

March 1, 2016

RE: Jessica Thomas – Application for Mathematics Teaching Position

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the absolute pleasure to work with **Jessica Thomas** during her time at West Virginia University (WVU) in the Master's Program in Higher Education Curriculum and Teaching. In addition to having her as a student in three of my courses focused on mathematics teaching and learning, Jessica has worked with me as a graduate research assistant since August 2015. Simply put, Jessica is one of the most driven, skilled, and thoughtful early-career mathematics teachers I have worked with. I highly recommend her for your available mathematics teaching position.

Jessica came to WVU having already earned her initial teacher certification in mathematics and English as part of her bachelor's degree at West Liberty University. With that being said, Jessica's approach to the coursework in her program—specifically the courses focused on mathematics teaching—is evidence of her professionalism and her disposition as a continuous learner. She could have easily seen those courses as covered ground, as something she already mastered with her previous degree. Instead, she sought these courses out and approached them in ways that allowed her to get as much out of them (if not more) than her colleagues in their initial certification programs. Jessica has reported back to me that the opportunity to focus on the Standards for Mathematical Practice and to develop skill with planning for and leading whole class discussions provided a benefit that her previous program did not. I cannot help but wonder if her previous experiences (as well as her general outlook on her own professional development) better prepared her to think about and work on more advanced ideas related to mathematics teaching and learning. As a result, Jessica is far more than your average first-year teacher.

Having only worked with Jessica as part of university coursework and a graduate assistantship, I would traditionally not be able to speak to her work in the classroom. However, a core aspect of the courses in which Jessica enrolled involved carrying out central aspects of the work of teaching—both planning and, more importantly, enacting the work in rehearsal settings. Through this, I was able to witness firsthand the skill and thoughtfulness that she would bring to the classroom. Jessica prepares extensive and detailed materials for instruction, whether her own plans or the materials students will use throughout a lesson. She is skilled at drawing upon a wide range of available curricular resources to design instruction. She articulates goals and objectives for students that are not only clear but also representative of the types of mathematical proficiencies we hope all teachers would support students toward. In the role of teacher, she is skilled at making progress toward those stated goals and building on students' ideas to do so. She is poised, confident, and is able to both provide clear explanations and also allow for students to do more of the explaining and reasoning about mathematics. She is thoughtful about and responsive to students' ideas and makes informed decisions about her instruction as a result. I have no doubt that Jessica will bring these skills to her first teaching position, which will immediately benefit her colleagues and her students.

As a graduate research assistant, Jessica has far exceeded my expectations. She completes tasks with work of the highest quality and often takes the initiative to extend the task. Jessica's ability to quickly understand tasks and complete them masterfully is evidence of her attention to detail, her skill as a writer and editor, and her developing skill for inquiring into practice. She does all of this while also completing a full schedule of courses for her program and serving as a research assistant for another mathematics education faculty member. My colleague and I often reflect how lucky we were to have been able to bring Jessica on to our respective projects. Jessica has been a model graduate student and she has demonstrated plenty of evidence to suggest she will be a model teacher as she begins her career.

Whether hearing about her time during West Liberty University or her work here at WVU, I am also constantly amazed by the type of activities in which Jessica has engaged at this early stage of her career. Most notable is her longstanding work through the West Virginia Center for Professional Development. Through this work she not only supports the organization of a variety of professional development experiences for teachers across the state but also plans and enacts sessions, specifically on technology integration. I imagine that Jessica will not only continue these kinds of activities but also expand them as she begins her career. Among many service and volunteer activities and participation in student organizations, I would like to highlight Jessica's central involvement in the creation of the "WVU Council for Mathematics Education," a student organization focused on the teaching and learning of mathematics. The organization became officially recognized by WVU in Fall 2015 and efforts to further establish the organization in the WVU community continue. Jessica's involvement in the early stages of this organization serve as another example of how she has fully invested herself in the experience of being a Master's student at WVU. Her contributions across the board have been invaluable.

I have had the opportunity to work with and support many prospective mathematics teachers across the country and only once before have I worked with an individual like Jessica Thomas, who is not only ready to enter the classroom as a teacher but ready to become an important contributor to the profession. She has the ambition and initiative to immediately become a wonderful addition to your school. More importantly, she has already demonstrated the skill as a teacher that will immediately benefit your students. Having had the opportunity to work with Jessica has shown me what is possible from a new mathematics teacher. As such, I consider myself fortunate to have been able to work with her, and I know you would be equally (if not more so) fortunate to have her join your school community. I hope to have the chance to keep in touch with Jessica and track her growth in her career. If you have any further questions, please feel free to contact me at mpcampbell@mail.wvu.edu or 304-293-4714.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "M. Campbell". The signature is fluid and cursive, written in a professional style.

Matthew P. Campbell
Assistant Professor of Mathematics Education
Department of Curriculum & Instruction/Literacy Studies