

April 21, 2020

Dear Students, Families and Staff of CEC Early College,

The mission of CEC aligns with my moral imperative; A focus on building and sustaining human capital to ensure current and future success. As an educator with more than 18 years of experience in a variety of roles from paraprofessional to school leader, I've learned one universal truth. Relationships, above all else, define a school's culture. It's no secret that in high performing urban schools, every person who walks through the doors, be they staff, student, or family, believe that they are valued, respected, safe, and comfortable.

As the next leader of your school, I commit to tirelessly coaching and promoting collective efficacy to ensure CEC continues to develop as a high performing urban school. Collective efficacy includes the belief that no matter your race, ethnicity, income, gender, orientation, background, disability, or demographic, every one of us can and will achieve. Together we are better learners, leaders, and collaborators. It's a commitment that requires collaboration from every stakeholder. So that 100% of the students at CEC Early College are prepared for success, and life beyond their public school education, we will:

- Challenge the rules and replace them with unwavering expectations;
- Commit to experiential learning;
- Celebrate failure, risk-taking, and the resulting success.

These principles define who I am as a leader and how I approach leading my school community. The CEC experience is defined by experiential learning. The concept that through practical hands-on learning, we are guaranteed to make mistakes, learn, and grow from them, is inherent in the model. I'm seeking an innovative program that desires and inspires top-quality leadership and aligns with my professional vision and mission, where a clear focus on experiential, project based learning, and the creative industries is the focus. I can't think of a more perfect fit for my skill set and pedagogical philosophy than CEC Early College.

My experiences in both California and Colorado have offered me the unique opportunity to lead, teach, and learn amongst a highly diverse population from expansive cultural, social, and linguistic backgrounds. I continue to evolve in my equity work through self-reflection and developing resiliency. I'm learning to navigate my privilege, speak truth to it, confront bias, and support the voice of those populations who have traditionally been marginalized. I have discovered that empathic inquiry is a best practice for determining people's needs. Whether it's in support of staff students or families, I am not afraid to ask questions, to seek advisement and to listen, listen, and then listen some more. Equity work is emotional work and requires a great deal of trust and vulnerability. Implementing process checks, constantly assessing blind spots, personal learning, and knowing that this work is never 'done' are just a few ways that I, as your leader, plan to ensure we move toward disrupting and dismantling systemic educational oppression.

As a classroom teacher, I learned that high-quality leaders are learning leaders. As the learning leader at CEC, I commit to being present in classrooms, providing ongoing coaching and feedback to instructors that is focused on student learning. As an educator who believes in data driven instruction, I know data is more than a survey or an assessment score. Data should act as a compass for learning rather than a summative report of status. As a learning leader, it falls to me to ask, "What is best for student learning?" and to coach staff towards answering that question by offering differentiated, adaptive support. Like students, there are rarely two educators who need the same thing provided by a singular method of delivery. Just as we design individualized learning for students, I'm prepared to offer that to our staff.

I am a vulnerable leader, collectively engaging all stakeholders in decision making, planning, and the development of the school's focus, knowing that at the end of the day, I am responsible for the outcomes. Having spent many years in the classroom, I understand how joyful and challenging the work is. Great staff and teachers are critical assets. Valuing their capital and investing in them is crucial in developing outstanding school culture and performance. I am confident that CEC is the program where I will serve as a visionary leader, partner in learning, and as a collaborative engineer developing scholars who are empowered to be successful and poised to choose the life they wish to lead. As your future school leader, I promise to be the model for a disruptive educational experience where every member of our community sees themselves as a visionary leader, partner in learning, and a collaborative engineer.

In partnership,

Cori Herbst