

To whom this may concern,

My name is Ben Mui and I am a commercial broker, but more importantly, a devoted husband and father of two amazing boys, both of whom are currently attending Renaissance Academy. I am writing this letter in support of Renaissance Academy's nomination for the Business Leadership of the Year award from the Richmond Chamber of Commerce Business Excellence Awards. In my previous role working with a real estate developer, I was heavily involved with leading/creating a new daycare franchise. As such, I visited over 25 different daycare centres varying from for-profit, nonprofit, franchise, and home daycares in Richmond, Vancouver, Vancouver West, Burnaby, and North Vancouver. Even having seen all of these different daycares, I immediately knew I had to put my boys into this daycare after my visit to Renaissance Academy. It was a big decision as my family and I live and work in East Vancouver and would have to commute back and forth for drop-off and pick-up but that speaks volumes to the high calibre of Renaissance Academy.

When I visited, not only did I get to see the early childhood educators in action in their classrooms, I also got to witness the professional and specialised teachers (dance, music, drama, etc.). One thing that really stands out at Renaissance Academy is that they hire teachers trained to teach their specific subjects (ie. French teacher to teach French classes, drama teacher to teach drama classes, dance teachers to teach dance classes, etc.) and this is something that I did not see at any other childcare centre. Between my two children, I have experienced three different classrooms with three different sets of teachers and I have to say that every single one of them is absolutely top-notch. They communicate well with the parents and identify areas that we can look out for and provide suggestions as to what we can do at home to further help our children. They are extremely attentive to each and every child, they are nurturing, encouraging, and just all-around loving people. My oldest son was very timid and nervous when he first started daycare and I witnessed his teacher help him through this with so much love, grace, and patience treating him as if he were her own son.

Another thing that really sets Renaissance Academy apart from other daycare centres is their curriculum. Being a fine arts daycare, there is an emphasis on art, music, dance and performing arts and it is clear that a lot of time, effort, and love has been put into creating these programs for the children. As previously mentioned, they hire professional teachers to teach and it truly makes such a huge difference in the quality of these fine arts classes. The artwork that they create and bring home is beautiful and we proudly display these in our home. Even with the emphasis on fine arts, other topics such as math and language arts don't take a back burner. Our oldest son comes home everyday with so many new things he has learned from his teachers and is always excited to share with us!

Speaking from a professional standpoint as someone who has researched childcare centres extensively, something that Renaissance Academy has that you will not find at any other non-franchise centres is the amount of resources invested in non-ECE (early childhood education) staff. Renaissance Academy has marketing, management, operations, and HR departments just to name a few. Typically, you would only see these resources from franchise centres where the cost is shared by many franchisee centres. I think this is a big reason why this business is so successful - Linda has such strong business acumen and the daycare is operating like a much larger

organization that invests in their staff and business. With these resources, everyone at Renaissance Academy gets to focus on what they are hired to do, including teachers, and I feel that that's a big reason they get to do so much more than the typical childcare centre can offer (ie. hosting networking events, community outreach, supporting charitable initiatives, offer many different types of enrichment classes, etc.).

Something very important that I feel Renaissance Academy focuses on other than education and childcare is community outreach and supporting charitable initiatives. My wife volunteers as a parent ambassador to help support and fundraise for the causes that the daycare supports and she loves being able to give back and help out at the school. The Brick by Brick campaign where they raise funds to build houses for families and provide supplies to school children in Sri Lanka and Jeremy's Memorial Foundation, which provides pyjamas to women and children fleeing domestic violence are just a few of the causes they support. They even get the children involved by having them donate pyjamas to Jeremy's Memorial Foundation once a year and they love doing this! I can tell by the initiatives that Linda and her team choose to support that a lot of thought and heart go into these decisions. Many, if not all, of these causes are run by members of the community or are linked to the school through a teacher or student (ie. the Jeremy's Memorial Foundation initiative is carried out in memory of Jeremy's aunt who used to work at Renaissance Academy). My wife and I absolutely love that there is such a strong focus on giving as it really role models to my children what it means to truly be a citizen of the world.

It's clear that Renaissance Academy was created to serve children and their families. All the staff work as a team and they all focus on how to better care for and help the children learn and grow on an ongoing basis. As a workplace, they have created such an amazing culture and environment that the staff just don't want to leave! From what I've witnessed in the past two years, there has been very minimal staff turnover which is unusual in the early childhood education sector. I must highlight an example to substantiate this point. One of my son's teachers had moved to another city which would require her to commute one hour each way to continue to work at Renaissance Academy. She decided to take a job at another daycare very close to her new home. Within 1-2 weeks, she was right back in my son's classroom. It speaks volumes to the amazing environment that has been created for all the staff that this teacher was willing to make this long commute daily just to work at Renaissance Academy. I feel that because the teachers are so happy working there that it creates a really great energy at the school and it has had such a positive impact on the care that I know my children are receiving.

What Linda and her amazing team has created at Renaissance Academy is truly outstanding and, in my opinion, insurmountable compared to all of the other daycare centres that I've seen. Not only is it a place where I've seen my children learn and thrive, it is also an environment where the parents, teachers, and supporting staff feel welcome and engaged. They really focus on the children, their families, their staff, and the community that they are in. I cannot say enough good things about Renaissance Academy. My wife and I feel so grateful that our children get to grow, learn, and thrive in such an amazing daycare created by a woman with a big vision and an even bigger heart.

Sincerely,

Ben Mui