



August 25th 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

Letter of Reference for Mr. Jesse Lewis III

It is my pleasure to write this letter on behalf of Mr. Lewis who was one of our most highly effective and game-changing math teacher-leaders at Pride Academy for the past 7 years. During his time here at Pride Academy, Mr. Lewis generously shared and amplified his many talents as an educator, motivational speaker, and advocate for youth agency and empowerment.

In my role as Principal, I have known Mr. Lewis to be a reflective, professional and caring educator who was eager and excited to implement new teaching and management strategies, and to critique his performance in order to hone his skills and serve his students in the best ways possible, as well as to sustain his own professional growth. Mr. Lewis always held high expectations for himself as a professional, and was committed to understanding and developing ways to accommodate his students' academic, social, cultural and emotional needs and learning styles.

Mr. Lewis was open to listening to and incorporating feedback even as he grew in his level of expertise and confidence in his practice. He was able to articulate ideas and perspectives that might not always have been the most popular with strength, grace, humility and respect for others and other's goals and priorities. With his unrelenting focus and energy, he became an instrumental teacher-leader in our school's evolution to becoming more culturally responsive, relevant, and successful in partnering with our students, parents and our wider community.

Mr. Lewis has always carried himself in a highly professional manner in his communication, dress, and interactions with all stakeholders in our school community. He is not only a highly effective teacher, but he is also an enthusiastic and voracious learner. He is mission-driven and results-oriented. I have only ever experienced actions and words from him that are ethical, respectful and grounded in principles of social justice and service that are at the heart of the our school community and that deeply matter to me as a leader, educator, and parent.

Over the course of Mr. Lewis' seven years at Pride Academy, I observed him in the classroom three times on an annual basis and countless informal walkthroughs. I enjoyed being in his classroom and witnessing learning that was vibrant, interesting and rigorous. I always left knowing that his scholars had learned something important and enjoyed themselves in the creative acts of making meaning, solving problems, and thinking critically. I was also witness to his memorable culturally relevant and riveting presentations to our entire school community that informed, motivated and inspired our scholars and teachers to connect to their goals, establish and follow pathways of success, and shape character and purpose with integrity and creativity.

A few years ago, Mr. Lewis shared with me his dream of launching and marketing an enterprise that would allow him to inspire and educate many more children and many more of their teachers in New Jersey and beyond! A few weeks ago, as we commenced our Staff Orientation, I was immensely proud to introduce him to our 2017-2018 Faculty as our Key Note Speaker and Presenter, and truly moved by his presentation entitled, **Classroom Vacation, Facilitating a Low-Stress Student Centered Learning Environment**. Overwhelmingly, our veteran and novice teachers were captivated and inspired by both the content and the ways in which Mr. Lewis engaged them in hands-on, fun, highly effective instructional practices that

they can adopt and readily adapt to their classrooms starting this week. Our mission is focused on empowering our scholars to become self-reliant, creative college and career ready citizens and leaders. Mr. Lewis provided a diverse repertoire of strategies and mindsets that will support our work and contribute to alleviating the very real stressors that our teachers experience as they dedicate themselves to building our school community. I know this repertoire of highly effective practices will make a difference because I have seen it in practice in Mr. Lewis' classroom and I have celebrated his scholars' results for the past 7 years!

Our entire school community misses Mr. Lewis as a teacher-leader on our staff and his Pride family will always wish him the very best of success. We look forward to continued collaboration and partnership with him as he develops his learning and public speaking consultation services and transforms classrooms and schools around the country.

Without any reservation, I highly recommend Mr. Lewis for your consideration in any capacity that you can engage him with the certainty that he will make a difference to your school community and leave you with tools and mindsets that will equip those fortunate to encounter him as they continue to amplify their skills and innovate, create, elevate, and strengthen your program and faculties.

Respectfully submitted,

Mrs. Fiona Thomas,
Principal, Pride Academy Charter School