

NEW DIRECTIONS SECONDARY SCHOOL

Connecting youth to pathways of success for life.

Carron Staple, Bronx High Schools Superintendent **Nate Dudley**, CPN 403 Network Leader

James Waslawski, Principal, I.A.

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to whole-heartedly recommend the student support services and professional development workshops provided by Wediko Children's Services of New York. Wediko has been a co-founding partner agency with our school in its first year, New Directions Secondary School. Our partnership began back in the planning stages for our very unique 6th through 12th grade school which is designed to re-engage some of the most disconnected teens of the South and West Bronx into regularly attending school. From our school's earliest proposal Wediko staff members have assisted us in designing and improving our school's student and family support model. As the founding principal of New Directions I chose Wediko as our primary founding partner because of the impact that their depth of understanding and compassion have on youth. I visited their other programs in New Hampshire and witnessed their therapeutic model in practice twice before deciding to invite them in as an integral new school design partner.

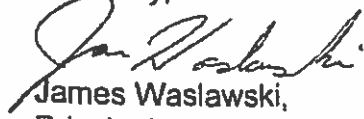
Wediko has been an important partner with our school in helping to establish our student re-engagement, repair and attendance strategies with all of our students during our first year. Our intensive student interventions and improved student connection to school has primarily come through the work of Wediko's four full-time staff counselors who also very often serve as case managers and always as advisory teachers to each of our 105 students. What is most valuable to me about our collaboration with Wediko is the overall sense that both the school and the organization share equally the desire and responsibility for the success of our work with our students. We are clearly on a shared path of creating an unprecedented school for some of New York City's most underserved youth and families.

During our first year working to build a socially relevant, emotionally supportive and academically engaging school environment for over-aged teens we have created important relationships within the community of service providers and parent community overall. Wediko staff has initiated specific conversations with ACS, Family Court, Montefiore School Health Clinic, New Settlements Housing Parent Action Committee and other family preventative care agencies to broaden our base of support for our students, their families and the overall success of our school. As a result of these partnerships we have been better able to fulfill our mission to the community and student population overall. Wediko brings a high degree of integrity and quality to their professional partnerships and relationships with other New Directions Staff. Through our first year New Directions teachers have relied on the in-class presence and professional development workshops offered by Wediko to better understand, manage and successfully instruct our students. Indicators of such success are: an 11% improvement in overall student attendance; a 33% improvement in our ELA state test pass rate; a 48% improvement in our Math state test pass rate.

To accomplish such jumps in student achievement we have relied on our partnership with Wediko to advance our school's model for support and success. Wediko has improved our students' ability to interact with adults and each other, thereby making school a place they want to be. This is evident

in our classrooms, the lunchroom gym and hallways where students show pride, talk positively about their school and convey an overwhelming sense of belonging – for the first time in a school. I highly recommend Wediko's New York School-Based Services and welcome any opportunity to discuss their services in greater detail.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "James Waslawski".

James Waslawski,
Principal, I.A.

"Connecting youth to pathways of success for life."