



April 26, 2013

To Whom it May Concern,

I am pleased to recommend Alison Bongiorno that I have had the pleasure to supervise over the last semester. As a background to our program, Penn State Art Education students are required to student teach in Pittsburgh during their last semester, to insure that they comprehend the complexities of the urban teaching experience and its relationship to the larger educational climate. During their semester in Pittsburgh, they have both an elementary and a secondary teaching placement. The coursework includes a variety of assignments designed to immerse students in the culture of their schools while also preparing them to step into their future position, capable of accepting all responsibilities with a high degree of accomplishment.

As a brief background to their experiences, they have created a standards-based unit at both the elementary and secondary level, using both informal and formal assessment strategies, including a comprehensive evaluation and modification of a unit based on a student with an IEP. Students are also asked to participate in a video taping of two of their lessons and then complete a formal critique of their teaching using the PDE430 criteria for teaching excellence, which introduces them to the importance of self-evaluation as a parallel experience to their future professional evaluations. It was also my intention to insure that students were introduced to the connections that can be made between non profit organizations and schools, to assist them in understanding the benefits of these relationships to bring added support and resources to their future teaching environments.

Ms. Bongiorno's first placement was at the Gifted Center, connected to Pittsburgh City School. This is a unique school, as students come from their home school to experience enrichment on a weekly basis. Ms. Bongiorno quickly formed a life-long partnership with her mentor teacher and stepped right into teaching, demonstrating her love for ceramics and passing this passion on to students through engaging lessons. Students respond well to her energy and enthusiasm where she challenged them to think, talk, create and reflect on their work, providing them multiple opportunities to critically engage with art.

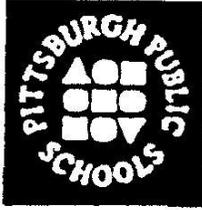
Alison's elementary placement, Wesley Spectrum Academy is a private school for students in need of academic, social and therapeutic support. Alison honed her abilities to modify material for the needs of diverse learners in addition to finding the best way to encourage students who lack self-confidence. She also assisted with the creation of the yearbook, leaving behind, for future classes, an InDesign tutorial.

Her energy, enthusiasm, will transform any situation into a positive, critical-learning environment. She knows what it takes; you can count on her to always do her best, and to bring a professional attitude that will engage all students to do their best work.

With a high recommendation, I welcome any further communication,

Sincerely,

Renee Kredell
Assistant Professor of Art Education,
Supervisor of Student Teaching
Penn State University
rck147@psu.edu



Pittsburgh Gifted Center
1400 Crucible Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15205
Dr. Jerry Minsinger, Principal
Phone (412)338-3820
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April 15, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to recommend Alison Bongiorno as an Art Teacher for your school. I was very fortunate to have been able to mentor an outstanding Art Teacher, as Miss Bongiorno, during this past semester at the Pittsburgh Gifted Center. I was honored to work with such a talented, dedicated and highly motivated teacher candidate.

Miss Bongiorno has exceptional artistic talent and intuitive leadership skills. She will bring her enthusiasm for teaching to any classroom and motivate all of her students. Alison was able to use her exceptional talents in planning integrated activities to enhance the lessons in multiple classes. She had developed comprehensive lessons merging mediums and content areas. Her lessons were well planned with inclusion of multi-media visuals, hands-on demonstrations, planning worksheets and assessment rubrics. She has a vast knowledge of art history and cultural influences in the various styles of fine art, sculpture and craft. She was able to provide impressive demonstrations and lead thematic units for the Middle School students. Miss Bongiorno has a strong understanding of the process of making art and implementing projects for her students. Her confidence provided a great structure for the classroom dynamics. She quickly gained the students' respect and cooperation as she shared new experiences with them and had personal engagement.

Miss Bongiorno entered our program with professional work and travel experience. She has great work habits and is extremely dedicated to her assignments. During the past eight weeks, I witnessed Miss Bongiorno to be conscientious of her work and classroom environment by maintaining organization and productivity. Alison had dedicated additional hours in the classroom to be prepared for her lessons and to rotate students' projects for storage or to place their ceramic pieces into the kiln. She is dedicated to the profession of art education by committing the necessary time for thorough lesson plans, methodical demonstrations and professional classroom management skills to offer a stimulating, safe, and productive classroom for her students.

