Wednesday, August 15th, 2010

To Whom It May Concern;

I am writing this recommendation on behalf of Melissa Sand in hopes that you will consider her for the Teacher Leadership Endorsement program through the University of Cincinnati.

I have had the pleasure of working with Melissa over the past five years, but working most closely with her during the past year and a half. During this time Melissa and I formed a close relationship through our work and discussions, specifically regarding leadership at Princeton High School. I am currently serving as one of the Instructional Coaches for the middle school and high school. As the instructional coach I am in charge of the professional development for the schools, specifically around curriculum and instruction. As a former science teacher coming into this role I was automatically focused on working with the core subject areas, yet seeking ways to provide meaningful and engaging professional development around curriculum and instruction to the elective departments and ultimately begin to form common language among all teachers in the buildings. During my first few weeks as instructional coach, Melissa came to me and shared her perspective for the elective departments. Her insight guided much of the support I used with the elective departments through out the year. Melissa’s knowledge of her content area and ability to lead the discussion on professional development around elective classes is innate.

However, more than her ability to own her content and think about the supports for elective classes, Melissa has a natural and powerful ability to think about the big picture. She is able to reason why and how the elective classes fit with the core subject areas as well as able to think interdisciplinary and bring in other core content areas into her classroom to make learning more engaging to students.

Once I saw Melissa ability to lead her elective department members, as well as the core subject teachers, we immediately formed a partnership. With every initiative I sought to share with the staff I first presented to Melissa, or involved Melissa in the planning. She has an ability to think through all the issues that might arise and even more importantly, she thinks about how any initiative might affect staff. Again, her ability to think about the big picture and make connections to best meet the needs of others is outstanding.

I decided to bring Melissa along during outside professional development trainings I attended. For example, Melissa attended the High Aims Project-Based-Learning (PBL) training where we, along with a science and social studies teacher, created and presented an interdisciplinary PBL lesson that we plan to use with tenth grade students this school year. Along with attending this training, Melissa helped me organize, plan, and even attended the Common Core workshops for English and Mathematics teachers this summer. Even though Melissa is an art teacher, she finds value in understanding standards for all classes and even more importantly how to make connections between these classes.

One initiative that Melissa and I, along with a small group of teachers, have been working on is the development of a STEAM (science, technology, engineering, art, and mathematics) cohort for 6-12th grade students. This cohort would encourage interdisciplinary lessons and co-teaching opportunities so students could see the big picture connection between content areas. Melissa is by far the lead member of this initiative. She is constantly researching, organizing, and creating documents to support this initiative. She has created templates, concept maps to show structure, presentations, and started to make important outside contacts with the forefront leaders in STEAM research.

Melissa is actively involved in any leadership or professional development task that is going on at Princeton High School. However, she also is involved in a series of other leadership roles. For example, currently, Melissa is a conference committee chairperson for the Ohio Art Education Association Conference, in which she will also act as a presenter during the conference this year. She will also be presenting at the Kansas STEM conference in October. Melissa is also a member of the Clay Alliance and National Art Education Association. She has even volunteered her time at Crayons to Computers over the past two summers. Inside the walls of Princeton High School Melissa has presenting technology workshops to the staff, is the Art Club Advisor, voluntarily creates all graphic art needs for the school, and just like all teachers at Princeton High School, teachers six classes. This year, Melissa will be teaching a new class, Animations, that she developed curricula for and worked to have it added to the course catalog this year.

I have never worked with a teacher like Melissa. She is unbelievably hardworking and committed. She will always follow through on tasks, and typically produce above and beyond work. She has an innate ability to think about others and build relationships. When Melissa talks, people listen. I know my success as an instructional coach is very much because of Melissa. Her dedication to do what’s best for teachers, and ultimately what is best for student’s, is admirable and something that all teachers view and strive to do.

I know Melissa will do excellent in this program because she is a leader all definitions of the word. You will be blown away by her knowledge and skills. I am honored, and lucky, to work with Melissa everyday and cannot wait to see her work to earn this Teacher Leader Endorsement to help her grow even more as an educator and leader.

Please consider Melissa for your Teacher Leader Endorsement program.

Thank you,

Elizabeth del Campo Hartman

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