



Hamburg Middle School
360 Division Street
Hamburg, New York 14075
(716) 646-3250

October, 2020

Citizenship Counts
504 Centennial Boulevard #805
Voorhees, New Jersey 08043

Dear Ms. Cooper,

I am writing to express my profound gratitude and sincere appreciation for your support. *Citizenship Counts* is a phenomenal organization. You have helped me develop a civics education program for my seventh grade students and organize opportunities for community involvement that develop responsible citizenship.

You have encouraged me to host a Naturalization Ceremony for my seventh grade students at the Hamburg Middle School near Buffalo, New York for the last eight years. These experiences have offered my students opportunities to appreciate their responsibilities as citizens and cultural differences as approximately fifty new citizens from thirty countries around the world take their oath in our school.

The significance of their birth-right to call themselves U.S. citizens is elevated to a newer, more valued place in their minds and hearts. Observing the emotional response from not only the new citizens, but from the audience of students and community members was obvious. This positive presence was also easily observed throughout the halls of the school as I connected lessons designed by *Citizenship Counts* concerning leadership, empathy and tolerance to this inspirational experience.

These lessons follow the New York State Learning Standards including those associated with the "Characteristics of a Citizen." This content is integrated throughout the event and develop skills in reading, writing, speaking and research, as planned by me and my colleagues. Students have the opportunity to consider their own place in the larger context of the world that further supports their respect for diversity among people and for their culture.

Citizenship Counts' willingness to work with me and other educators to make the naturalization process accessible to young citizens, our future leaders, has the ability to inspire empathy and encourage responsibility. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Jason R. Steinagle
Seventh Grade, Social Studies Teacher
Hamburg Middle School

New York State Teacher of the Year Finalist, New York State Education Department
New York State History Teacher of the Year and National Finalist, Gilder Lehreman Institute of American History
Jane Skryzpek Educator of the Year, New York State Western Region Parent Teacher Association
History Teacher of the Year, Daughters of the American Revolution