Miss Bongiorno is a very friendly and caring person. She adapted well to the needs and interests of the Middle School students. She has a very kind and positive dialogue with her students. She developed a consistent and respectful discipline plan in the classroom, while including motivational strategies and her sense of humor. The students at the Pittsburgh Gifted Center quickly connected with Miss Bongiorno's friendly personality and encouragement. Alison was often tutoring students during her lunch break. I know she enjoyed the opportunity to develop relationships with her students as much as they enjoyed getting to know her. This relationship transferred back to the atmosphere of the classroom as the students responded to her with great respect and interest.

Miss Bongiorno is a dynamic art teacher. We were all glad to have had her in our school community for a short time. I hope she will have her own Art classroom very soon. I know she will be a great asset to any school. Please don't pass up this talented art teacher!

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Cynthia L. Blackwell".

Cynthia L. Blackwell
Cooperating Teacher, Visual Arts

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Phone: 412-338-3820 | Fax: 412-338-8665 | www.pps.k12.pa.us/pittsburghgifted

Dr. Jerry Minsinger, Principal

March 7, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to write this letter on behalf of Alison Bongiorno. Ms. Bongiorno served as a student teacher at the Pittsburgh Gifted Center during the Second Semester of the 2012-13 school year. I have observed Ms. Bongiorno establish a structured and caring classroom for students. She assumed responsibility for rigorous course designs in Art and created a classroom environment of high expectations. She took on a difficult challenge and made it work. The students were the beneficiaries of her diligent persistence.

Ms. Bongiorno uses a variety of techniques to accommodate different learning styles. Her teaching style integrates content knowledge with process skill development to enrich learning for students. I observed direct instruction, flexible groups, high level discussions, and the use of instructional technology. Alison scaffolds instruction to build success and opportunities for children to explore, create, and think deeply about content and process.

Ms. Bongiorno is committed to improving her practice through regular reflection and conversations with other professionals. She spends significant amounts of time creating and modifying engaging lessons that give students opportunities to explore and “own” their work. In addition, Alison consistently fulfills her responsibilities above and beyond her role as a classroom teacher. Her willingness to support children and our school is exemplary.

Ms. Bongiorno’s skills, and ability to see each child as an individual, provide her with a strong foundation to be a successful teacher. She is a team player who sees the value of learning from her peers. She implements “best practices” that she learns from other professionals. I highly recommend Alison Bongiorno as a Classroom Teacher. If you have any questions, please call me at 412-338-3820.

Sincerely,

Jerry Minsinger
Principal



May 8, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this letter of recommendation on behalf of Ms. Alison R. Bongiorno who is applying for an art teaching position in your school. I've known Ms. Bongiorno for approximately two years during which time she was a student in my art education courses in the School of Visual Arts at Penn State University and, as of this writing, she is about to complete her student teaching in the Pittsburgh city schools.

Ms. Bongiorno is a highly motivated artist and teacher. Her research, writing, and creative work in my classes were of the highest quality. She contributed and, in many instances, led class discussions about art, visual culture, and the significance of these practices in affecting children's creative and intellectual development. She approached her studies and her creative projects with enthusiasm and a profound interest in how the visual arts can make difference in children's contemporary cultural life.

The compositions, craftsmanship, and concepts in the artworks that Ms. Bongiorno created in our studio program evoked great interest among faculty, students, and the public. Whether working in the wood and metal shop, the foundry pouring bronze and other metals, or the ceramics studio, she was always immersed in a process of exploration and experimentation that led to thought provoking images and ideas. She brings that creative impulse to her student-centered K-12 teaching practice, and to her abilities in developing standards-based art lessons and assessments.

In addition to her student teaching experiences in the Pittsburgh city schools, Ms. Bongiorno served as an art education intern in the "Helping Hands" project in both the elementary and secondary schools in the State College Area School District in State College, Pennsylvania. This and the several affiliations and community involvements listed on her resume indicate her high level of participation and commitment to art education and community outreach.

As for her ability to get along with others, Ms. Bongiorno is a caring and compassionate person who is always willing to help her students and to work collaboratively with colleagues. When things need to get down, she is one who rolls up her sleeves and inspires others to get the job done together. I highly recommend Ms. Bongiorno for the teaching position that you are searching knowing that she will be an outstanding member of your faculty and your school community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Charles R. Garoian".

Charles R. Garoian