



John M. Smyth IB World School
1059 W. 13th Street
Chicago, Illinois 60608
Phone: 773 534-7180 Fax: 773 534-7127

Ronald Whitmore, Ed.D.
Principal

Adonia Donnella
Assistant Principal

October 26, 2016

Dear Mr. Hart,

This letter is in response to your request that I provide professional feedback and assessment of two episodes of a children's television series "Saved by The Bell". Your request was that I provide feedback as to whether both episodes were age appropriate and support the interest, and educational needs of students between the ages of 13 to 16.

Both episodes were very informative and artfully spoke to the age appropriate educational interests of the aforementioned age range of students. Both episodes speak to social justice, while offering suggestions to students for practical application in real life situations. One episode addressed peer pressure, fan culture and the reality of the influence of drugs in social settings. The second episode addressed acceptance, inclusion and social interaction with students with disabilities. Both episodes address issues of sensitivity, compassion, empathy, respect, and understanding. The episodes are relevant for high school students because they address issues students are faced with daily and can be utilized as opportunities for deeper provocation in discussion with students. Embedded in these episodes are the realities teens are facing daily when making decisions to stand up for what they know is right, while having their moral compass challenged or to show what real acceptance looks like when interacting with differences.

The first episode in my opinion, focused on the strength teens possess to say NO to the influence of drugs. Moreover, the first episode does an artful job in its depiction of how teens can succumb to their perceived perception of celebrity status or power. The episode strategically placed students in a situation where they are enthralled by a peer who happens to be a teen heart throb that has come to their High School to make a video that supports the importance of saying NO to drugs. Zack and his friends are further seduced when they are asked to star in the video. The students along with the Principal are seduced by the idea as well as by their perception of this teen star and agree to participate. Unbeknownst to Zack and his friends, the teen star is experimenting with drugs. The crux of the episode

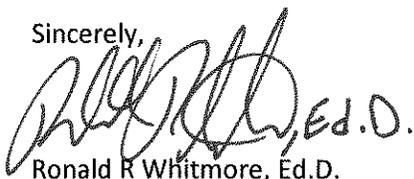
is that once Zack finds out, he and his peers pool together and take a public stand and turn their back on the video and the teen heart throb. The episode ends with Zack and his peers giving a public service announcement that reinforcing that saying No to drugs is cool. The episode was masterful in communicating and connecting the reality teens in 2016 are facing daily with drugs.

The second episode confronted the reality of having a disability. In the episode students manned a "Teen Hotline". There was to provide their fellow students a vehicle by which their fellow peers would have an outlet to support their peers who were having personal difficulties. Zack used the "Hot Line" to score a date. Unbeknownst to Zack, the young lady was confined to a wheel chair. Morally, he was confronted with an issue, should he continue the date or leave? Fortunately, Zack continues the date. Honestly she communicates to Zack that she is inundated with her family treating her like she has a disability. She further communicated to Zack that she is self-reliant and wants to be treated like a regular person. Zack agrees, they have lunch, go to the movies, and have great conversations. Interestingly, as the two spend more time together Zack begins overtly communicate to EVERYONE, that she is confined to a wheel chair. He makes the wheel chair a bigger issue. Zack forgets that real acceptance is given not talked about. Often times teens are placed in situations where being a friend can be confusing and they end up making a friendship a cause, not a friendship. The episode when Zack hears how he unintentionally hurt his friend feelings by being insensitive. Once he hears her he apologizes and they move on.

Please consider the letter of endorsement and strong support for both episodes. It is my strong opinion based on 30 years of experience as a classroom teacher and administrator that both episodes reinforce current educational trends for addressing social/emotional issues and the moral and ethical responsibility of our youth in 2016. Our youth are faced with life changing decisions daily and often are not equipped to use good judgment as to the character of an individual or Social Emotional Learning which would encourage deeper conversations and understanding. The episodes reinforce the need for character education and Social Emotional Learning opportunities that address and speak to the issues teens are facing today. The episodes encourage reflection and empower students to take a stand and transform how students between the ages of 13 and 16 to engage in conversation regarding social justice. The message is powerful and creates an opportunity not only update the relevant conversation but to encourage conversation regarding Social Justice, Charter Education, and Social Emotional Learning.

Thank you for this opportunity to review two outstanding episodes. Clearly both have great potential to inform all students and extend their educational possibilities.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Ronald R Whitmore, Ed.D.", written over a printed name.

Ronald R Whitmore, Ed.D.

Principal

John M. Smyth IB World School