

West Hill Secondary School
750 9th Street West
Owen Sound, ON
N4K 3P6

April 1, 2012

Dear Sir or Madam,

I am writing this letter to recommend Sterling MacNay for a teaching position. As Mr. MacNay's associate teacher, I observed and worked with him for six weeks in an English classroom setting, and so I feel qualified to say that Mr. MacNay is very effective secondary teacher. During the six-week practicum, Mr. MacNay fulfilled my teaching assignment: three sections of ENG4C. He taught the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* from start to finish, including a mini-unit on essay writing.

Mr. MacNay was always thoroughly prepared and very professional in all of his duties. He enthusiastically discussed his lesson plans for each day, especially the ways in which he would approach each lesson differently based on the students in each class and their needs. Mr. MacNay was committed to improving his teaching practice as much as possible. He engaged in constant reflection and was very open to constructive criticism, both of which he used to refine his plans for the next day, or sometimes the next class during the same day.

Mr. MacNay demonstrated a solid understanding of curriculum and identified meaningful ways to assess students' skills and knowledge. Each formulative task was followed up with a summative or consolidating task which reinforced student learning. Mr. MacNay made use of a variety of assessment strategies, such as quizzes, essays, class discussions, debates, homework checks, anecdotal notes, checklists, and rubrics. He demonstrated the ability to match assessment to expectations and the tasks he asked students to complete. For example, when planning an essay test to end the novel unit, he designed and delivered a mini-unit on essay writing, in which he assessed students' prior knowledge and writing skills. He then taught students how to write an essay, including a proper thesis, supporting arguments, quotations, and MLA citations and bibliography. He gave students the opportunity to refine these skills over the course of several practice essays, and he gave immediate and appropriate feedback on their writing. The students were well prepared to use these skills and apply them to a literary essay.

Mr. MacNay encouraged students to make use of the accommodations described in their IEPs. He also differentiated his instruction as needed, giving students opportunities to learn the material in different ways, such as listening to an audiobook of the novel on their iPods while reading, or blogging their journal entries on his Moodle site with their smartphones or

computers. He always took into consideration students' different learning styles and needs. He demonstrated that he could be flexible when necessary, i.e. changing due dates for students who had been ill or who needed more time to complete an assignment.

Mr. MacNay consistently shows commitment to students and their learning. He greeted the students at the door each day and made a noticeable effort to develop a rapport with as many students as possible, including learning the names of all seventy-two students by the middle of the second week. Mr. MacNay's strength lies in grabbing students' interest and making connections between the literature and the students' own experiences.

Mr. MacNay is an effective communicator, in both written and spoken language. During classroom discussions, Mr. MacNay showed that he valued the students' opinions, and that their interpretations of the novel are as important as the teacher's. Not only did he treat students equitably and with respect, but he got the students to think critically about why it is necessary to treat others with respect. Mr. MacNay promoted a positive learning environment, in which he reinforced positive behaviour. One of his great strengths is in his calm approach: he speaks to students as adults, in a way that demonstrates his respect for them, not talking down to them as some teachers do. His classroom management techniques are solid, and he is ready for the challenges of setting up his own classroom.

Mr. MacNay puts much effort into his lesson plans, and his passion for teaching and learning comes across in his classroom practice. He takes his role as a teacher seriously, but he still makes his classes interesting and enjoyable for his students. I would not hesitate to recommend Mr. MacNay for a teaching position, because he approaches everything in a professional and considered manner.

Yours sincerely,

Bonnie Cameron, B.A., B.Ed.
English and History Teacher
West Hill Secondary School