



Hollis Innovation Academy
225 James P. Brawley Drive NW • Atlanta, GA 30314

May 25, 2019

Dear Sir or Madame:

I am writing to nominate Dr. Diamond Ford for the Silverberg Leadership Award. As Principal of Michael R. Hollis Innovation Academy, Dr. Ford intentionally focuses on engaging the broader community around an inspirational vision of student success rooted in EL Education's three dimensions of student achievement.

Under Dr. Ford's leadership, Hollis has developed a strong, consistent, and innovative partnerships program that supports the overall mission and vision of the school. In addition, partner initiatives align with EL core practices and the school's EL work plan. Dr. Ford innovatively created a Partnerships Manager position that is responsible for building community partnerships (corporate, nonprofit, and post-secondary) that will identify and attract resources to achieve school goals and priorities. The Hollis partnerships program focuses on engaging organizations through volunteerism and planning collaborative initiatives or through providing place based wraparound services.

Mastery of Knowledge and Skills

At Hollis, students are taught to communicate clearly, write, speak, and present ideas effectively in a variety of media within and across disciplines. Sixth and seventh grade students participate in bi-annual Communication Days that include being paired with a mentor that assists them with setting and tracking their goals toward improving their communication skills from the beginning of the year to the end of the year using the Hollis Habit Tracker. Dr. Ford's Principal's Advisory Council also participated in a series of communication-focused workshops that culminated with a student media project entitled "Why Hollis?".

Character

Supporting students in the development of relational character traits has been the foundation for growth and success at Hollis. Our community partners have been integral in helping our students become effective learners, and develop the mindsets and skills for success in college, career, and life. Through the partnerships program, students have had several experiences with college students from Spelman College, including after school clubs such as Math Masters and Girl PWR. Students have visited the campus for different fine arts events, tours, and STEM workshops. Hollis robotics club students were supported by corporate volunteers from NCR Corporation throughout their competition season. This initiative culminated with students visiting NCR headquarters, taking a tour of the facilities, and speaking with STEM professionals at their workplace. Students reported being able to see how design thinking and the Hollis habits were important to the role of an engineer. Furthermore, each year, Hollis

participates in STEM Day, a collaboration between staff members and NCR leaders to bring innovative and real world artifacts, projects and experiences to the every student.

Partners also support service learning at Hollis. For the past three years Hollis students and staff organized the Great Day of Service in collaboration with the members of Peachtree Road United Methodist Church. This day of service included projects that supported student initiatives at the school including the Garden Club and Drama Club. This year, 7th grade students led a campus cleanup project that aligned with the service learning component of their expedition. Lastly, our school participated in its first “A Better World Day” in May 2019 that focused on each students participating in activities that recognized the efforts of community organizations that work in our school neighborhood and community. Volunteers from our partner organizations assisted in the classrooms and learned more about EL and its dimensions of student achievement.

High Quality Student Work

CEISMC at Georgia Tech has been a multi-year partner of our school. Dr. Ford has been working consistently with CEISMC leadership to create an Expeditionary STEM program that is robust and qualifies Hollis for state STEM certification. Based on the state rubric, partnerships with both business and post-secondary institutions are needed in order to build the capacity of the staff. CEISMC provides 2-4 Innovators-in-Residence that are professionals with expertise in engineering, computer science and art to support teachers in designing tasks that ask students to apply, analyze, evaluate, and create as part of their work. These Innovators-in-Residence meet weekly with our STEM team to plan and develop projects that integrate complex work and connect to real world issues.

I hope that you agree that Dr. Ford’s leadership has allowed for the creation of a growing partnership program that is sustainable through annual Hollis traditions. Her communication and leadership makes partners feel engaged and her strategic planning makes their work impactful and meaningful. Without hesitation, I nominate Dr. Ford for this award.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "U. Dubose". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letter of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Upenda Dubose
Partnerships Program Manager
Hollis Innovation Academy