



Canterbury Woods Elementary School

FAIRFAX COUNTY
PUBLIC SCHOOLS

4910 Willet Drive
Annandale, VA 22003

March 22, 2005

To Whom It May Concern:

Mrs. Danell Ricciardella taught for the past three years at Canterbury Woods Elementary School, and in that time she demonstrated that she is a master teacher who uses best practices in her classroom. She also demonstrated that she believes in teachers refining their craft through research, professional literature, and staff development. Her commitment to continual learning and her knowledge of current educational practices impressed me the most during her initial interview for a teaching position at the school. She was also chosen to conduct staff development for her former school district in hands-on math and science, also demonstrating that other administrators saw her as a highly skilled educator with the capacity to provide instructional leadership for other teachers.

At Canterbury Woods, Ms. Ricciardella taught third graders for two years and this year looped with her general education class to fourth grade. All of her parents agreed that she was an outstanding teacher and that their children were fortunate to be able to have her as a teacher for an additional year. She used differentiated instruction for her students after carefully assessing their needs. She had a wonderful relationship with the children and went out of her way to make each child feel that he or she was successful.

Mrs. Ricciardella used all available resources to support her students. She worked collaboratively with special education teachers, instructional assistants, and the reading specialist to provide meaningful instruction for all of her students. At team meetings, she actively participated, and provided support and ideas from her wealth of knowledge about students and learning.

Mrs. Ricciardella demonstrated excellent leadership skills and the desire to learn new instructional strategies. She actively participated in staff development opportunities both at the school and in the county, provided a workshop on interactive writing for parents and staff at Canterbury Woods and recently served as a teacher leader by attending Professional Learning Communities workshops in October and March with other Cluster II and III administrators and teacher leaders. As a result of those workshops, Ms. Pankas immediately worked on developing assessments in each curriculum area for her team that could be used to assess quarterly curriculum objectives.

At Canterbury Woods we often have Teachers as Readers groups meeting throughout the year. Mrs. Ricciardella joined two TAR groups and actively participated at every meeting. It is readily apparent that her colleagues respect her wealth of knowledge and level of understanding about students and learning and often seek her advice. She was a positive influence on her grade level team. One of her team members revealed to me that she was so glad that Mrs. Ricciardella was on her team because she was always positive and professional and wanted to discuss ways to solve problems and bring about effective change.

Mrs. Ricciardella has been a welcome addition to our school. She not only consistently provided her students with an excellent education based on the latest instructional practices she also created a learning environment of respect and responsibility where students developed a deeper understanding of concepts through an inquiry approach. She worked cooperatively with administrators, parents, and staff alike, and significantly contributed to the goals of the school.

Last year and this year, Mrs. Ricciardella performed many administrative tasks to support her educational leadership degree program. Our school benefited from her training in a variety of ways. She consistently

contributed on the school-wide leadership team, as well as re-designed our school-based mentor program, and established our first Teachers as Researchers program at the school. Mrs. Ricciardella also, through her interest in business partnerships, was able to partner with one of our parents to provide enrichment programs for our students.

Any principal would be fortunate to employ Mrs. Ricciardella as a teacher or as an assistant principal. They would be getting a child-centered individual who modeled best practices as a classroom teacher, has excellent leadership skills, and who is extremely organized and highly professional. If, and when, she returns to Fairfax County, and I have a vacancy, I would immediately offer her a position at Canterbury Woods. She always has a home at our school.

Respectfully submitted by,



Barbara Messinger

Principal

Canterbury Woods E.S.

Cc: Local School File