

September 11, 2020

To whom it may concern:

I am writing in support of charter renewal for Vincent Academy. I have served as Vincent's Turnaround Arts Regional Coach for the last two years, and am supporting the community there again this year in that role.

As coach, I have seen Vincent's staff and students take on strategically implementing the arts school-wide since 2018. I have so much respect and gratitude to the staff for committing to the hard and joyous work of building their skills, capacities, will and knowledge of arts integration and arts learning since we began.

Vincent's Arts Leadership Team (ALT) chose to plan for and carry our programming with the greatest and most sustainable impact on students via arts learning by prioritizing 1) building teacher capacity to teach through the arts and 2) using the arts to change culture and climate initially. Last year, they expanded their priorities to include 2) family and community engagement. They have strategically leveraged resources in and out of Turnaround Arts, winning several grants to augment our Turnaround Arts funding last year.

At Vincent I have witnessed the school faculty fully embrace arts strategies while connecting those strategies to their commitment to culturally responsive teaching in a short amount of time. The ALT have presented on their work as leaders who can pivot as a result of school shutdown/distance learning to the Turnaround Arts California network, and they have been flexible and creative, skills that artists embody every day, in their adapting to arts learning in this new structure. I've never seen a teaching staff more fully committed to using Visual Thinking Strategies (VTS) so well in their practice regularly – many use it daily – to support students' growth as critical thinkers well-practiced in engaging in detailed close-reads and close looking, while providing evidence for their ideas.

Partnerships with SPARC, San Francisco Opera, Cantare con Vivo, Beat the Odds, California Film Institute, and Destiny Arts reflect Vincent's ongoing embracing of culturally responsive and rigorous arts teaching and learning.

As a result, students at Vincent have skills, practiced and developed through arts learning, they are now bringing to new and rigorous academic and life challenges under COVID-19. They have strong, multi-year relationships with teachers and teaching artists to support them in this time of multiple challenges. Vincent students are experienced and caring audience appreciators of fellow students. They are self-aware, self-expressive performers and visual artists. They are seasoned critical thinkers about what is new and unfamiliar, thanks to using VTS regularly. They have relationships with an array of teaching artists who look like them and support them in tapping into their interests as they explore and refine their artistic and academic voice through writing, acting, singing, making visual art, dancing, and through talking about the artworks, writings, and films of artists who are both at the top of their craft and use their hearts to connect communities.

In education, we need to be reminded at times that true, sustainable growth takes time. Through committed, regular, caring practice, teachers and students at Vincent embody this and I look forward to supporting an even greater impact of the arts on students and families this year and going forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Liz Harvey", with a stylized flourish at the end.

Liz Harvey

Turnaround Arts Regional Coach