



June 26, 2012

To Whom It May Concern:

It is a pleasure and a joy for me to write a letter of recommendation for Mr. Kenneth Bennion, a pre-service teacher who attended a course I taught at Utah State University titled *SCED 4200: Language, Literacy, and Learning in the Content Areas*. As part of his work in my course, Kenneth planned several mathematics, physical science, and earth science lessons that integrated comprehension, vocabulary, writing, and critical literacy instruction; he also wrote blogs and completed projects in which he reflected on how various facets of literacy can be used to enhance scientific and mathematical reasoning.

Based on my extensive interactions with Kenneth, I can say without hesitation that he personifies a winning combination that is extremely rare for pre-service STEM teachers. This winning combination includes qualities such as exceptionally strong people skills; a robust yet professional sense of humor; excellent communication skills in both speech and writing; a sense of advocacy for students from historically underserved populations, such as English Language Learners; an awareness of the cultures and interests of young people; and the ability to provide engaging instruction that accounts for these cultures and interests.

Not only does Kenneth exemplify these characteristics desirable of all good teachers, but he is well-suited to make a difference in the field of STEM education specifically. His background in multiple STEM fields, such as physical science and mathematics, places him in a unique position to create integrated lesson plans which are becoming the hallmark of quality STEM education. Kenneth has a solid grounding and understanding in both disciplines, and his intelligence translates itself into creative lesson plans that enable students to develop solid groundings in these disciplines as well.

In a blog posting for my course, Kenneth summarized the semester by reiterating the importance of "comprehensible input and meaningful output." I would like to use these words to summarize Kenneth's approach to teaching as well. His lesson plans show that he is able to make learning accessible to students through beginning with their background knowledge or through drawing from their popular cultural interests as springboards to learning. Most impressively, to me, is Kenneth's emphasis on "meaningful output." All of his lessons did not allow students to be simply passive recipients or listeners to lectures, but rather required them to join mathematical and scientific conversations through producing personally meaningful, powerful, and/or authentic mathematical and scientific texts of their own. I am confident that, due to this approach to teaching, Kenneth's students will leave his class as active participants in "big conversations" occurring in society, rather than as passive, uncritical consumers of others' ideas.

In sum, Kenneth is an exemplary student, teacher, and human being. He will treat his students with both empathy and rigor, and I expect to see great things both from him and his students in the not-so-distant future. With utmost respect for him, I recommend him whole-heartedly to you. If you have any questions about this letter of recommendation, please do not hesitate to contact me at amyalexandra.wilson@usu.edu or (801) 633-7638.

Sincerely,

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