



The American Int'l School – Caracas, Venezuela

April 4, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

It is an extreme honor to write this letter of recommendation for Michael Anderson, who has served as a middle school art teacher and arts integration specialist at Escuela Campo Alegre (ECA) since August 2008. [Note: Mr. Anderson will be leaving in June 2014 at the end of six years at ECA, as we have a “six-year rule” that does not allow overseas teachers to stay beyond this period.] Let me begin by stating that you will never regret hiring Mr. Anderson, as he is one of the finest educators and people with whom I have had the opportunity to work in my 20-year educational career. His talents lie in many areas, but a few I would like to touch on are: art teacher, innovator, collaborator, and community-builder.

As an art teacher, you will be hard-pressed to find an individual so finely-tuned at his craft. Mr. Anderson’s class is extremely engaging, and I personally find it difficult to leave every time I enter (even though I have never myself been a student of the arts). His students have the same feeling, as they listen closely to every word he says and then completely immerse themselves in the classroom activities. His classes take time to experiment, to reflect, and to engage in a process of thinking creatively. His students take risks, explore, and have fun with the variety of projects he provides. Additionally, Mr. Anderson shares his enthusiasm for art education with others, presenting at conferences, training our faculty, and even writing professional articles for publication.

During my first two years in the school, proposals came through that cut our art program from one semester per grade level to one trimester per grade level. As would be expected, these proposals were not greeted with enthusiasm by Mr. Anderson. Rather than be upset, however, Mr. Anderson listened, reflected, wrote up proposals, and engaged in thoughtful, professional dialogue. Through many discussions, research, and reflection, new art programs developed through this period. Mr. Anderson developed an Art Tech class, created to help engage a different type of student in the arts through an alternate medium. He also created an Advanced Art Lab class that could be taken by our most advanced arts students in 8th grade instead of Band or Choir. Both classes were developed with great attention to detail and have enjoyed tremendous success. Additionally, through research we discovered as a faculty what an important part the arts can have in preparing 21st century learners for the real world. Mr. Anderson lead a team of faculty (our “arts integration committee”) through a time of research, and came to the conclusion that integrating the arts throughout our curriculum would better help our students develop the skills they need to be successful in the 21st century. Mr. Anderson has now taken on the additional role of Arts Integration Specialist in the middle school and collaborates with all middle school teachers to integrate the arts into all subject areas. Mr. Anderson is a visionary, a forward-thinker, and a very innovative professional.

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His role as Arts Integration Specialist has given Mr. Anderson incredible opportunities to collaborate with all teachers in the middle school, and he has flourished in this role. During prep periods he meets with teachers to discuss curriculum and help them develop lessons with an arts component integrated into the lesson/unit objective. He then works with the teachers in the classrooms to deliver content and team-teach these lessons. Additionally, the Art Tech class he developed was in conjunction with our Technology Integration Specialist, and the two met regularly to plan and develop content and taught the class together for most of the first year. Mr. Anderson has served on our Advisory and House Committees, and has worked closely with the school administration in terms of developing our Arts Integration program. In all these activities Mr. Anderson has successfully worked alongside other professionals, as his demeanor, attitude, sense of humor, and professionalism make it incredibly easy for others to work with him.

Finally, let me speak to his strength as a community-builder, both inside and outside of school. I already mentioned his role as a member of our Advisory and House Committees, which help to demonstrate his interest in building community within our middle school. Outside of school, he is just as committed to building this sense of community with others. Probably the best example is the group he has formed called “Be | Create | Travel.” He has developed this on his own and provides opportunities for others to get together to meditate, participate in art workshops, travel, and more. My family participated in one of the travel opportunities, a trip to the Orinoco Delta, which was one of my favorite travel experiences as we were able to engage in the local culture and enjoy the natural beauty of Venezuela. Mr. Anderson’s commitment to community, both inside and outside of school, will make him an incredible asset to any school.

As you can tell, I strongly endorse Michael Anderson—both on a personal and professional level. You will never regret hiring Mr. Anderson; his passion for his work, for children, for community, and for experiencing the world around him are contagious, and he will be an asset to your entire community. Please do not hesitate to contact me at any time if you have questions or if I can be of further assistance.

Respectfully,

Michael R. Johnson
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