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I am exceptionally pleased to recommend **Daniel Lazar** for a secondary teaching position in history and the social sciences. It has been my professional privilege and personal pleasure to work with and get to know Dan in the last three years. Of the close to two hundred students I have helped prepare for careers in secondary education, none have more impressively demonstrated the thoughtfulness, dedication, and passion necessary for effective teaching and learning. I will miss Dan when he leaves NIU, but my guts tell me that I will hear from him time and again as he makes an indelibly powerful mark in the field of education.

Passion lies at the heart of Dan's approach to teaching. He believes in the value of education and the value of self-reflection and wants his students to believe in these things as well. This attitude has led Dan to reject the idea that teaching involves some educated individual imparting knowledge to passive students. Instead, he believes that students learn best when they are actively engaged in their own learning. To achieve that end, Dan has pushed himself to design imaginative, creative lessons in which the students engage each other and the material at hand and arrive at thoughtful assessments and conclusions. Carrying out such student-centered lessons calls for particularly advanced interpersonal communication and classroom management skills, for such lessons veer far afield from the more traditional and relatively passive practice of lecture-based instruction. Dan is remarkably adept at successfully pulling off this challenge, partly because he genuinely enjoys students as people, and partly because he understands completely the necessity of thorough planning. He knows, in fact, that lessons which engage students take significantly more planning than teacher-centered instruction.

In terms of planning, Dan also has done a thorough job of preparing himself to teach a variety of the social science subdisciplines. Although he is completing the teacher certification program as a sociology major and is passionate about that field, he has recognized that to be an effective social science teacher he needs a fuller appreciation and understanding of history. In fact, he came by my office some months ago to discuss the possibility of double majoring in sociology and history, and we tried to work out a schedule that would accommodate this desire. Unfortunately, we could not come up with a reasonable schedule that would allow Dan to finish both majors in a relatively timely manner. He nevertheless pushed himself to take as much history as he could, and I suspect that he will continue to take history courses as he moves into his teaching career. I enjoyed having Dan as a student in my history courses (The Vietnam War and The Cold War) as much as I enjoyed and appreciated having him in the History/Social Science Teaching Methods class which immediately preceded his student teaching semester. He has shown me through his work in all of these classes that he is concerned about learning and is dedicated to finding the most effective way to generate that interest and concern in his future students.

I was not the least bit surprised when his classmates in the Teaching Methods course selected Dan as the winner of the J. Patrick White Scholarship, an award given every semester to the one person judged to have the greatest potential as a teacher. I thought at the time that it was a fitting tribute to Dan's achievements, and I suggest today that whatever school gives him his first entree into the profession will be as impressed with his work as were his peers.

Respectfully,


Bruce E. Field
Associate Professor of History
Secondary Teacher Certification Coordinator, History/Social Sciences