



OVERLAND PRAIRIE CAMPUS

Overland High School
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OVERLAND-PRAIRIE CAMPUS: A SCIENCE TECHNOLOGY ENGINEERING AND MATHEMATICS CAMPUS

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To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to recommend Hannah Smith for the orchestra teaching position at your school. As the band director at Overland High School, I have seen firsthand the impact that Hannah has had on her students, the school, and the community at large.

Five years ago, the orchestra program was in shambles, having a small number of students enrolled, and those students who remained were lacking the skills necessary to be successful. However, in just a few short years, Hannah has reenergized the orchestra program at Overland. She has increased enrollment from around 40 to 130, her students consistently make regional and state honor ensembles, and her ensembles repeatedly receive superior ratings. Her students now have the techniques and knowledge needed to perform at a high level, and they are proud to be in orchestra. Hannah helped stabilize the Overland instrumental booster group so that it began making money, fixed up the instrumental music room so that students could take pride in their practice areas, and has taken leadership roles in the school to promote the successes and needs of instrumental music at Overland and in the district.

I joke that Hannah should change her mailing address to the school address since she spends so much time here. I find her here before school, after school, over weekends, and during breaks from school. She helps the middle school orchestra director during her planning periods and helps with recruitment and vertical alignment during planning and breaks. Hannah truly goes out of her way to do anything that is necessary to see students be successful. Music constantly flows from the instrumental music hallway as her students can be found at all hours of the day practicing, a stark contrast to five years ago when the hallway was devoid of orchestra students outside of class time. Hannah's dedication has created a culture of excellence that is exemplified by her students loving music, music making, and her. The relationships she has developed and the time she has spent with students have made her students believe in themselves and the program.

Hannah conducts efficient and rigorous rehearsals. She plans effectively and holds the students to a high standard. Students comment that she is tough, but at the same time, I see them go to extremes for her and the orchestra because she cares so much. She spends the necessary time putting truly meaningful preparation into class to maximize the time she and her students have together. Hannah is always reflecting on her teaching and conducting. If something in a rehearsal does not go as planned, she always reflects on what she could do better as a teacher to allow the students to be more successful.

Hannah is a terrific colleague. Over the last 13 years that I have either been teaching full time at a public school or involved in marching bands, I have experienced firsthand the difference between colleagues that truly care about students and music and those who are only concerned with themselves and their program. Hannah collaborates with all of the performing groups in the performing arts department at Overland. She has had orchestras play with the choirs, the bands, and the theatre department. The performing arts department, both the staff and students, are close as a result of teachers like Hannah being opened minded to collaboration. She truly wants students to be involved in performing arts in some way, whether it be band, choir, orchestra, or theatre.

To conclude, I feel as though this letter falls short in conveying the deep appreciation and admiration I have for Hannah Smith and her work at Overland High School. She is inspirational to students, staff, and myself and is a model for dedication, learning, and care for kids. The students at Overland deserve talented teachers just as students in more privileged areas do, and they have one in Hannah. It has been a privilege to work with Hannah over the last five years, and although I would be disheartened to see her move to another school, as she is an amazing colleague, I want the best for her because she is a fine person and a terrific teacher. I know that she will be beneficial to any performing arts program at any school and without a doubt, I recommend her for your school's orchestra director position.

Sincerely,

Ryan A. Monarch
Director of Bands
Overland High School



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