



January 21, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Natalia taught a wonderfully engaging SOAR afterschool workshop called **'Shark Tank': Create and Defend Your Business Ideas** for 4th through 6th graders for 6 classes during the fall of 2018. SOAR is the Salisbury Central School's after school enrichment program. The class was designed to introduce students to basic financial literacy concepts such as budgeting, savings, investment, interest, risk, and return through interactive learning, teamwork, and collaboration. Over the course of 6 classes, students generated ideas for a business, constructed a mock business plan, and created a marketing strategy to pitch to the "investors" modeled after the popular TV show *Shark Tank*. To create a real-world approach to learning, Natalia recruited local business people to act as the 'investors' or 'sharks'. The workshop culminated with each participant pitching their business idea to the panel of community business people during their last class.

The workshop was an enormous success. Natalia completely hooked her students with this engaging, novel learning opportunity that required them to use a variety of academic skills from math to writing to communication skills. Natalia is a masterful, experienced instructor who is as able to capture the attention of a room of 4th through 6th graders as she is a room full of college students and beyond. The rigor of the class was disguised by the motivating *Shark Tank* format and underscored Natalia's ability to successfully adapt her teaching strategies to the interest level and academic readiness of her young students. Each student put a lot of thought, creativity and energy into creating their business pitches and certainly walked away with a deeper understanding of important economic and financial concepts from this dynamic class.

Parents were equally complimentary and appreciative of Natalia's class and teaching abilities, as were many of the community members on the panel of investors. All thought the workshop was one of the more engaging, creative and rigorous that their child had participated in through SOAR and were very impressed by the important financial literacy skills their child was exposed to. There have been many requests by community members, parents and students to bring this class back again next fall and I look forward to doing just that.

It cannot be easy to teach such sophisticated economic and financial concepts to younger children in a fun and understandable way but Natalia has figured out how to do just that!

Sincerely,

Linda Sloane, SOAR Program Director