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Dear WE and Educational Supporters,

I am writing this letter of support to acknowledge and thank you for the powerful work your organization has done to inspire young people in working for social change both locally and internationally. As a teacher coordinator in British Columbia, I have been lucky enough to work with teachers and students who have been directly involved in working for social change, including WE initiatives. I have witnessed firsthand the inspirational effect of WE day, AND the dedication afterwards of students and teachers digging in to their communities, figuring out where they want to work for change, and using free WE resources to support them to do so. I have deeply appreciated that WE resources provide a wide variety of ways to support conversations and learning about HOW to approach 'making a difference', and always encourage school teams to develop and support projects that matter to them and their unique community. Perhaps most importantly, throughout all of the events, materials and workshops I have been a part of, it is very clear that a key message is to 'seek to understand before presuming to help'.

I was lucky enough to go on a WE trip to Ecuador with other educators, and I was definitely curious about what such a large organization might look like on the ground internationally. I was deeply impressed with the 'hand up' not a 'hand out' WE village model. The work we did as volunteers was alongside community members who were integral participants in the planning, development and organization of the projects we participated in. Each village is working towards the goal of becoming a self-sustaining community within 5 years, and I saw the impact of this, especially with young girls in communities that can now sustain animal husbandry programs, local cultural artisan collectives and education that allows for sustainable growth and long term employment in areas relevant to that community.

I know that there are critics who will see events like WE day as a way for businesses to sell their brand. I have attended many WE days, and I can recall one early on that perhaps had too many 'advertisements'. WE welcomed feedback (and I have found your organization to always be open and responsive to feedback) from many educators, and subsequent WE days have been focused on bringing awareness to important issues as well as inspiring students to see themselves as changemakers.

Perhaps the most powerful thing I can share is that my son went to WE day. He came home inspired because in a 15,000 seat arena, he saw that there were other kids like him who care, who want to learn about the world, and want to help. He watched other young people speak out about issues that matter like mental health, reconciliation, local poverty and resiliency. What more could a parent want from a learning experience? When he came home excited and inspired, I took it as an opportunity to open up that conversation further. My son needed the inspiration first, the joy of feeling a part of

something with other young people, the permission to feel excited and inspired about doing good. For me, as a mother and an educator, I want my son and my students to take their first steps into the conversation about local and global issues with that same excitement and motivation, that belief that they can be compassionate agents of change in a world in which they are intricately connected. Then I can teach my son AND my students about the serious part, the importance of seeking to understand and the complexity of making change.

I am so deeply appreciative to the WE organization for playing such an important role in empowering my son and SO many young people to take those first steps.

Sincerely,  
Marna Macmillan

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