

May 10, 2010

To Whom It May Concern:

Kristen Sadaly has been involved in a yearlong internship in my fifth grade classroom during the 2009-2010 school year. She was part of a Professional Development School, which is in collaboration with the State College School District and Pennsylvania State University. Immediately upon meeting Kristen last August, I discovered her maturity and her love for children. She is genuine, friendly, and very passionate about making a difference.

During the fall of the internship, Kristen demonstrated her gentle manner and patience with children daily. After observing the class, Kristen began teaching small and large group lessons to the students. She immediately displayed her "natural" talents in the classroom. She was curious about the broad ability levels of our twenty students, and she respected each child for his or her unique gifts.

Our district's social studies curriculum revolves around The Story of America. Our thematic approach incorporates historical fiction chapter books, historical picture book read-alouds, and Nystrom Atlas map kits based on our country's history. Kristen participated in and planned historical lessons on American history from 1607 to the 1900's. She utilized technology and built-in authentic research when appropriate.

Kristen taught structured guided reading groups for the majority of the year using historical chapter books. She planned reading instruction for two to three different reading groups, continually questioned her students, and assessed their comprehension. She repeatedly required students to cite evidence from their text for support in their answers. She taught character analysis, vocabulary meanings, context clues, author's purpose, point of view, and many other lessons through modeling. Toward the end of the year, Kristen also initiated the introduction of Literature Circles to our students. She tiered her instruction by first modeling the roles, then teaming students, and finally expecting independence from our children. As Kristen continued to try new strategies and expand her reading lesson plans, it became evident that reading instruction would be one of her many gifts. In fact, our principal asked Kristen to do a Kindergarten guided reading group daily, as one of her responsibilities. She rose to the challenge willingly.

Kristen was actively involved in the teaching of writing. She helped to teach the children the process of writing, editing techniques, descriptive language, dictionary skills, thesaurus usage, and conventions through the use of mini-lessons. She taught the students paragraphing, persuasive writing, informational writing, and narrative writing. Kristen was careful to give the children regular feedback on their written work, and she soon noted that teaching writing to twenty students with individual needs was a challenge. Kristen began to use children's literature as examples of "expert writing." Her inquiry project on writing helped her teach our students how to create style, use more figurative language, and organize their pieces in a purposeful way. The improvement in the children's writing was dramatic.

During the year, Kristen taught the technology competencies to the fifth graders in our room. Without a doubt, the integration of technology is one of Kristen's greatest strengths. She found comfort in using an online learning environment, Moodle, with our fifth grade students. Kristen enjoyed using Moodle for classwork and homework, writing journal responses, and reading discussion forums. Within our room, Kristen has shown great confidence in using our classroom SMART Board for engaging lessons with the children. Kristen was also instrumental in teaching our students how to create podcasts through GarageBand.

Throughout her intern experience, Kristen worked diligently to devise experiences in math and science that were child-centered and meaningful. The hands-on activities have helped our students gain a sense of real-life math and science. In math, Kristen differentiated her instruction with a high degree of confidence, using a manipulative-rich approach. She consistently helped students explain their thinking when problem solving. Kristen integrated technology into the Investigations curriculum each day. She also became a master at Calendar Math both on the SMART Board and on the bulletin board.

Kristen has used and created many different assessment tools with our children. She has created pre-assessments, study guides, quizzes, and tests. She has used district-created rubrics and she has created her own for both lessons and long-range projects. Kristen has used anecdotal records, and kept an accurate and confidential online grade book.

One of Kristen's greatest strengths is her ability to take feedback, whether written or oral, and use it to improve her next lesson. She has always taken criticism in a positive way, often times *asking* for suggestions and guidance on improving a specific strategy. She has always had a keen sense when a lesson could have been improved.

Kristen has blended into our staff here at Ferguson very well. She works as an equal team member in our division, sharing ideas, insights, and resources. She is flexible and cooperative when working with others. Kristen has used her strong communication skills when talking with parents in person, on the phone, or through the use of newsletters. During our parent conferences in the spring, Kristen ran several of the conferences. The students shared progress with their parents using a PowerPoint presentation on the SMART board. I found Kristen able to communicate very calmly, tactfully, and thoughtfully during these conferences.

Kristen has done an outstanding job in our classroom this school year. She is confident, mature, and reflective in her teaching practice. She manages children well, consistently trying new approaches to keep our students accountable and respectful.

I would highly recommend Kristen Sadaly for an elementary teaching position. She would handle the challenge of any grade level competently and enthusiastically.

Respectfully yours,

Susan J. Feldman
Mentor Teacher, Grade 5
Ferguson Township Elementary