



April 5, 2022

To Whom It May Concern:

Educators are frequently looking for unique, robust, and authentic learning opportunities for their students. Finding the perfect combination of academic skills building and social and emotional skill-building is challenging, yet the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum's commitment to providing these opportunities is amazing.

Starting in January 2022, the Addison Wayfinder Experience program embarked on a journey to build a boat. That first day, students had many questions for which staff had no answers. "How are we going to know we're building the boat, right?", "How many different parts are there to the boat?", "What if I don't know how to use the tools?" were just some of their questions. Staff had concerns, too, regarding student dysregulation, attendance fluctuations, and not knowing how to build either! It's hard to explain the magical process within the boat shop walls, but I will try to give you a glimpse.

### **Teamwork Makes the Dreamwork**



For students who struggle with new faces, places, and routines, our students quickly warmed up and built positive relationships with both Nick and Jack. Working together with staff, Nick and Jack helped establish practices and expectations and motivated students in positive ways to engage in this adventure. Using humor, various check-ins, and giving students voice and choice leads students, school staff, and boat staff to work together efficiently, effectively, and with fun.

Wayfinder staff noticed that students were talking about the boat shop to their families, during our community meetings, and looked forward to going four days a week. Staff also noticed that students were advocating for tasks they wanted to try to continue became the norm. The transformation of students' confidence was exponential, and we attribute it to the environment fostered at the boat shop.

### **Lots of Fun and Funny Things**

Harder to capture but so easy to talk about. Potatoes, toothpicks, lime jello, Team Rivet, "snowboots," the question game, eating yummy treats, and celebrating birthdays are just some of the memories we have made with the shop. When we first arrive at the shop, our mornings are filled with humorous conversations, celebrations, and connections. Wayfinder has a boat shop family, and we're so incredibly thankful for that. Our students have made connections in the community and have thrived in the wholesome environment.



### **Learning Some Independence**

New tasks can be scary, and new tasks with new tools are even more frightening; however, these young ladies all rose to the challenge! The kindness and attention Nick and Jack gave our students are unrivaled. Their patience, encouragement, and willingness to stick by students lead students to the point of taking the reins! It was remarkable to see.



This program is so essential to the development of both students and adults. Learning about boats, trees, artifacts in Lake Champlain, and most importantly, about each other as individuals and as members of a team and community is beautiful. Our students report that they feel accomplished, valued, regulated, and confident these aren't words they express easily or without good cause and reason. This program is exceptional, and I genuinely wish more students could access it.

I sincerely hope that this program is around for decades to come, and we feel so fortunate to have experienced it for ourselves. It has created memories for our school that will never be forgotten and developed skills in students they never thought they would have, showing them the power of collaboration and dedication to a project.

Kind Regards,

Ashley Hanlon  
Director