



Monday, 03 December 2007

To Whom It May Concern:

With pleasure I am writing you to introduce you to Ellen Gormley, whom I worked with here at the Zurich International School for the past 2 school years. Although we worked in different divisions of our school, Ellen and I collaborated on a project entitled "LEAD," the acronym for leading, educating, advocating, diversity. In short, I found Ellen to be an inspiring leader and educator to work with, and I feel her work with our students was very important in raising awareness of some key issues of inclusion and exclusion, in our school.

Ellen has a warm personality and relates very well with young people. Moreover, she quickly gains their trust with open and honest communication, and she has very high expectations for them, which has led to some significant student effort and work with LEAD. Our first project with the LEAD group was to hold a workshop with corporate trainers focusing on diversity and sensitivity training. The main trainer, Ron Halbright, who works with the National Coalition Building Institute (NCBI) here in Switzerland, led a fantastic workshop. Our students were buzzing about the activities that really pushed them and uncovered many hidden prejudices and highlighted the need for them – and all their peers – to develop further sensitivities to inclusion in our school.

Stemming from this workshop, the kids really began to work diligently on the project under Ellen's guidance. She pushed the kids to develop a strong and powerful activity called "Label Me," which was delivered to students across the Middle and Upper School spectrum at ZIS, and also to many of our faculty groups. The activity's goal was to uncover and highlight stereotypes that exist in our school, and included a most impressive series of debrief questions. The activities were entirely led by our LEAD kids and the feedback was extremely powerful. I still can recall one grade 9 student's thoughts when we were discussing a LEAD activity where students explored the stigma of stereotyping in schools: "The guy who said, "Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me" didn't know what he was talking about ... bruises heal."

Ellen Gormley cares about kids from all the right angles. She understands truly that if a child does not feel safe and welcome in a community of learners, it does not matter what the teacher is talking about. In essence, Ellen can see past the white boards and projects, and through to the really important reasons for being in education. If one of the key goals of a teacher is to "light the fire within" then Ellen simply gets it! How can you light a fire within a kid if you do not take time to understand them and cherish them for who they are? I imagine most school administrators would walk around their building and find very few teachers who fit this mold, and truly "get" this. Ellen Gormley is one of these teachers.

Ellen decided to leave ZIS at the end of the last school year in order to pursue a path in diversity training. I am most pleased to hear she is working with the NCBI presently offering workshops both within Switzerland's English-speaking schools community, and to other international schools in Europe. This is truly important for young people and adult groups to develop their sensitivity and understanding of diversity. I strongly recommend her to you in this capacity. She has a passion for this important work, and considerable talent as a leader.

Please feel free to contact me to discuss Ellen's work with our kids further, or for any other questions you have to support my recommendation for you to consider her for a position in this field.



Most sincerely,

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