



February 26, 2016

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter in support of **Jessica Safreed Thomas**'s application for a teaching position with Monongalia County Schools. I have known Jessica for about 4 years. She was a student in my Advanced Composition class, and I also served as her English Content Portfolio reviewer during her last semester of coursework here at West Liberty University. In addition, I worked with Jessica as her "mentor teacher" during her time as a peer instructor in our Accelerated Learning Program (ALP).

It is this ALP experience with which I would like to begin. Our university implemented an Accelerated Learning Program as a way to provide supplemental instruction to students in need of remediation in writing. As a peer teacher in this program, Jessica was the sole teacher of record for a 2-credit supplemental instruction course that was a companion to my ENG 101 class. As a peer instructor, Jessica not only attended 3 hours of my class per week in the role of teaching assistant, but she also planned and implemented instruction for the 2 weekly hours of her own class. For all intents and purposes, Jessica spent a semester as, essentially, a full-time teacher with all the accompanying responsibilities (planning curriculum, implementing instruction, grading student work, etc.). My observation of Jessica's performance as an ALP instructor revealed that she was ever the consummate professional. Despite her status as a peer to these undergraduate students, she always maintained a 100% professional teaching persona. She had total control over her classroom, and her students respected her and responded quite well to her instructional designs. In fact, she took her responsibilities so seriously during her time as an ALP instructor that she even managed to catch two different instances of student plagiarism. This was a direct result of the amount of time and effort Jessica always put into her instruction and grading. When she reported to me the plagiarism case, she did so with full and thorough documentation—the collection of which likely took a significant amount of time. I took this to be a signal of the commitment and diligence with which Jessica always approached her role as instructor. In short, as an instructor, Jessica was meticulous in her planning, energetic in her implementation, and always professional. In fact, throughout her time as a peer instructor in our ALP program, I came to regard Jessica as more of a colleague than a student, and this signals to me that she is more than ready to step right into a secondary teaching position—she already spent a semester successfully doing so.

In addition to these instructional accomplishments, I would also like to mention Jessica's own academic achievements. Certainly, as a part of her application, you have likely become familiar with her transcript. Her honors-level academic achievements are plain to see. However, the manner in which she approached her collegiate experience is a noteworthy addition to those accomplishments. Jessica always approached her study with the same energy and scrupulousness with which she approached her aforementioned teaching. This is especially impressive given that she essentially had three majors (English, Education, and Mathematics). Jessica was always an energetic and confident participant in classroom activities, often adopting the role of de facto class leader for in-class activities. As an instructor, I could always count on Jessica not only to meet the expectations of an assignment, but most often to exceed those expectations. Her work in my Advanced Composition class was truly

exemplary. In fact, I still use the literature review she wrote for that class—on the educational topic of math anxiety in middle schoolers—as an example when teaching the lit review form to my current classes. Overall, I would characterize Jessica as a true scholar-teacher, who approaches whichever challenge is in front of her—be it academic or pedagogical—with energy, confidence, and an unrivaled thoroughness. I highlight these qualities to suggest that if you were to hire Jessica, you would not only be getting a classroom-ready colleague, but also an intellectually astute and engaged “student” of the discipline. In short, Jessica is poised to succeed regardless of which challenges—be they intellectual or pedagogical—she may face in her teaching position.

In my view, Jessica Safreed Thomas is a responsible colleague, a meticulous student, and a true scholar-teacher. Given the chance, she will undoubtedly inspire in you the same viewpoint during her time in your building. As a result, I highly recommend—without reservation—Jessica Safreed for a teaching position in Monongalia County Schools. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions or require any additional information. Thanks for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Steve Criniti
Associate Professor of English
West Liberty University
304.336.8197
scriniti@westliberty.edu