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## Letter of Recommendation for Sophia Matthews

To whomever it may concern:

I have known Sophia ever since 2013 when I won CMS Teacher of the Year. She'd interviewed my students, unbeknownst to me, in order to share a very sweet video at the announcement. First, it made me cry, and second, it exhibited this woman's ability to find the direct path to people's hearts. Ever since, she helped me to find my voice and platform for shining a light on educational inequities.

As my journey moved into the Opportunity Taskforce work, Sophia was right there to collaborate and discuss things from a research perspective and in the vein of how the students themselves reacted to the findings of these reports. We meet for lunch sometimes just to hash out topics and events of the day and she never fails to offer a fresh perspective.

In 2015, I started the Be More Foundation, a nonprofit that uses media literacy to help urban youth of color organize their priorities and make life choices most likely to disrupt cycles of poverty. I asked Sophia to be on my Board and she still is to this day. Due to her efforts, we now have a presence in three high schools and are in the process of digitizing our curriculum so that even more students can participate remotely.

As a parent, you want to see that the people who affect how your children see themselves have the kind of heart and intelligence that Sophia possesses. As a parent now herself, I look forward to seeing how she will continue to better the world for her daughter. I know she can and will best accomplish paradigm shifts in any organization lucky enough to have her.

Thank you,

James Ford  
2013 CMS Teacher of the Year  
2014 NC Teacher of the Year  
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