



June 1, 2006

Mary E. Hourdequin, Principal
Donna Nestler-Rusack, Assistant Principal
Michael Renkawitz, Assistant Principal

100 King Philip Drive, West Hartford, CT 06117
Phone (860) 233-8230 • Voice (860) 233-8236 • Fax (860) 233-0812

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to you in celebration and recommendation of a trusted friend and colleague, Richard de Meij.

In November 2004, my wife and I attended an awards banquet at Trinity College, during which Richard was honored by the city of Hartford's Southside Institutions Neighborhood Alliance [SINA] for his continued outstanding community service. Richard has been a volunteer ESOL (English as a second language) teacher for four years now at the AETNA Center for Families, located at the Learning Corridor Complex, on Washington Street in Hartford. This is just one of the many examples of how Richard is a dedicated member of the community, as well as how he contributes to the advocacy of maintaining World Language Programs and, ultimately, to the improvement of National Security of the United States through his dedication to teaching many languages and cultural diversity, by "breaking down communication barriers."

Few teachers incorporate the truly multi-modal approach to teaching as Richard does on a daily basis. Going above and beyond his peers and their traditional teaching methods, Richard regularly incorporates such highly effective, dynamic strategies that include singing, dancing, technology, amazing visuals and movement, all of which research shows to increase long term memory storage in learners. I have witnessed his teaching and have been inspired to, and now do, incorporate similar successful strategies that I have learned from Richard's examples.

Professionally, Richard consistently contributes to the development of his peers by sharing novel ideas and volunteering his assistance on many levels, ranging from helping on BEST Portfolios to teaching how to format documents in Microsoft Word. In our School District, he has regularly lead professional development workshops, and assisted in curriculum writing. He regularly does presentations at CTCOLT Conferences (CT Council Of Language Teachers), and at other conferences by invitation. His workshops often lead the way in incorporating music, dance and technology into lesson planning. Although he cannot always accept, he regularly gets invited to other school districts to conduct 'Music and Culture' workshops. He has also been invited, for the last three years in a row, by the state of Connecticut's summer teaching

certification program ARC [Alternative Route to Certification] to give a workshop/presentation on teaching methodologies and successful classroom activities for World Languages.

Richard's typical day starts at 5:00 am, at which time he prepares daily online lessons for a private, accredited high school. He is pioneering an online high school Spanish course for CCAVS (Central Connecticut Adventist Virtual School) through his church. He is currently also an active member of that school board. Later in the afternoon, after a full school day, at 6:00 pm he typically heads over to the AETNA Center for Families until 8:00pm, three times a week, to teach ESOL. While also being an active member of organizations such as ACTFL, the CTCOLT Conference Workshop Committee, he finds time to be a volunteer judge for Portuguese Language during the annual Statewide Poetry Contest. To say the least, Richard is selfless and passionate in his dedication to language teaching and education.

The most amazing part of all, is witnessing the 'magic' that overcomes the various students who attend Richard's classes and the inspiration that he imparts on them. His former supervisor, Judy Katzman, used to make Richard's classroom a regular observation stop for any teaching candidate or visitor to the district. When John DeMado, an outside consult and textbook editor for the district's chosen French textbook series "Allez, viens!", was invited to evaluate West Hartford's Public School's World Language Program, he commented on how effective Richard was in getting his students to speak in French and the high level of language "risk taking" the students exhibited. Mr. DeMado was quoted as saying, "Richard is one of the best that I have seen in West Hartford."

Personally, Richard is a devote Christian, who is an active and highly respected member of his church, where he has been a youth leader and teacher for several years. He regularly attends his faith's local and regional conferences. He also periodically leads his church's programs and helps with the publishing of materials by volunteering his technical word processing and formatting expertise. Above and beyond his faith, Richard is a person of tremendous work ethic, integrity and of great character. His is an immediate friend to anyone, and an inspiration to all.

Very Sincerely,



John Hegarty
French/Spanish Teacher
World Languages Department
King Philip Middle School