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The Commonwealth of Pennsylvania recognizes that children need more today than ever before. We lose our high-performing students to low expectations, quiet children to loud classrooms, and disruptive students to suspension. We lose our teachers to unrealistic testing expectations, limited tools, knowledge, and support for their professional growth.

I am writing to express my heartfelt testimony regarding the exceptional holistic approach to children adopted by Charter School, a model deeply rooted in Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs. As an educator, parent, and advocate for quality education, I have witnessed firsthand the transformative impact this approach has had on the well-being and development of students across the Commonwealth in our charter schools.

Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs provides a fundamental framework that recognizes individuals' diverse and interconnected needs of children. Charter Schools have embraced this philosophy by creating a nurturing environment that prioritizes fulfilling children's needs, which include physiological needs(food, air, water, shelter, and clothes), safety needs(personal security, employment, resources, health, and property), love and belonging (friendship, family, and sense of connection), esteem(respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, and freedom), and self-actualization(desire to become the most one can be).

Charter School goes beyond conventional educational practices by recognizing the importance of social connections and a sense of belonging in students' lives. The School encourages positive relationships among students, teachers, and parents by fostering a community-oriented environment. From their conception, charter schools have had diverse students needing innovative approaches to ensure students' success in all areas, including academically, behaviorally, and socially/emotionally. Remember, "You can't teach them until you reach them."

Childhood aces, or Adverse Childhood Experiences, refer to traumatic events or circumstances children may encounter during their formative years. These experiences can include abuse, neglect, household dysfunction, or other stressful events that may have a lasting impact on a child's physical and mental health. Childhood Aces have been extensively studied, and research suggests a strong correlation between the number of adverse experiences and a range of negative outcomes later in life, such as mental health issues, substance abuse, and chronic diseases. Recognizing and addressing childhood aces is crucial for promoting healthy development and breaking the cycle of adversity that can persist across generations. It underscores the importance of creating supportive environments for children to thrive emotionally and physically.

Due to various factors, teacher preparation programs must often adequately equip educators for today's classrooms. One key challenge is the rapidly evolving education landscape, driven by technological advancements, changes in student demographics, and developing teaching methodologies. Many teacher preparation programs need help to keep pace with these dynamic shifts, leading to a misalignment between the skills teachers acquire during their training and the demands of contemporary classrooms. Additionally, there is growing recognition that practical classroom experience is as crucial as theoretical knowledge, and some programs may need more hands-on training opportunities. Furthermore, the emphasis on standardized testing and compliance requirements can overshadow the development of critical skills such as adaptability, cultural competence, and effective communication, leaving teachers ill-prepared to address the diverse needs of today's students.

In the last two years, I have visited 70 of our charter schools, and I want to share a few examples of schools that are getting it right for our children. Charter Schools Processes and Programs based on Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs:

Students Physiological Needs Met through:

Lincoln Charter School York, Pennsylvania:

Lincoln Charter Schools in York, PA, are renowned for their commitment to providing students with a well-rounded education, and this dedication extends to their food service programs. LCS participates in all feeding programs, including CEP (Community Eligibility Program), breakfast and lunch program, fresh fruit program, and At-Risk site serving snacks and dinner. Recognizing the importance of nutrition in students' overall well-being and academic performance, Lincoln Charter Schools have implemented comprehensive and nutritious food services utilizing the MyPlate and 4H curricula. LCS Wellness program goes beyond healthy eating to include two recesses daily, partnership in building Hope Street Learning Lab, and community activism by participating in National Walk to School Day and National Bike to School Day. Importance of communal meals and healthy eating habits. Through their food service initiatives, Lincoln Charter Schools aims to create an educational atmosphere that nurtures academic excellence and their student's overall health and wellness. LCS fed over 500 individual students on the first school day of the pandemic when every other School in York was closed down. LCS took food service on the road during the pandemic, feeding their students in the city and county.

Charter Schools Offer:

Breakfast in Classroom

Second Chance Breakfast

Lunch

Snack

Dinner Programs

Bookbag Feeding Program for Weekends

Mobile feeding Programs

Clothing Closets for Uniforms and Leisurewear

Allow students to take regular water and toilet breaks if in person.

Provide breaks for food - and offer nutritious snacking options.

Ensure adequate lighting and ventilation.

Monitor temperature so that students do not feel too hot or cold.

Safety and Security:

Executive Education Academy Charter School Allentown, Pennsylvania

Executive Education Academy Charter School holds morning and afternoon student meetings to foster a dynamic and engaging learning environment. These meetings serve as valuable forums for students to come together, discuss important matters, and receive updates on school activities. During the morning meetings, students can kickstart their day with announcements, inspirational messages, and pertinent information that sets the tone for a productive learning experience. In the afternoon meetings, students can reflect on their day, share achievements, and collaborate on projects. These gatherings contribute to effective communication within the school community and promote unity and shared purpose among Executive Education Academy Charter School students.

Life Male STEAM Academy Charter School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

The LIFE Male STEAM Academy SMART® Student Health and Wellness Clinic is a vital component of the academy's commitment to fostering the overall well-being of its students. This state-of-the-art clinic is designed to provide comprehensive healthcare services, ensuring students can access high-quality medical care and support. The acronym SMART® reflects the clinic's focus on Student Medical Access, Resources, and Treatment, emphasizing its dedication to addressing the diverse health needs of male students in the fields of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts, and Mathematics (STEAM). Staffed by qualified healthcare professionals, the clinic offers medical treatments and promotes preventive care and wellness programs, contributing to the holistic development of students within the academy. The LIFE Male STEAM Academy SMART Student Health and Wellness Clinic is crucial in creating a supportive and thriving educational environment focusing on physical and mental health.

