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TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN:

Mrs. Amy Purcell is the middle school guidance counselor at First Philadelphia Preparatory Charter School. Mrs. Purcell has been with First Philadelphia since 2006 and has been a driving force in developing the program that exists today at a school that went from serving 700 students to 1880 students. She is a dynamic, organized, dedicated individual who makes student benefit the focal point of the counseling program's vision, goals, and decisions.

Mrs. Purcell is a pinnacle member of the First Philadelphia staff. She was the original, sole member of the middle school counseling staff when the school grew from an elementary school to a middle school and began to serve grades K to 8. Now the school has a K to 12 counseling team of six staff members. Mrs. Purcell has been pivotal in creating the vision for meeting the needs of students and planning for the expansion of staff and programming. This team works collaboratively and effectively together. They facilitate book studies to expand their expertise. They attend a variety of trainings and professional developments. Mrs. Purcell is a driving force in ensuring that the team is always growing, implementing best practices, and trained to meet the ever-changing needs of our students.

First Philadelphia serves a high-needs urban population of students. Mrs. Purcell is a first responder in crisis. She is gifted in de-escalating students. She is proactive in helping students to avoid crisis with alternative outlets and strategies. She is always the "solid object," remaining calm and in control in all situations. She shows students respect, asks open-ended non-judgmental questions, has a calming presence, and knows each student individually. She refers students to crisis treatment, acts as a liaison with behavior health agencies, supports families, and provides counseling. She is willing to go above and beyond for the students she serves. She keeps excellent documentation, is extremely collaborative, communicates effectively, and ensures the safety and well-being of all students and staff. She runs groups for anger management, bereavement, bullying, socialization, response to trauma, and more. She also provides individual counseling using relevant books, games, activities, and role play. She is always researching new material for her groups and sessions. She engages students and ensures they can take what they learn and generalize it in other settings. Mrs. Purcell also pushes-in to classes when needed to ensure students can effectively use the tools that they are learning. In addition, she models for teachers how to support students in using their tools. Mrs. Purcell read and began implementing Impact Counseling. Students are quickly led to achieving the goals of the session to ensure they can spend the majority of their time in the classroom focused on learning. She also has been part of the team that spear-headed the implementation of a school-wide social and emotional screener, known as the BESS.

She uses the screening data to ensure that students in the highest tier are properly labeled and supported. She also ensures that those in the next tier are getting the intervention and supports needed so that their needs will not intensify and begin to impede their learning. She is forward-thinking and always working to incorporate new processes and practices that will benefit our students.

Mrs. Purcell served as the school-wide leader for the No Excuses University initiative. This initiative is a foundation to getting students driven to a future that includes education and career. Mrs. Purcell assesses and surveys community needs, trains teachers, and provides on-going support. She has written social and emotional learning curriculum and lesson plans for teachers to follow. This role makes her an integral member of the administrative team. She is a highly respected leader within the school community. Mrs. Purcell has built strong relationships with staff. Staff members are very open to hearing her feedback and often seek her help when they have difficulty reaching particular students. She observes in classrooms and gives teachers guidance on how to create routines, provide praise, state expectations, and meet the extremely varied needs of the students before them.

Mrs. Purcell is an invaluable member of the First Philly family. I highly recommend Mrs. Purcell to your program. Her expertise is vast and she is anxious to share this knowledge with others, but she is also always looking for opportunities to grow and learn more. She has an incredible work ethic and her dedication to the school community is unwavering. She is collaborative, works extraordinarily well with others, leads by example, and is organized and efficient. Her role at the school is tremendous and she manages it flawlessly. The students and staff are lucky to have Mrs. Purcell. I hope you will also be fortunate enough to have her as a member of your community. Please feel free to contact me for any further information at 215-868-0092.

Sincerely Yours,


Kristine Magargee
Director of Pupil Services
American Paradigm Schools