



TEENS, INC. Youth and Family Center www.teensinc.org
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To whom it may concern,

My name is Michael Wight and I am the Academic Coordinator for a small alternative high school named Chinook West. We are located in the small mountain town of Nederland, Colorado, and serve an average of 20 students per year. Chinook West is a unique partnership formed between the Boulder Valley School District and the Non-Profit, TEENS, Inc. The school program takes place within the TEENS, Inc facility, with teachers provided by the school district and my position provided by the Non-Profit.

The impetus for the inception of our school program was to provide an alternative for students that were not succeeding in the traditional system and to decrease the drop out rate at the high school level. Typically, the type of student we get is in a place where they are struggling with their schoolwork for a variety of social, emotional and family issues. Most of our students would be considered at-risk.

I am writing this letter in genuine support of the New Leaders Institute. New Leaders took the initiative to fundraise in order to provide our school program with a much-needed Leadership Workshop. TEENS, Inc and Chinook West both run on a shoestring budget and did not have the available resources to fundraise in the short amount of time for this important project. We are grateful for the effort that the New Leaders staff put forth to see our project through.

Not only do I immensely appreciate the motivation of this group to provide our students with this experience, but the organization required to carry out this process in an effective way with a challenging student group, should be duly noted as well.

The facilitators provided me with a detailed curriculum and answered my questions on a conference call, as well as becoming familiar with our student body and the intricacies of our program, well before flying in from various locations around the country. Upon arrival, I found the facilitators, Susan, Reuel, Kim, and Linda to be professional, flexible, empathetic and, most of all, excited.

As the week progressed, I saw a change in the way that our students related to each other, absorbed the different lessons, communicated, and respected the facilitators and fellow students. It all began a bit challenging with varying levels of interest, and by the end of the week, our students, who had previously been a rowdy bunch, were quietly listening to each other, stepping up with different ideas and comments and role-modeling proper respect!

The workshop culminated in students grouping up, choosing relevant projects and making a plan to carry them out along a specific timeline. The topics chosen include creating a youth mentoring program, repairing skateboard ramps, cleaning up a local picnic area and outreaching information about a dangerous new disease that has shown up in the area.

Even though the workshop is now complete, our students continue to proceed with their projects, and should see them to completion as well. I have noticed some tangible changes in the attitudes, communication, respect and general school community that would not have occurred without the generous commitment of the New Leaders facilitators.

Reuel, Susan, Linda, Kim and New Leaders Institute: Thank You! You have given our students and our school community a boost. We cannot show enough gratitude for all of your generosity and teachings. Thank you as well to all of those who anonymously donated to allow this workshop to take place, and to enrich the lives of youth you may never know. The students of Chinook West and the employees of TEENS, Inc. are very grateful for your services! I would highly recommend the New Leaders Institute to any school group and would be entirely willing to speak with anyone in person about the benefits of this program and to answer any questions I can about the workshop we received.

Sincerely,

Mike Wight

Academic Coordinator

Chinook West

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