



Central Pennsylvania Holmes Partnership
Elementary Professional Development Schools



May 6, 2010

To Whom it May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Kristen Sadaly. Because I have worked very closely with Ms. Sadaly as her advisor, field supervisor and professor during her senior year as a teacher candidate, I feel I am in a unique position to comment on her qualifications as a beginning teacher. I apologize for the length of this letter, but I hope to capture for you a few of Kristen's specific accomplishments. I would like to give you some insights into what kind of student Kristen is and what kind of teacher I believe she has become. Before I do that, I'd like to give you a little background on what it means to be an intern in Penn State's Professional Development School.

During the past twelve years, Penn State University and the State College Area School District have collaborated to create and operate professional development schools at the elementary level. As part of the professional development school program, outstanding veteran teachers agree to mentor a Penn State student for a full school year. Senior undergraduates are carefully selected to participate in the PDS internship on the basis of written applications and interviews with teams of mentor teachers and university faculty. When selected for the program, interns abandon the university calendar and follow the school district calendar for the entire school year. That means that Kristen will graduate on May 16 and then return to finish the school year with her class.

While participating in the internship, interns complete four upper level methods courses, jointly planned by university faculty and mentor teachers. In this way, experiences and assignments are seamlessly linked with the school's curriculum. The learning experience is authentic. Interns also conduct a teacher research project or inquiry over the course of several months, the results of which are presented at a professional development conference at the conclusion of the year. In her case, Kristen explored how to effectively use children's literature to enhance her fifth graders' writing.

It is worth noting that the PDS collaborative in which Kristen participated was named the Distinguished Program in Teacher Education in 2002 by the Association of Teacher Educators, and also received the Zimpher Award for Best Partnership from the Holmes Partnership Organization in 2004 and also an award for outstanding achievement by the National Association of Professional Development Schools in 2009. Principals and superintendents who hire PDS students often send us word about how well these students perform as first year teachers. They almost always remark about their willingness to engage in problem solving through collaborating with other teachers. We are very pleased to hear these remarks. Our program is very demanding, but the results affirm the

rigorous experiences we provide for teacher candidates.

During the internship, Kristen was enrolled in a Classroom Learning Environments course where she learned how to purposely observe children and other teachers. In addition, she used Student-led Classroom Meetings and other activities to create a classroom learning community. She conducted a detailed case study of a student. She created a comprehensive classroom plan that included everything from student desk placement to plans for accommodating special needs learners through differentiated instruction. She understands and uses the principles of a responsive classroom in managing student behavior. Her fifth graders were highly engaged in meaningful learning activities throughout the year.

In addition to CLE, Kristen took courses in the teaching mathematics, science, and social studies. These content courses are deliberately sequenced and interrelated. The pedagogy models and emphasizes inquiry learning and differentiation. They use the principles of reformed science, conceptual mathematics and culturally responsive social studies. Each course models state of the art technology including Studio Code, a video editing tool used to enhance lesson analysis. I have observed Kristen using the concepts and skills she learned in methods classes within her own fifth grade classroom.

Kristen has very good organizational skills. Her greatest strengths may be her ability to identify problems, her written expression and her habit of reflecting thoughtfully about her teaching. She is mature beyond her years. These attributes are essential for new teachers. I feel that Kristen has a disposition toward continued professional learning. She is thoughtful, hard-working and committed to becoming the best professional she can be. I can honestly say that she is one of the best interns I have ever had the pleasure to teach. I recommend her without reservation.

Sincerely,

Bernard Badiali

Associate Professor of Educational Leadership

The Pennsylvania State University