One administrator and a special education teacher have received extensive training for this program. The teacher has incorporated the training into work with middle level special education students at EMHS.

**Financial Implications:** Stimulus monies from the 2010-11 budget (IDEA and Title One) will support the purchase of this program.

**Recommendation:** That the Board of School Directors approves a budgetary expenditure not to exceed \$33,000 for the implementation of the WhyTry program in elementary and middle schools.