



Glenbrook North High School

Social Studies Department

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To Whom This May Concern:

It is my distinct pleasure to present to you a teaching candidate of outstanding promise. Mr. Dan Lazar has been my student teacher in Sociology during these past three months, and has impressed me from start to finish. Knowing what is at stake, cooperating teachers strive, whenever possible, to paint their student teachers in the best possible light. I am pleased to report that with Mr. Lazar my task could not be easier. He has exceeded even the highest of possible expectations for a beginning teacher. Sociology at Glenbrook North is an extremely popular elective. Students have come to expect a course that is challenging, thought provoking and entertaining. Mr. Lazar has not disappointed my students in the least. Indeed, they will be sorry to see him depart. I have some high expectations to meet when I return to the class in two weeks.

One is quickly impressed when he enters the classroom and sees Mr. Lazar at work. His poise and command in front of a group of students belie his relative inexperience. His presentation of material is eloquent and articulate. He speaks clearly, engagingly, and in language that while intelligent and scholarly, is accessible and intelligible to his students. He projects that sense of urgency and enthusiasm that is a hallmark of quality teaching. He manages discussion adroitly, allowing students to find their own voices while making spare, judicious interjections which maintain scholarly focus. His "time on task" is high. He gets class started soon and maintains student engagement to the bell. And he does all this while maintaining a friendly, honest, accessible and very humorous demeanor that students find very attractive. It is no wonder that my students warmed to him almost instantly.

Mr. Lazar's personality is certainly a great strength in the classroom. He does so well in the classroom partly because of who he is beyond and outside of it. He is an interesting person with a wide range of passions, a restless, curious sort who can find something worth discussing in most any situation, setting or subject. And he is, in more ways than for most student teachers one encounters in the suburbs, a self-made man. He has worked continuously to pay for his college education, all the while earning outstanding marks. His educational philosophy is in keeping with what quality social studies teachers value. He sees little use in filling students up with facts and figures merely so that they can regurgitate information back on tests.

Rather, he uses scholarly material and subject matter to make students challenge their assumptions, think about their beliefs and values, and better understand and appreciate themselves, their neighbors, and the world that they live in. This approach to teaching is entirely consistent with Mr. Lazar's own beliefs and experiences. He appreciates more than most the value and the magic that an education can hold, and he wants his students to get the same from their educations as he has from his.

Mr. Lazar's success is, however, owed to far more than personality and belief. It is indeed rooted in a lot of knowledge and hard work. He is extremely well-versed in the discipline of sociology. He has encountered no problems in comprehending the subject matter and objectives of my course. Far from being "textbook-bound," he has handled the course material like a ten-year veteran. In fact, he has added depth and breadth to certain units from which I have learned quite a bit and will use when he has gone. If I were a department chair and were looking for a teacher who could design and implement an outstanding Sociology course from scratch, I would look no further than Mr. Lazar.

Further, Mr. Lazar has demonstrated skill and commitment to teaching which will translate well into whatever courses he teaches. Day after day, he has arrived early and stayed late. He has devised thoughtful, creative lesson plans and even entire units with little help from me. Due to his diligence and competence, I have been happily reduced to the role of consultant. He has marshalled an impressive array of materials for use in our class, including music, film, statistics, primary sources and articles. And he has displayed creativity and variety in the classroom, utilizing not only lecture and discussion, but also simulations, role-play, surveys and guest speakers. These activities have not been "gimmicks" designed to fill time or to pay lip-service to the idea of creativity in teaching. They have been well-considered. They have been used judiciously. And they have worked.

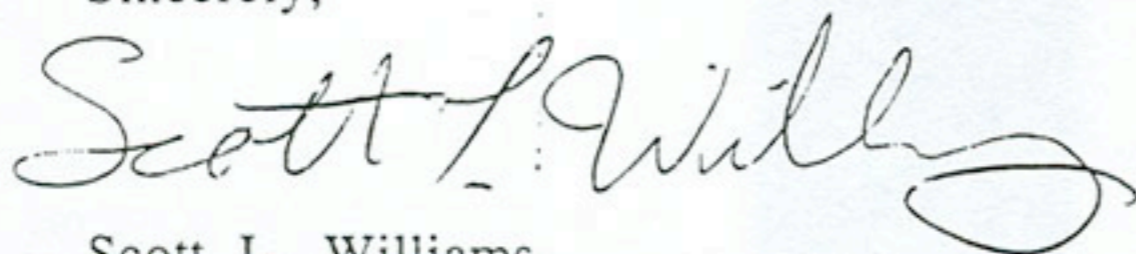
Though I have not served as Mr. Lazar's cooperating teacher for U.S. History, I can, due to the proximity of his work desk to mine, attest to the tremendous effort he has put into that assignment as well. Though not as thoroughly versed in U.S. History, and a little less confident about his abilities in that subject, Mr. Lazar has nevertheless produced scores of excellent lesson plans for that course as well. I have spoken to several students from his U.S. History courses who have been favorably impressed with his performance in their classroom. And I have seen him spend countless hours consulting with his U.S. History students at his work space about essays, upcoming exams, lessons that they missed due to absence or didn't quite understand, and any other topics or concerns that they had. I have been surprised and impressed by what Mr. Lazar understands about our country's history, and truly impressed by the ability he has for communicating understanding and interest in the subject to his students.

Finally, Mr. Lazar has from start to finish worked to cultivate good

relationships with his students, cooperating teachers, and the staff at large. He has frequently asked students for assessment of his performance and has taken their criticisms to heart. He has demanded honest criticism from me and has taken that just as well. He has spoken to other members of our staff and petitioned them for ideas, opinions and lesson plans. Most important for me, he has striven to uphold the standards that I set for my classroom, and implemented the general design of my course while incorporating so much of his own material. He has, in short, demonstrated an almost desperate desire to do excellent work. And he has succeeded.

Obviously, I have a lot of respect for Mr. Lazar, and great expectations for his teaching future. He has done terrific work within a demanding and challenging school setting. He is not going to "develop into" a good teacher. He is one right now. And, given how well he relates to people from all backgrounds, he can teach in any type of school district. Inner-city, working class, middle class, affluent college prep, you name it, Mr. Lazar can teach there, and teach well. He has been an asset to Glenbrook North High School, and he can be so anywhere. Of that I have no doubt. If I can answer any questions or provide more information about Mr. Lazar, I would be more than happy to do so. Please feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Scott L. Williams". The signature is fluid and includes a large, decorative flourish at the end of the name.

Scott L. Williams
Social Studies Instructor
Glenbrook North High School
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