



Lincoln Middle School

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this letter in strong support of the STARBASE program located at the Air Force Base in Duluth, Minnesota. My name is Derek Gabardi, and I have the privilege of serving as the principal of Lincoln Middle School in Hibbing, Minnesota.

For the past five years, our school has been fortunate to partner with STARBASE, providing our fifth-grade students with a weeklong, hands-on STEM experience that far exceeds what we are able to offer within our own facilities. This program has become an integral part of our students' educational journey and has significantly enriched their exposure to science, technology, engineering, and math in meaningful, engaging ways.

Even during the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic, STARBASE went above and beyond by bringing the program directly to our school, ensuring our students would not miss out on this invaluable learning opportunity. Additionally, the STEM kits provided annually have continued to benefit our classrooms, allowing our teachers to incorporate high-quality, standards-based materials into their instruction.

Our collaboration with Mrs. Charity Johnson and the STARBASE team has been nothing short of exceptional. Despite the distance—over sixty miles—Mrs. Johnson has consistently worked with us to ensure that our students could participate without unnecessary burden. Her dedication and flexibility have made a lasting impact on both our staff and students.

To lose the STARBASE program would be a tremendous loss for our school and especially for our fifth-grade students. This is an experience they look forward to and talk about long after they return. It ignites curiosity, builds confidence, and inspires future aspirations in STEM fields.

I understand the financial pressures that many programs are facing, but I respectfully urge you to reconsider any proposed funding cuts to this outstanding initiative. The long-term benefits it provides to students across northern Minnesota are both measurable and profound.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Derek Gabardi
Principal, Lincoln Middle School
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