



January 12, 2015

To Whom It May Concern,

Brandy Wortinger worked as a fourth grade teacher in my division for six years. It was an amazing partnership; I am so grateful to have had the opportunity to work with her. Brandy is extraordinarily organized. She not only encourages her students to be well organized, she develops thoughtful and efficient structures and tools that help them achieve that goal. She has been acutely aware that she is preparing her students to go on to Middle School, and she works diligently to help them develop independence and confidence.

The format of our Lower School literacy curriculum is workshop based. Brandy was a pioneer in the adoption of this approach for Catherine Cook. Her inclination to make strong, authentic connections with her students fits so well with the one-on-one nature of reading and writing workshops. Her mini-lessons are engaging and her individual coaching and small group work are exemplary. Brandy initiated “Tea Talk” with her fourth graders. Each month she has a selection of fairly sophisticated and theme-based picture books on display. The children read them in their spare time and on a designated day when most of the students have read them, Brandy makes tea and the children sit comfortably in small groups, sip their tea and talk about the books. It’s both motivating and charming. In the winter, she might substitute hot chocolate for tea. Brandy encourages deep reading whether the children are reading picture books or chapter books, and the conversation during Tea Talk or during Reading Workshop always reflects the multi-layered interpretations she expects and teaches them to make.

Our math curriculum is UCSMP *Everyday Mathematics*. Brandy understands the iterative and spiral nature of this program. She also helps children develop their mathematical thinking skills, rather than expecting rote memorization of facts and procedures. She has really effective techniques for differentiating instruction, facilitating review and using assessments to determine what to teach next and to whom. She maintains an excellent classroom website with many links for the students to use to find math challenges or remedial practice, if that’s what they need. Her communication with parents is always appropriate; she appreciates the benefits of a strong school-parent partnership. The website is just one of several channels Brandy uses to stay in touch with parents and keep them in the loop of what is going on in the classroom.

Our social studies curriculum consists of project-based, teacher-created units of study. Brandy has developed extensive, content rich, technology enhanced units on a variety of topics including financial literacy, service learning, East Asia and Jerry Spinelli. Her research was thorough, her big ideas well developed, her student activities engaging and student-centered and her assessments reasonable and formative. Curriculum development is an area in which Brandy is brilliant. You can tell she really enjoys the challenge.

what school should be

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Last year, Catherine Cook decided to explore the possibilities of teaching coding from Early Childhood through Middle School. It promised to be an ambitious undertaking and was daunting for several teachers. Brandy embraced the idea, researched it independently and shared her enthusiasm and newly developed expertise with many of her colleagues. Her positive, generous, can-do spirit is an inspiration; she makes any project more fun. Her kindness, sense of humor, and willingness to do more than her fair share have made her a treasured colleague who will be greatly missed.

The most extraordinary thing about Brandy is her ability and desire to connect with her students. Brandy has a special gift for finding and appreciating what is unique about her students, especially her students who have struggled socially or who have had difficulty connecting with teachers in the past. She makes the time to have meaningful conversations with her students, and the relationships she forms with them are the basis for their willingness to take risks and give their best efforts. Her students truly feel they have an advocate in Brandy.

Brandy is a warm, generous, gracious person. She is an exemplary, skilled and passionate teacher. She has a great sense of humor and can keep a conversation from going south with just the right comment or suggestion. I am so incredibly sorry to lose her. She will be an extraordinary addition to any faculty she joins. Please feel free to contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

Pamela Pifer, Ed.D.

Head of the Lower School