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March 21, 2018

To Whom it May Concern:

In my greater than 25 years in education I have been a part of the conversation looking to address the lack of diverse candidates in our teaching workforce. Being a part of the St. Paul Urban Teacher Residency (SUTR) Program these past two years and having the talent of Talisha Jackson become a part of our team at Murray Middle School as a special educator, has made me an advocate for this model in being a solution available to truly address this need in our urban district.

In the two years I have worked with Talisha Jackson, both as a SUTR resident and now as a special education teacher of learners with emotional and behavioral disorders, I have known her to exemplify what is needed in education today for connecting students with a love for learning. I have observed her classes where I have witnessed Talisha create excitement for learning through personalized approaches, strong relationships and various instructional practices always putting learners first. I have had multiple opportunities as principal to observe her and she consistently engages students with thoughtful awareness as to their needs as students with disabilities.

Ms. Talisha Jackson came to Murray as a SUTR resident having experience in schools in a role other than teaching. She brought with her an understanding of systems, learners and families that immediately starting benefitting our school, families and students. Her yearlong residency allowed her academic coursework to align directly with her daily experience in the school under the guide of an experienced mentor. This allowed for deeper understanding, instead of years in college learning theory to apply months or years later. Real time application of skills has provided us a teacher that I can confidently say demonstrates skills past a typical first year teacher. This is so much so, that I have recommended other teachers observe Ms. Jackson to learn her command of classroom management, routines, rituals and pedagogy. This is a rare position as a first year teacher.

I have been fortunate to be in a school that has hosted 6 residents, hired 2 and although I have highlighted the skills of only 1, I can confidently say that all the educators making it successfully through this program will have deep impact in our schools. I would love to answer any questions or have a conversation regarding the St Paul Urban Teacher Program. I cannot state strongly enough how this program is key in developing a strong and diversified workforce ready to impact learning in our schools.

Respectfully,

Stacy Theien-Collins