



UNIVERSITY OF
NOTRE DAME

College of Arts and Letters

Daniel Lapsley
ACE College Professor of Psychology
Senior Academic Advisor, Alliance for Catholic Education
danlapsley@nd.edu

DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY
390 Corbett Family Hall Notre Dame, Indiana 46556-1908 USA
tel (574) 631-6650 fax (574) 631-8883 web psychology.nd.edu

January 5, 2020

Mike Morath
Commissioner of Education
Texas Education Agency
1701 N. Congress Avenue
Austin, TX 78701

Re: Letter of Support for *7Cs Academy*

Dear Commissioner Morath:

I am delighted to write in strong support of the Gen 26 charter application of *7Cs Academy*. The conceptual framework that structures and animates the work of *7Cs Academy* is one the strongest I have seen, and my experience in the charter school sector goes back to my work as director of the Office of Charter School Research at Ball State University when Indiana first passed its enabling charter school law in the late 1990s.

I want to draw attention to several extraordinary features of the present application.

First, the Academy weaves a seamless strand between STEM-focused education and character education. To think of science education as a form of character education is remarkably prescient. At the very core of intellectual formation in science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) is a suite of intellectual and other character virtues that have wide ranging application beyond the classroom, as students prepare for lives as productive citizens in service to communities.

Second, the application outlines a detailed conceptual roadmap of how this integration of STEM-infused general and character education is to be accomplished. The tactical and strategic goals outlined in the conceptual framework are driven by well-attest scholarly literatures in the learning sciences and cognitive neuroscience. I want to draw a special attention to the triangle model that emphasizes the role of metacognitive instruction as a pedagogical objective. There is now a strong consensus that critical thinking, learning of all kind, and even the work of virtues, is metacognitive in nature, and that metacognition can be taught. Featuring metacognition in the conceptual framework is a most powerful component of the application.

Third, the emphasis on the social-emotional aspects of classroom and school life, the importance of school culture and sense of community, is highly salutary. Indeed, if we have learned anything about what makes schools work it is that it comes down to two things: 1) academic press and 2) caring classrooms that are experienced as a community. Indeed, it would

not be possible for a school to develop mastery of STEM subjects and also motivate growth in character virtues without attending to the social-emotional needs of students. This application accomplishes that dual task superbly.

Fourth, the leadership of 7Cs is superb. I have had numerous conversations with Dr. Nathan Balasubramanian about this application and I have come away deeply impressed by his experience and vision, by his energy and commitment, by his record of demonstrated success with the educational model that he brings to the Academy. He has pulled together a capable leadership team; and without exception, members of his advisory panel are prominent experts in education and character development who would not be easily recruited were it not for the excellence and promise of this application.

I do support the application with enthusiasm and without the slightest reservation. Indeed, I am confident that the Texas Education Agency will look back on the acceptance of this application with justifiable pride.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Daniel Lapsley". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Daniel Lapsley, Ph.D.
ACE College Professor