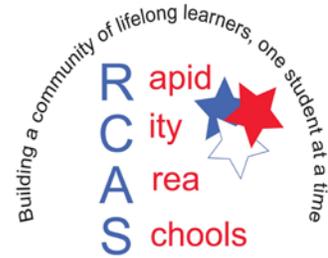


**RAPID CITY AREA  
SCHOOL DISTRICT 51-4**  
300 Sixth Street  
Rapid City, SD 57701



**Mike Talley**  
**Principal**  
**Rapid City Central High School**  
**(605) 394-4023**

It is with pleasure that I write this letter of support for Mr. Tim McGowan and the Cobbler 2 Cobbler peer mentoring program at Rapid City Central High School, as we look to expand the program to schools on the Pine Ridge reservation. Rapid City Central High School is one of the largest high schools in the State of South Dakota with a student population of 1950, grades 9-12. The population of American Indian students enrolled at Central High School is 375, approximately 20% of the student body.

My name is Mike Talley and am an enrolled member of the Standing Rock Sioux Tribe of South Dakota. I serve as the head Principal at Central High School and have done so for the past 9 years. I have had the pleasure of watching our peer mentoring program grow into one of the most recognized and effective programs in the nation. We were recently featured in REL Central, a national educational research journal. The peer mentoring program has been extremely successful in assisting Native American students to feel more connected to school, establish appropriate peer-to-peer relationships, promote academics, and learn what leadership is all about.

Rapid City is in close proximity to the Pine Ridge Indian Reservation. These communities have been experiencing a rash of teen suicides the past couple of years. It is our desire and intent to expand this program by partnering with these schools to establish a peer led mentoring program that we hope will help these students better cope with their circumstances and help them see that education is the path out of poverty and despair.

This program is research-based and the design of the program is student led and student driven. Students receive training on how to be peer leaders and mentors and this authentic approach allows students to have a real voice in their schools, as well as promoting accountability and responsibility. Students at Central HS that wear the mentoring badge are looked upon by their peers as school leaders and their actions justify that recognition.

This is a wonderful opportunity to expand this program down to the reservation schools. I hope you will strongly consider funding this opportunity. Please feel free to contact me if you have any additional questions. Thank you.

**Mike Talley**