



Burns Elementary Middle School
14350 Terry Street Detroit, Michigan 48227 Ph. 313 852-0534
Cynthia Clayton, Principal Stacey Daniels, Assistant Principal
#BandedTogether



January 13, 2021

Dear MACUL Innovative District Award Committee:

It is my pleasure to write a letter in support of the Detroit Public School Community District (DPSCD) application that is being submitted for the MACUL Innovative District Award. I serve the principal of Burns Elementary in Detroit. Like many schools in Detroit, when the pandemic hit, most of my students did not have access to devices at home. Although my staff was able to touch base with 100% of our students when we shifted to online learning in March 2020, we realized that only about 40% of our students were able to log on. We knew that something dramatic needed to change if our district was going to continue to offer online learning.

That's why I am so grateful for Connected Futures. Over 95% of Burns staff volunteered to support device deployment, and the staff who were unable to participate with deployment called our families to make sure that they knew when and where to pick up their devices. I am proud to say that Burns deployed devices to 100% of our students within two days.

Going to an online environment has pushed my staff to be innovative with their teaching and student engagement. With an open and can-do attitude, we've adopted new learning apps, executed drop-in observations, and adapted our curriculum for the online environment. Families have had to adjust to these changes, too.

In fact, many of our families struggled with the transition. Thankfully, they've been able to turn to the Technology and Family Resource Hubs. Without these supports, many of our students would have been completely cut off from school. With the new resource hubs, we've seen our attendance jump up as families get assistance with logging on and navigating our learning apps. This has all been supported by central office staff, so my teachers and school support staff can focus on teaching and culture and climate at Burns.

Everyone says it. 2020 has been a year like no other, but the DPSCD family has come together to support our families and staff the best ways we know how – by being there for each other, by listening, and by giving our time, expertise, and kindness. We are seeing positive outcomes. Students who were once shy about sharing out and speaking now use chat or other tools to type in their response. Through this initiative, we have been able to engage students that we may have otherwise missed without technology.

The sheer ambition of Connected Futures – deploying devices to approximately 50,000 students – and the 360-degree support provided by the District through the Technology and Family Resource Hubs called upon each and every staff member to step up, and we did it. We are delivering.

I fully support the efforts of the District as they seek this award. Despite the challenges presented by the pandemic, the District has shown that our community can and will rise!

Sincerely,

Cynthia Clayton

Cynthia Clayton (Jan 13, 2021 12:15 EST)

Cynthia Clayton
Principal
Burns Elementary-Middle School
Detroit Public Schools Community District