

6817 Brookville Rd

Chevy Chase

MD 20815

18th May 2015

RECOMMENDATION LETTER for Ms KATIE NIMITARNUN for a potential Teaching position

To whom it may concern:

We would very much like to recommend the potential employment of Ms. Katie L. Nimitarnun (aka Ms. N) as a teacher in your school or school district. Ms. N is our daughter's 5th Grade Home Room teacher at Chevy Chase Elementary School (CCES), Montgomery County MD in this current academic year, and she was also our daughter's 3rd Grade Teacher in the 2012 – 2013 academic year.

In addition to our 5th grade daughter we have twin boys who are high school seniors at Bethesda Chevy Chase High School (BCC) and who will graduate in May 2015. Our sons started pre-school in Atlanta in 1999 and we moved to Montgomery County in 2006. I mention that because we can say categorically that in the 16 years we have been parents-of-kids-in-schools Ms. N is absolutely the best teacher any of our kids have ever had.

Ms. N is a truly exceptional and gifted teacher for the following reasons:

1. Her domain knowledge and abilities at different levels of the pre K – grade 5 elementary school experience;
2. Her thorough knowledge of the subject matter and her ability to communicate with the kids;
3. Her high levels of enthusiasm and energy in the classroom;
4. Her ability to work with the kids to have them set and achieve high goals;
5. Her ability to build relationships with parents, colleagues and community members;
6. The fact that she does go the extra mile to ensure that all her students get the support they need.

I would like to provide some detailed examples for each one of these categories:

1. Her domain knowledge and abilities at different levels of the pre K – grade 5 elementary school experience;

In 2012/13 Ms. N was the lead of the 3rd Grade team at CCES. She is currently the lead of the 5th Grade team, and taught our daughter in both those years. To be honest, our daughter struggled somewhat in the 1st and 2nd grades and entered the third grade behind most of her peers particularly in terms of reading and comprehension. Ms. N has a tremendous passion for reading and was able to transmit this to all the kids – particularly our daughter. In spite of the challenges of transition to the new Curriculum 2.0, and transition to the Common Core Ms. N had a clear view of what each of the kids needed in the classroom and the dedication and focus to deliver it. In 1st grade and 2nd grade some teachers expressed

frustration to us concerning Curriculum 2.0, and seemed to have challenges transitioning to it. This was never an issue with Ms. N whose commitment, dedication and focus on the classroom was unwavering.

2. Her thorough knowledge of the subject matter and her ability to communicate with the kids;

Over the years we have spent a lot of time in my kids' elementary school classrooms and we have often marveled at the skills and experiences of elementary school teachers. As parents we sometimes struggle to maintain order and structure with our 3 children – but elementary school teachers have 24 or more to deal with, and do so seemingly effortlessly. Ms. N's command of the classroom is second to none. She is prepared, each day is structured, each kid has a role or a task to perform on the daily and weekly and monthly schedule of events and activities. The kids are energized and engaged. However, Ms. N can also deal with negative situations extremely well:

On one particular school field trip which one of us participated in as a chaperone there was one kid, who was having behavior and attention challenges, and who behaved somewhat inappropriately to another student. The offending child's parent was at a loss as to how to respond and react and Ms. N stepped in firmly and clearly and let the child know the standards of behavior and mutual respect that were expected as part of a CCES field trip. It was action that was swift, decisive, effective and very kind.

3. Her high levels of enthusiasm and energy in the classroom;

When we ask our daughter why does she love Ms. N so much she says: "because she is always smiling, and she is never sad, she understands what you are doing and she always gives you advice to improve your work." One of Ms. N's unique talents is she is always able to focus on and emphasize the positive, and in any particular situation with the kids she is always able to find a positive aspect to illustrate. She also constantly motivates the kids to behave positively. Not only does she give classroom awards for high performance, or major improvement in specific academic exercises, but she also works hard to recognize kids who are demonstrating very positive behavior, kindness and support of others, which creates a very positive, high energy, supporting classroom environment.

