

17. April, 2009

re: Ms. Jane Evans, Teacher Applicant

To Whom It May Concern;

My work with the National Writing Project and the Bread Loaf School of English, my degrees from Binghamton University and the University of Louisville, and my ten years in an urban classroom have not given me enough skills to express all the enthusiasm I have for Jane Evans as an English teacher. As her supervisor for full-placement at Johnstown High School and as a co-teacher of her English Methods class, I could always guarantee a smile of pride with Jane's work. Her creative talents, absolute passion for all learners, irreplaceable sense of humor and intrinsic talent to motivate students made her an obvious leader in her classroom. In addition, Jane Evans received all feedback well and went miles beyond the call of duty to make herself a better educator each and every day. I recommend her without reservation.

Ms. Evans was one of the more reflective student teachers I worked with during the Fall semester. She constantly re-thought her practice. In particular, I was impressed by Jane's move to using visual literacy, too, as a way of understanding what her students know. Their drawings and thought processes from the reading of *Ulysses* was evident all around the room. In fact, her classroom was a museum of her teaching progress and modeled the excellence she demonstrated in her teaching. Ms. Evans spent a lot of effort staying on top of her content and worked diligently to better understand the soap opera of the Gods as it revealed itself in Greek mythology and teaching Homer's texts. She pushed her students to think in frames (ie: 5 paragraph essays) but also to think poetically and outside the box. Jane's best trait, however, was seeing her lively and personable approach to teaching. It was extremely intrinsic and natural.

In a pen name activity, Ms. Evans worked with technology, creativity and humor to have each of her students identify an authorial name for their classroom writing. Her lessons appeared to always keep her students at the forefront. During one of my observations I took note of a student who was labeled with learning disabilities. Ms. Evans read my feedback and talked enthusiastically to me about how she knew he was a strong learner and that she had been working hard to boost his academic confidence. She was very thankful that I was able to focus on his activity because it offered her a set of eyes that she couldn't spare in a room of so many students. Working with a class called "transitions," too, Ms. Evans demonstrated her ability to think about struggling readers and writers and what they need to be successful. Here, she mentored those who didn't show traditional achievement in school and, again, demonstrated her flexibility and ethic to reach all students.

Whether through index card quizzes, group exercises with multiple roles assigned, fairy tales or essays, Ms. Evans seemed to recognize writing and thinking processes over product. She worked alongside her kids (wrote every assignment herself), modeled her expectations and used the results of assessments to rethink the curriculum she was teaching. She worked extremely well with teaching assistants and operated with multiple learning styles in mind.

Ms. Sky, her mentor teacher at Johnstown High School, often remarked their collaboration was a heavenly match. Their senses of humor, academic strength and energy bounced well of one another and was evident everywhere in their room. The assistants in the room, too, also recognized Ms. Evans's maturity as a classroom leader and saw her as a colleague and NOT a student teacher. This speaks volumes about Jane's professional

conduct and collaboration. Ms. Evans enjoyed playful and whimsical love for students who aren't traditionally overachieving and hardworking. The more they were impish, the more she seemed to love teaching them.

The school district that hires Jane Evans will be fortunate. She will add much happiness to her department and excellent academics to her classes. Please contact me if I can be of further help.

Sincerely,

Bryan Ripley Crandall
Field Supervisor in English Education
Syracuse University