



Olympia School District

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William V. Lahmann, Superintendent

March 10, 2008

LETTER OF RECOMMENDATION FOR JUSTIN WRIGHT

I am writing a letter of recommendation for Justin Wright. Justin is a paraeducator with all the right skills that make a difference for students, especially those most at-risk. He is passionate about the success of children, thoughtful as an instructor, and highly professional as a caring adult. Justin would make any school proud.

I first met Justin in the fall of 2006 where he was assigned as a 1:1 paraeducator for a student who had low cognitive abilities at Madison Elementary School. He came across as quiet, yet assured, wise, yet open to new ideas. Impressive was Justin's breadth of experiences that have built the foundational layers of being a quality paraeducator. Since 2001, Justin has worked in schools. He has been a Americorps member, a 21st century academic coach, a pre-school assistant, and an elementary school paraeducator before coming to Madison. However, most importantly, he has been and continues to be a professional clown. What struck me most about Justin is his passion to bring the laughter and humor of clowning into his work with children.

Another opening came up in the winter, 2006-07 to work with a high functioning autistic 1st grade gifted student. Justin said he was up to the challenge. He learned and continues to learn how to work with a child who has significant disabilities. He has been working 1:1 for 12 months with this child until the student was transferred to a self-contained classroom at a different location.

Justin has always worked towards this child's success. He also knew he needed a better skill set. Justin enrolled in a variety of classes: restraint training, de-escalation strategies; working collaboratively with our ASD specialist; taking professional development courses and seminars which provided him tools and the background on how to assist this child and his educational team. He learned the right balance of hovering around the child but floating within the classroom as a resource to all students. He developed collaborative skills, important in implementing the team's directions and communicating with the parents. He offered his ideas to the team, many of them valuable to this child's success. He also learned new skills by listening and observing others as they modeled effective strategies with this child. Over the course of the year, his relationship with the child has been professional, warm, and caring, often in times of great stress when the child would become physically or verbally difficult.

Justin sets a relaxed atmosphere among students, and honors the genuine ideas of other students. He offers real life experiences to his work with students; he is firm, yet fair and is willing to stand ground when it affects the learning of others. It is that level professionalism that exemplifies his belief that all children need a safe and caring place to learn. Justin would be a great asset to any school. Please do not hesitate to contact me if you have further questions.

Gayle Mar-Chun, Principal