

November 24, 2020

City of Milwaukee
Steering and Rules Committee
City Hall
200 East Wells Street
Milwaukee, WI 53202

Dear Steering and Rules Committee:

Please accept this letter in support of Escuela Verde receiving their 5-year contract renewal. Escuela Verde is not only a high school, it is a community anchor dedicated to cultivating a more just, sustainable, and peaceful Milwaukee. Their unique model prepares students to become our state's next leaders by focusing on student-led project-based learning, environmental stewardship, restorative justice, and civic engagement.

I have been closely connected with Escuela Verde since 2013 when we moved to the Milwaukee area and started researching the highest quality education for our daughter. We had no idea what an incredible impact EV would have on our lives. I will first describe the impact of EV on our daughter and family, and then focus on the role of EV in the community as a pioneering educational model.

We fell in love with EV immediately upon her enrollment in seventh grade. EV fulfilled so many needs for our family. It was a caring, attentive, academically-challenging environment that prioritized the specific learning goals of my daughter. But EV also became a very supportive community for our family, and an important connection for us to get involved in the broader Milwaukee community through service and cultural events.

Skillful and caring advisors guided and encouraged her to stretch her comfort zone which allowed her to broaden her interests, progress academically, and engage in both the school and broader community in meaningful ways. Each year of her matriculation from grade seven through graduation, I could list a dozen such stretches where she was challenged and invited by advisors to discover and contribute her unique talents.

In seventh grade one advisor, Bethany, recognized Diya's blossoming writing skills and really called her to task to level up her composition skills. As the years progressed, Diya was challenged and nurtured to similarly develop her skills in other areas as well including serving as a student Circle Keeper, contributing to public art projects in school and in the community, and becoming thoughtfully engaged in social justice activism. The strong connections that advisors have to influential visionaries in the community provided amazing opportunities for Diya to learn, be mentored, and serve in Milwaukee.

The unique project-based approach of EV prepared Diya for life. As her mom, I give a lot of credit to EV for her current success in managing two jobs, a full class load, and active involvement in her academic community as a junior at UW-Milwaukee. She's politically literate and uses her talents to create the kind of world that I'm excited for her generation to lead.

As a long-term parent at Escuela Verde, I had multiple experiences of volunteering and working alongside staff over the years. The quality of staff and their commitment to the principles of sustainability, restorative justice, and justice is inspiring to witness first hand. It's not just an idealized pedagogy, it's lived, on-the-ground engagement that is transformative for their students. In one volunteer position serving on the Strategic Planning committee I had the opportunity to observe as this group worked hard to more deeply align the school's daily functioning with the school's mission. Having had such a perspective only deepened my appreciation for how 'baked in' are the values that are integral to the school's success. The thoughtfulness and deliberateness of delivering a high-quality, participative education is evident at every level and every interaction.

As a parent in the community I was gifted with opportunities to personally benefit from this dynamic, engaged community as well. It isn't just the students that are nurtured in the EV community. As families, we know we matter too. Parents groups, evening cultural and community programming, and networking with other social and environmental leaders in the community were all perks of participating in the EV community.

I enthusiastically support the continuation of Escuela Verde's mission. I look forward to speaking with you should you have additional questions about this recommendation.

Regards,



Brie Noble
Parent of Escuela Verde Alumna Diya Mark
speakpeace@gmail.com
(262) 720-8990