

MICHIGAN STATE UNIVERSITY

28 April 2013

620 S. Farm Lane Road
317 Erickson Hall
East Lansing, MI 48824

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write to recommend Elizabeth (Lizzie) Nash for a position as a mathematics teacher at your school. Lizzie was a student in two courses I taught (TE 802 and 804) from Fall 2012 to Spring 2013, as well as two courses I supervised (TE 407 and 408) from Fall 2011 to Spring 2012. TE 802 and 804 are graduate-level courses designed to develop students' capacity for reflection upon practice and using reflection before, during, and after a lesson to improve practice. During the courses, I engaged with Lizzie during class discussions and small group work, reviewed and provided feedback to lesson plans she developed, observed her teach lessons to her peers, and reviewed a variety of papers she wrote, from teaching philosophies to unit plans to reports of results from lesson study projects. Therefore, I am able to comment on her beliefs about mathematics teaching, her knowledge of mathematics for teaching, and her ability to plan and enact lessons in secondary classrooms.

Lizzie has an infectious enthusiasm for teaching that is matched by a strong commitment to continually improving her practice. She is conscientious about the importance of incorporating her assessments of students' understanding as she plans each lesson. She also has a refreshing perspective on becoming an excellent teacher; she is not afraid to take risks and learn from her mistakes. In my experience as a teacher educator, this is seldom seen in a preservice teacher. Lizzie strives for her best, but she is not thrown off if something unexpected happens in her lesson or something doesn't go as well as she expected. She is quick to reflect upon those moments afterward and, instead of dwelling on them, comes up with her own strategies for changing the outcome in the future.



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As an MSU intern, Lizzie completed 12 graduate credits of coursework while students teaching for a full year at Holt High School in the 9th grade campus. This is a challenging load, but Lizzie and a fellow intern took initiative to seek out professional development opportunities such as attending an NCTM Regional Conference in Chicago to broaden her tool kit. One of the activities they took from their experience at the regional conference turned into the subject of a collaborative lesson study with her mentor teacher and three fellow interns at the same high school. Previously, she collaborated with her fellow interns to implement an exploratory lesson to help students understand the meaning of pi in the formula for circumference by using string to compare the circumferences of different sized cylinders. These lesson studies exemplify Lizzie's approach to improving her practice; she is thoughtful, deliberate, and chooses to implement new ideas in a way that she can get feedback to learn from. I have truly enjoyed working with Lizzie; not only is she a conscientious student, she inspires me with her genuine enthusiasm and positive energy.

Please feel free to contact me at kbieda@msu.edu or 517-432-9925 to discuss Lizzie's merits further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kristen Bieda".

Kristen Bieda
Assistant Professor, Teacher Education
Secondary Mathematics Subject Area Leader