

February 14, 2020

Dear Mr. Finn,

I am one of the librarians at McMahon Elementary and earlier this week our school had the opportunity to have Coach Chris White, as well as local legend Coach Whittaker, come to host a soccer clinic for our 4th, 5th and 6th graders. Upon sitting through their sessions and learning about this incredible program, I was deeply impressed with the approaches and affects of the After-School Soccer Leadership Academy. Coach White has shaped this program to take a cohesively inclusive initiative that focuses on building self-confidence, self-discipline and pro-social skills in addition to soccer experience. His ambitions and goals through this multifaceted design guide our students to be more successful socially, academically, emotionally and physically.

After the soccer clinic presentation at school, my co-worker encouraged me to attend one of the after-school sessions to support our students that participate, as it means a lot to them to have a teacher that cares present. I did not hesitate to show up that evening and was blown away with what I experienced. Several of our students that, in the past, have struggled with major behavioral issues in class were in attendance. It was incredible to see the transformation in attitude and behavior (that I believe are a direct reflection of Coach White's methodologies) which has attributed to their social-emotional growth. They start each session off with a quick check-in survey that communicates how their overall day has been and what they personally struggled with. Another wonderful aspect of the academy are the routine mindful breathing exercises which give the kids 5 minutes of peaceful thinking time through guided meditation, which studies have shown are immensely beneficial to psychological health and development (and in my opinion would also be an ideal addition to our daily curriculum in school as well). Before breaking off into smaller groups to work on skills, Coach White does a "mindful minute" where he focuses on a new life-skills topic each week to hone in on that the kids can implement and utilize both in sports and in their day-to-day challenges. This week's topic was patience. It was so touching to experience each kid at the end (during "exit tickets") give an example of one thing they encountered that exemplified patience or impatience and then high five it off to the next teammate to share their experiences too. This program offers the kids a safe place to communicate their challenges, and to find effective and positive ways to work through them, all while having a blast playing the game.

Growing up I was a serious athlete, participating in competitive figure skating, horseback riding, ice hockey and soccer. I am also the daughter of a former pro-hockey player-turned ice arena manager, so needless to say I was around sports quite consistently. When reflecting upon my own experiences with coaches and how they helped to shape the character and drive that I have today, there are few whose approaches and ideologies are as well rounded and impactful as those of Coach White with his kids. His program goes far beyond the typical "basic-skills set" approach that many sports programs inherently inhibit and instead encourages our students to not just be great athletes, but great human beings as well. He is incredibly patient with the kids and interacts with them with the utmost respect, and in return is given that respect back tenfold. He engages with the kids in a calm yet encouraging manor that provides them security and ownership of themselves and their own potential. This program is a fundamental asset to this community and I would love to see it grow! Down the line, having a girls league would be a phenomenal extension to this already stellar program too. I implore you to look further into Coach White's Academy and please help bring community awareness to the benefits of the After-School Soccer Leadership Academy and extend any fundraising support available to help this program grow and thrive for our kids!

Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions and thank you for taking the time to consider helping to further develop this amazing program.

Warmest Wishes,

*Kaitlin Kennedy Globensky*