

17. April, 2009.

re: Ms. Samantha George, Teacher Candidate

To Whom It May Concern;

Before the historical election of Barack Obama as a representative leader of the United States of America, student teacher Samantha George conducted a six-week unit entitled, "Why Vote?" with her students at a local, urban high school in Syracuse, New York. As her supervisor and a co-teacher of her English Methods class, I witnessed her creation of this insightful unit and its remarkable implementation (which required students to think critically, to write an argumentative, researched essay and to grapple with deeper issues of the American political system). Students in her care went from apathetic, disillusioned youth to become engaged, opinionated and capable citizens comfortable with reading and writing about political issues important to their worlds. Samantha George was the class conductor who used video, poetry, historical documents, speeches and technology to spark passion into her senior classes. The saying "Still waters run deep" rings true for the gentleness she had as an instructor. Her confidence, intelligence and strong organizational skills inspired her students and was very clear in the class packet she provided them.

Samantha George is in her last phase of English Education at Syracuse University and is ready to step into the career she's chosen for herself. With a strong interest in drama and literature, she will add great expertise to any department. As her resume shows, her stage-management experience is also an area that sets this candidate apart from others. In addition, Ms. George's integrity as a leader can easily be found from those who know her. Recently, her previous employer from a summer camp contacted me about possibly promoting her during the upcoming season. He felt great admiration for her ability to work with young people and wondered if Syracuse University felt the same. Of course, I could offer very little criticism. As her advisor, Dr. Kelly Chandler-Olcott, and I often discuss, Samantha George is a stellar student who had amazing success as a student teacher.

There are many characteristics of Samantha George's teaching that stand out, but I wish to express one that truly became obvious during her classroom observations. Samantha works with all students as individuals and sees each as capable of doing very well in school. In her drama class, she often pulled in the inclusive education students and worked with them to feel a part of the classroom and to add much to the community she upheld. Her differentiation of instruction existed for all students. In her space, all students mattered and could achieve. I witnessed great presentation skills in this young teacher, too, and was impressed by her knowledge, her ability to make class notes accessible to students and her sense of humor to deliver new information.

Ms. Fennessey, her mentor teacher in the Fall of 2008, often remarked at her luck for having this stupendous student teacher. The two collaborated wonderfully and it showed through the karma of their room. Samantha began to articulate a large understanding of her student population and grew to advocate for their unique needs. In the future, she will become an instructional leader for others in her school.

Finally, Ms. George did a digital-story narration as her final reflection of student teaching that Dr. Chandler-Olcott and I still discuss today. In fact, her work with this project inspired us to make it a requirement for all student teachers this spring in their part-time placement. We even brought in an expert from the Hudson Valley Writing Project to teach our new students the skills that Samantha naturally has. I have no reservations about Ms. George as a new teacher and acknowledge that the only items that will make her stronger at this time are more experiences in the classroom. Please contact me if I can be of further help.

Sincerely,

Bryan Ripley Crandall  
Field Supervisor in English Education  
Syracuse University