

March 2nd, 2014

To Whom it may Concern,

My name is Floyd Cephas Jr., a program manager for Propel Schools. I have been tasked with directing a program titled "Project H.O.P.E." during the 2013-2014 school year. The goals of this program are centered on supporting African-American male youth into becoming good students and productive community members by enhancing their self-awareness and shaping a positive identity. Along that path to self-awareness, where students struggle to face their perceived weaknesses while being encouraged to enrich their strengths, there must be opportunities to speak frankly about some of the precipitating factors that challenge our young men. I was extremely fortunate to have been introduced to Ms. Ways and her exclusive programming, Words by Ways. Ms. Ways' dynamic experience as a credentialed social worker and established theatre producer/director provided the perfect avenue to safely sparking these types of discussions with students.

Ms. Ways and her talented team facilitated 5 workshops over the course of three months for our Project H.O.P.E. program. The "To Hug a T.H.U.G. (To Help Unleash Greatness)" workshop catalyzed some powerful discussions both during and following each event. The day long workshop reached roughly 150 students from 9 schools. In response to the workshop, students asked for more content like this because they felt that it gave them strategies to deal with the real obstacles that emerge in home and community life. This of course is very empowering to us as mentors working with these boys in small groups; Ms. Ways and her team helped students' talents and feelings emerge in a manner that gave us at Propel Schools/Project H.O.P.E. a deeper understanding of how we can support them in being successful.

Thank you for considering my impressions of this programming and the professional and talented group that was caring enough to create it.

Take care,

Floyd Cephas Jr.
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