

Dear Dr. Price,

I was motivated to write to you tonight from the perspective of a long-term educator who has been advocating for the kind of educational goals that Central promotes in their day-to-day commitment in educating the whole child.

I just want to share with you my view of how valuable Central Academy's work is to not only the children and community they most directly serve, but to the larger educational community. My work has been about advocating for the full potential of children, to support their content learning through meaningful and socially-emotionally engaging work that prepares them to contribute to the larger good in society. As I teach this in my classes, my students often worry that while they value this effort, they believe in "real life," this is not possible. I was thrilled to find a school in Middletown that embraces and enacts this same mission. HOPE.

I have spent significant time at Central the past few semesters as I was facilitating EC Lit Block field students, and have observed that those involved in educating Central's children — teachers, administration, families, etc—*live* all of the core values Miami strives to instill in our students (especially those of embracing diversity, thinking critically, cultivating collaboration, building community, and creating knowledge.) The teachers at Central work as caring, competent and transformative educators.

Two of my former students are currently student teaching at Central and have discussed with me their experiences. On a recent visit, I observed a series of teachers' meetings—and witnessed the two student teachers taking *active* part in the discussions throughout. Another visitor told later that he was surprised when I introduced one of the student teachers as such. He said, "I thought she was one of the teachers here!" This clearly demonstrates the respect that student teachers are accorded at Central Academy.

During our EC debriefings post-field, the 6 students who had been placed at Central shared consistently positive comments regarding their experiences there—discussing the active participation of students, the positive relationships teacher-to-teacher, teacher-to-child, school/teacher-to-family/parents. They also discussed how welcome they felt and that their ideas and questions were respected and carefully considered in the context of the needs of the children in the classrooms in which they were placed. The other Miami students who were placed in other sites had multiple questions for these 6 students, and were

fascinated by the possibilities of Central's work with children.

One of those 6 students sent me an unsolicited email at the end of her first week reading only: "I love this school!!!" They have already expressed to me that *they* plan to request a placement at Central for student teaching.

NO other site in any district has had such an impact on our students as has Central. The teachers and administrator at Central *actively* seek collaboration with the university and Miami students— not to lighten their load but to enrich the teaching and learning experiences for all involved.

I have already met with Dianne Suiter and with the K-1 teachers to support projects the teachers and students have begun to expand their understanding of the elements of diversity as enriching their curriculum and pedagogy, and to support the curricular connections advancing social change and fostering a global perspective, as well as other aspects of the social and political component of teaching and learning.

Please allow me to thank you for supporting the work of Central Academy. I am so happy to have found this school. It's incredible.

Sheri

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