

January 26, 2023

To: Whom It May Concern

From: Joseph S. Renzulli
University of Connecticut Board of Trustees Distinguished Professor
Winner of the 2009 Harold W. McGraw, Jr. Prize in Education
Voted # 3 among World's Top 30 Education Professional for 2022

RE: Xavier House, Gainesville, Florida

I have been working in the area of education for the gifted and talented for fifty years and I can say, without reservation, that I have never come across anything as inspiring and effective in providing services for a highly valuable group of young people as Xavier House. I know of nowhere else in the world that deals directly with foster care children like Xavier House. And because they focus on young people in this group that have high potential, my work in the area of gifted and talented immediately motivated me to examine this exemplary program.

The first thing I learned is that their identification process is much more in keeping with modern day use of multiple criteria rather than just depending on test scores. This approach is especially important for students that frequently change schools and may have the parental support found in other populations. Indeed, other educators addressing the need to give more low-income and minority populations an opportunity to develop their gifts and talents could benefit from the identification practices used at Xavier house.

The independent living skills and hands-on real-world projects that are the focus of their work is important to what I believe is a major goal of this program – giving their students encouragement and support to prepare for college or skill trade readiness. It is only through such an approach that any program serving challenged young people can help to remove the cycle of poverty that overwhelms so many lives.

The effectiveness of the Xavier House program should be widely distributed to all social service agencies and policy making bodies because its success makes it a highly replicable and sustainable program. Interested persons should be invited to visit the program and benefit from the very effective organization and leadership that I have clearly observed.