



March 3, 2015

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of the Community Connectors proposal being submitted in partnership by the Graham Expeditionary Middle School (GEMS), the Graham Primary School (GPS), the Summit United Methodist Church, Donato's Pizza, and the Department of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University. As the Chair of Teaching and Learning, I have participated actively in the creation of the Columbus Community Teaching and Learning Center (CTLC), a partnership between OSU/T&L and GEMS/GPS. This site will provide a key nexus point for bringing together the critical learning and leadership resources available across these programs, providing an optimal environment for Columbus young people to receive mentoring and for OSU students to learn about and offer mentorship.

As an educator invested in the success of young people in Ohio schools, I value the opportunities afforded by this grant. I share your commitments to helping young people set goals, develop agency and character, embark on a path towards a positive future, and maintain resiliency along the way. And, as an OSU faculty member committed to preparing teachers who understand their place as role models and mentors, I see this as a prime learning opportunity for our students. I recognize how much OSU students have to learn from the Columbus community, and I see the CTLC as a site for our students to learn from and with community partners. I also believe, wholeheartedly, that our OSU students can play a key role as mentors to young people. Most of the students in our program have worked incredibly hard to reach OSU. They understand, experientially, how to forge a pathway towards success. Under the auspices of this grant, we aim to teach them, more explicitly, about mentoring relationships as part of teaching so that they can, then, develop these practices through their mentorship of young people in the CTLC. OSU students will serve as literacy tutors in the GEMS/GPS space. Concurrently, each OSU student will be paired with a particular student as a long-term mentor. OSU students engaged in this project will receive coaching and support in how to develop mentoring relationships, as well as engaging with current research on the importance of key factors such as resiliency (O'Connor, 1997), grit (Duckworth, Peterson, Matthews, and Kelly, 2007), and other non-cognitive skills (Tough, 2012). And, perhaps most importantly, as young college students, they will serve as embodied examples of how goal setting, perseverance, and optimism, among other things, can lead to a positive future.

Doing this work in partnership with the Summit United Methodist Church is also a key element of the work. As a Children's Defense Fund Freedom School site, the Summit community understands the role that political action and a critical understanding of social history play in giving students a sense of connectedness to the past, helping them develop resiliency and a



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deeper sense of human agency and academic motivation (O'Connor, 1997). This work, too, will inform the mentor/mentee relationships that are developed at the CTLC.

Again, it is my sincere pleasure to support this work through material and in-kind support and continued leadership and engagement in the CTLC. I have no doubt that it will have a powerful, positive impact on Columbus area young people.

Sincerely,

Caroline T. Clark, Ph.D.  
Professor and Chair