Charter Schools Offer:

Staffed trained and assigned to students' arrival, looking for any signs of trauma

Grade-level morning and afternoon meetings.

Parent Surveys

Advanced security systems allow the building to be locked down from the outside and inside out. They allow community use of the building evenings and weekends while securing all classrooms safely.

Local community members staff behavioral support teams.

Wellness Centers treat the whole family.

Health screenings include dental, eye, and health.

Enact well-defined routines in your classes.

Set forth well-defined rules and procedures and **communicate them to the students**.

Follow the rules and routines **consistently**.

Cultivate an environment that allows for healthy discussion and non-judgmental conversation.

Monitor the environment of your class to identify and prevent bullying.

Love and Belonging:

Bear Creek Community Charter School, Bear Creek, Pennsylvania

Bear Creek Community Charter School in Bear Creek, Pennsylvania, prioritizes and values parent engagement as a crucial component of the overall educational experience. The School recognizes that parental involvement is vital to a student's academic success and personal development. To foster strong connections between parents and the school community, Bear Creek Community Charter School regularly organizes events, workshops, and meetings to encourage parents to participate actively in their children's education. Whether through parent-teacher conferences, volunteer opportunities, or informational sessions, the School strives to create an inclusive and supportive environment where parents feel empowered and informed. By promoting open communication and collaboration between educators and parents, Bear Creek Community Charter School aims to enhance each student's educational journey and strengthen the sense of community within the School.

Global Leadership Academy Charter School, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

Global Leadership Academy Charter School in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, offers enriching worldwide trips to its students, fostering a global perspective and cultural awareness. These international excursions are transformative experiences, allowing students to explore diverse cultures, histories, and landscapes beyond their local surroundings. Whether engaging with historical landmarks, participating in community service projects, or immersing themselves in the traditions of different countries, these trips aim to broaden students' horizons and instill a sense of global citizenship. The School's commitment to international education goes beyond the classroom, as these trips become integral in shaping well-rounded individuals prepared to navigate an interconnected world.

Charter Schools Offer:

Uniforms

Family and community events at the School.

There is an open-door policy for all parents.

Home visits

Phone calls home

After School Clubs

Establish ground rules about being respectful towards one another.

Create a sense of teamwork by engaging students in team-building and bonding activities.

Encourage group work and other inclusive learning techniques.

Make conscious seating arrangements and groups. Place students where they can be best supported and aided.

Self-Esteem:

Seven Generation Charter School, Allentown, Pennsylvania

Seven Generation Charter School in Allentown, Pennsylvania, strongly emphasizes fostering student self-esteem as an integral part of their educational philosophy.

The School recognizes that a positive self-image is crucial for academic success and personal development. Through innovative teaching methods, mentorship programs, and a supportive learning environment, Seven Generation Charter School actively instills confidence and self-worth in its students. By nurturing individual strengths and providing opportunities for self-expression, the School aims to empower students to navigate challenges with resilience and develop a lifelong love for learning. This focus on student self-esteem aligns with the School's commitment to holistic education, ensuring that students excel academically and emerge as confident and well-rounded individuals prepared for the future.

Provident Charter School, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Provident Charter School, located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is committed to providing comprehensive academic support to its students. Recognizing the diverse learning needs of its student body, the School employs a range of educational strategies to ensure academic success. The dedicated faculty at Provident Charter School implements individualized support programs, including tutoring sessions, peer mentoring, and after-school programs. These initiatives aim to reinforce classroom learning, address specific academic challenges, and foster a positive and inclusive learning environment. Provident Charter School strives to empower its students with

the skills and knowledge needed for future success in their academic endeavors by offering tailored academic support.

Charter Schools Offer:

Core Values

Student Support Services

Guidance Counselor

Social Workers

EL Support

Special Education

MTSS

Counselors

Show your students that their efforts and hard work are noticed and appreciated. Provide powerful affirmative feedback.

Create opportunities for students to share positive feedback with their peers.

Encourage students to participate in competitions, extracurricular activities, and events.

Self-Actualization:

Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship, located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, is renowned for its innovative approach to education with a strong emphasis on fostering entrepreneurial skills among its students. The School's entrepreneurial system is designed to instill a mindset of creativity, problem-solving, and initiative from an early age. Students are exposed to real-world scenarios, allowing them to develop business acumen and a keen understanding of the entrepreneurial process. The curriculum integrates practical experiences, such as creating and managing projects, which empowers students to think critically and develop the skills necessary for success in the ever-evolving landscape of entrepreneurship. Penn Hills Charter School of Entrepreneurship stands as a beacon for cultivating a new generation of forward-thinking individuals prepared to navigate the challenges of the business world with confidence and resilience.

City High Charter School

Twenty years ago, we researched cutting-edge schools across the country to find the perfect mix of best practices with one goal: to graduate students ready for life. Our curriculum for grades 9-12 is rigorous and relevant to the modern world. Furthermore, career-mapping, workforce skills literacy and mentored internships ensure our students graduate tech-savvy, college and career ready. Today, this unique educational model continues to prove itself. With free* laptops, year-round classes, a low student/teacher ratio, and focus on college and career readiness, City High averages a 94% graduation rate – across all demographic groups.

Charter Schools Offer:

Students Specific Area of Study

Students feel the Joy of Learning

Students can be All You Can Be

Students are achieving goals set by their schools in partnership with the students.

Joint Values among students, staff, and parents.

Students Feeling Peaceful and Safe at School

Students having friends in School

Students are making a positive difference in their community.

Students Experience joy, happiness, and love regularly.

Students Developing a Strong Sense Of Self-Acceptance

Peer Coaching

Leadership Oppurnitiues