



81 Providence Street
Worcester, Massachusetts 01604

PHONE 508 754 5302
WEB WORCESTERACADEMY.ORG

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To Whom it May Concern:

I would like to recommend Aaron Stephenson wholeheartedly for his expert teaching and leadership among colleagues. Aaron leads by example, honing his craft, engaging in and encouraging self-reflection with students and colleagues, and making full use of local resources to provide authentic linguistic and cultural experiences to students.

When I started teaching Mandarin at Worcester Academy in 2010, Aaron was my World Languages department chair. During his time as chair, I always looked forward to department meetings because of the genial yet focused discussion, which created an ideal environment for me to grow as a young teacher. His leadership in the process of developing departmental standards and benchmarks helped me think about my courses in a rigorous manner. Aaron was committed to introducing Mandarin to the World Languages Department in the right way; he pushed for its inclusion in the middle school, and supported my colleague Yuming Lu and me as we grew our program and started a trip abroad to China. In retrospect I have come to appreciate how lucky I was to start out in the teaching profession with a department chair as skillful, evenhanded, and supportive as Aaron.

Aaron has always been a model to me of an effective World Language teacher. Aaron encourages students not only to approach all facets of the class in the target language, but to reflect meaningfully on their performance through detailed surveys. Rather than relying on imperfect textbooks, he has put the effort into developing his own curricula grounded in authentic materials and experiences. His students regularly engage with Spanish literature, and Aaron has brought in a variety of guests to his classes including Worcester's former Poet Laureate Juan Matos and Quinsigamond College Music Professor José Castillo. In the latter case, students also benefited from Aaron's own passion for music as he joined Professor Castillo on the guitar. When I think about the various standards and best practices for World Language teachers I have encountered throughout my graduate school career and teaching experience, Aaron exemplifies them all. He draws students into the study and use of language by providing meaningful experiences and tasks to engage them. I still have a lot to learn from Aaron's work. He is a cherished colleague, and I recommend him without reservation as an asset to any World Language program.

Sincerely,

Jeffrey Lutter McCreight

History and Mandarin Teacher

301-233-0477