



September 27, 2011

Recommendation for James Burwell

With full confidence, I write this letter of recommendation for Jim Burwell. Any school who hires Jim will benefit from his dedication and passion to teaching and learning. I have had the privilege of serving as principal the two years Jim Burwell has been at CDS. As an English teacher, Jim has demonstrated enthusiasm for the process of teaching through technology integration and student centered learning and a deep care for kids.

Jim's contribution to Country Day has been a godsend. In my first year leading the High School we needed an English teacher. My predecessor informed me that Jim successfully led three years as High School Principal in Guatemala, but was looking to return to teaching. Without hesitation, he recommended Mr. Burwell. Jim's relocation to Costa Rica brought us his experience as high school leader and his passion for literature and the English language. Jim engaged most of the Senior Class in AP English Literature, British Literature, and Creative Writing.

Jim's English classroom is an active learning environment. I was in Jim's class frequently, observing him captivating students in discussion and thinking. Frequently students advanced instruction through individual and group presentations of posters, models, speeches and multimedia pieces. Jim maintained a rigor in the classroom that initially was uncomfortable for some students; but by the end of the first quarter, several students responded that their favorite class was Mr. Burwell's. When I probed deeper, a common response was because they were learning to write well and because of his enthusiasm for literature. In addition, I believe students respond to Jim's dedication and authentic interest in young learners. Leading mock AP English Literature exams on Saturdays or advising meetings during lunch, Jim is never idle.

Integration of technology was woven throughout Jim's classroom fabric. Jim utilized social network Nings, Wikis, digital portfolio Glogs, and student video production to enhance and assess learning. I really enjoyed watching his student's video modern adaptation of George Orwell's *1984*. Students depicted concepts from *1984* in our current time and place at Country Day.

Jim made special effort to share his successes and expertise with other teachers. Many colleagues adopted Nings in their courses as a direct result of Jim's staff development presentation. This year he has collaborated with our Educational Technology Coordinator and presented digital billboard Glogs and Wiki Spaces to the High School Faculty. Jim appropriately uses and promotes technology as a tool, while mastery of curriculum content is the primary concern.

Jim also helped bring Student Council into a more prominent role at the High School. Student Council markedly raised school spirit, aptly communicated plans, and completed their initiatives, such as Pep Rallies, High School sports tournaments, fund raisers, and organization

for the school-wide community picnic. Jim recognizes the natural talent in his group and allows the kids to stretch their leadership wings.

Jim exemplifies a compassion and thoughtfulness toward children entering and excelling in high school. We had concerns with the transition of 8th grade Middle School students to the High School. Jim not only proposed an idea to survey the 8th grade, but he designed and administered the survey through the Middle School teachers. Then Jim led the development of a 12th - 9th grade mentorship program, where the students from the Senior Class were matched with Freshman the beginning of the year.

Jim approached this mentorship pilot from a number of angles. He shared data from the surveys with both faculty and the Senior class. Jim led focused discussions with 9th grade teachers, as well as collaborated an action plan for implementing an orientation to High School over a one month period. Jim guided student leaders in analyzing survey data and planning icebreaker sessions, as well as mentor-mentee discussions.

If I had to describe Jim's personality, he is a thoughtful and sincere person. He is quick to engage you in conversation about world news, politics, and leading a learning community. Jim's keen desire to experience and learn in another part of the world is the only reason preventing us from pulling in every resource to get him to stay.

Jim Burwell has my highest recommendation. He will make an excellent contribution to whatever faculty he joins. He is a listener, learner and leader. Should you have any questions about this true proponent for education, do not hesitate to ask.

With regards,



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