



Lehman Alternative Community School ★ Ithaca, New York

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To whom it may concern:

I am writing on behalf of Andrew Herrick. As a science teacher at the Lehman Alternative Community School, I had the pleasure of hosting Andrew during his student teaching practicum throughout most of this past spring semester. Perhaps one of the clearest things I can say about Andrew is that he is a standout. He is already an accomplished teacher, and a young person whose genuine openness to input and thirst to help empower young people will likely make him one of the best.

Andrew and I worked together beginning in January of 2014 and extending through the beginning of June of this year. During this time, we collaborated in a number of varying teaching contexts. After an initial observation and acclimatizing period, we co-taught my Molecular Biology and capstone Ecology courses. In both contexts Andrew eventually took on full teaching responsibilities, but in the Ecology course, he also designed and taught an entire 4 week curriculum on “Soils: Their Formation and Ecological Significance”. We also worked together with my Localvores group; a group of students who met four days each week, dedicated to increasing the amount of local whole foods that go into our school’s lunch offerings. In addition, Andrew developed and taught (on his own) a mixed middle school/high school student project that met twice weekly for 2 months: “The Consumption Project”, which developed a traveling waste reduction installation that will spend time in each of the 12 Ithaca City School District buildings next year. Finally, Andrew was one of three staff members that organized and supervised a week-long school trip with 20 students, focusing on rock climbing and camping.

Throughout these widely varied contexts, Andrew presented himself as an educator who has already deeply considered what it means to teach. He is clear, present, sees his students as complex and capable individuals and knows how to set and adhere to expectations. He is well versed in the concept of differential learning styles, something quite apparent in the Soils curriculum he designed and taught to an exceptionally diverse group of high school students. Closely related to this, Andrew is quite clear regarding the pivotal role of support in learning: for some students this was the difference between experiencing growth, as opposed to a lack of competence. He demonstrated this by offering after school support sessions to his students on a regular basis.

Regarding his teaching of content, Andrew is well versed in the fields in which we collaborated. He uses instructional strategies which foster questioning, open-ended investigations, and problem solving, in addition to the creative sharing of information. His use of “essential questions” as a guide to his teaching is exceptionally effective,

allowing his students to not only see where they are going, but to create their own answers along the way.

One of the most under rated aspects of teaching may be one's ability to set a class tone that affords real learning. Andrew seems to have a natural awareness regarding the gifts associated with diversity, and has a knack for encouraging openness, tolerance, respect, and self-motivation. Some of this is through modeling, some the result of his genuine way of interacting with his students.

Perhaps even more fundamentally important than all of the above, Andrew clearly finds personal joy in getting to know young people and helping them grow. This was clear in the way he embraced unexpected outcomes, the need for motivation, and the way in which he provided formative feedback to his students, always with an eye toward their personal growth.

As a teacher of over 30 years, I have had the pleasure of working with a good many student teachers over my years in the classroom. Some have shown promise, others not so much. Andrew is perhaps as skilled and well oriented as anyone with whom I have ever worked in this context. He is new at this thing called teaching, but is beyond ready to step into a position wherein he will have the responsibility for fostering growth in the young people with whom he works. I could not recommend him more highly. Should there be any need or interest in discussing any of the above more thoroughly, please feel free to contact me through the information provided below.

Sincerely,

Dan Flerlage

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