4. Her ability to work with the kids to have them set and achieve high goals

For our daughter her single biggest challenge entering 3rd grade was that she was behind in reading and comprehension. It was something as a family we struggled with, we tried extra tutors, we tried simpler books more attuned to her interests (e.g. sports) but nothing seemed to work, our daughter was losing her confidence and motivation and things just seemed to be getting worse as we started 3rd grade.

It is impossible for us to exaggerate the tremendously positive impact Ms. N had on our daughter. Today she is a confident and capable reader, performing at level. It is not that Ms. N taught her how to read – Ms. N taught her how to enjoy reading - and – perhaps even more importantly – how to be confident.

For us, as parents, this is the real talent and mark of an impressive and exceptional teacher. Our daughter had a very specific problem related to fear and lack of confidence with respect to reading and comprehension. The harder we tried to solve this problem, the worse it seemed to get. Ms. N's approach to the problem was a combination of her professionalism, her teaching techniques, her

patience, her genuine enthusiasm, her high energy, her strong drive, her focused dedication, her real passion and her boundless commitment. We really wish Montgomery County – and every school district in America – could find a way to distill those different ingredients, bottle them and then sprinkle them over every teacher in America.

5. Her ability to build relationships with parents, colleagues and community members

Simply put Ms. N is a master communicator with parents. More than any teacher we have ever worked with before, her frequent, brief and incisive communications have done a lot to build a core group of engaged and committed parents who support both Ms. N's work in the classroom, participation in classroom activities, school events, field trips, and a wide variety of other activities. Three specific types of parental communication are worth emphasizing:

- *General email updates* - on a weekly or fortnightly basis, or coming up to a specific event, Ms. N will send an email to the entire class' parent group to outline what is happening, set our expectations and request any help or participation
- *Individual email notes* – We do not know how she does it, but Ms. N keeps in almost constant individual email contact with all parents giving them brief point updates when a child has made progress, done something praiseworthy, or helped another kids in the class – this really helps all the parents in the class to be as engaged, supportive and part of “ Team Ms. N” as much as possible
- *Face-to-face updates* – at each Parent-Teacher conference meeting Ms. N is always incredibly well prepared, goes into great detail and is able to focus on the strengths and achievements as well as the opportunities for improvement. Each time we leave those meetings we are encouraged by the progress our daughter has made, clear on where focus and attention is needed and resolute that we are Ms. N's partners in continuing to make progress.

On a less formal note, every time she goes to visit her family in California, in the summer and winter breaks, Ms. N sends each kid in the class a post card from her home town of Seal Beach, with an individual message and greeting on the card. This is a small touch, but one which brings great excitement to each family in her class.

6. The fact that she does go the extra mile to ensure that all her students get the support they need

Not only is Ms. N fully engaged with each kid in the classroom, and fully aware of everything going on inside the classroom, but she is constantly asking the kids “ Is anything going on in the lunch room or the playground or elsewhere that I can help you with?” During recess at CCES the 5th grade boys and girls play soccer on alternate days. Our daughter is a keen soccer player, and was invited to join the boys and played with them regularly. After a few weeks some of the 5th grade girls decided they did not like this and wanted her to stop – “forbidding” her from playing with the boys. This had quite an adverse impact on our daughter, she stopped wanting to go to school on the boys' soccer days, she lost enthusiasm for soccer, she feigned illness etc. Ms. N was instrumental in resolving this

situation by going to the playground and playing soccer with Lily, and the boys - and other girls. Her effective leadership and example outside of the classroom defused a worrying situation for us.

In conclusion, thank you for the time taken to read this letter of support and recommendation for Ms. N, whilst we would be saddened by any potential departure from CCES we wish her all the best she would be a tremendous asset to any school or school district.

Yours Faithfully

Paul McGowan

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(Parents of Lily R. McGowan, 5th Grade, CCES)