

BEFORE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
STATE OF NEBRASKA

Melissa Converse
5840 Abigail Drive
Lincoln, NE 68516

Petitioner,

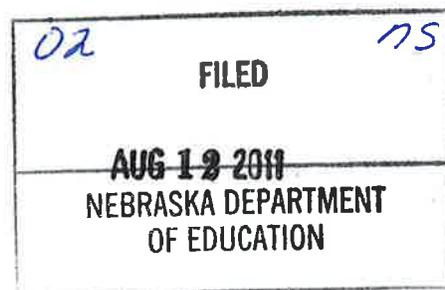
v.

Roger Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education
P.O. Box 94933
Lincoln, NE 68509

Respondent.

Case No. 11-11

ANSWER



COMES NOW the Respondent, Roger Breed, and for his answer to the Petition of the
Petitioner, admits, denies, and alleges as follows:

1. Respondent admits paragraphs 1-4 in the Petition.
2. Respondent denies paragraph 5 in the Petition.

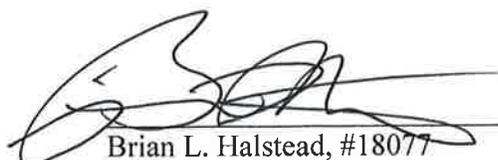
WHEREFORE, the Respondent requests that the State Board of Education appoint a hearing officer to hold a hearing on this matter, make a recommendation to the Board, and the Board take such action as may be warranted by the evidence at such hearing.



Roger D. Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

CERTIFICATE OF SERVICE

I hereby certify that a copy of the above Answer was mailed to the parties of record through regular United States mail, postage prepaid, this 12th day of August 2011.



Brian L. Halstead, #18077
Attorney for Respondent

BEFORE THE STATE BOARD OF EDUCATION
STATE OF NEBRASKA

Melissa Converse
5840 Abigail Dr.
Lincoln, NE 68516

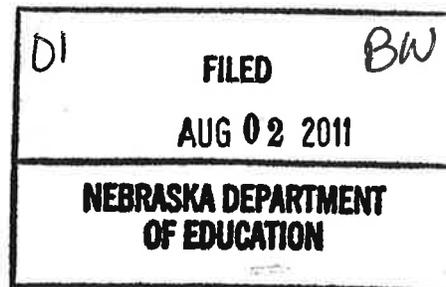
Petitioner,

Roger D. Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education
P. O. Box 94933
Lincoln, NE 68509-4933,

Respondent.

Case No. 11-11

PETITION



Pursuant to Title 92, Chapter 61, of the *Nebraska Administrative Code*, Petitioner alleges and states the following for a petition and appeal against Respondent, Roger D. Breed, Commissioner of Education ("Commissioner").

1. This Petition constitutes an appeal of the decision of the Commissioner to deny the issuance of a Nebraska certificate to Petitioner.

2. The State Board of Education has authority and jurisdiction to grant the relief requested by Petitioner by reason of Section 009.03 of Title 92, Chapter 21, of the *Nebraska Administrative Code* and by reason of the Nebraska Administrative Procedures Act, Neb. Rev. Stat. §§ 84-901, *et seq.*

3. Petitioner applied for a Nebraska certificate on or about April 25, 2011. Kevin Peters, Ed.D., Director of the Nebraska Teacher Certification Office, sent a letter to Petitioner stating that the application would be denied unless Petitioner made a written request for review within twenty (20) days. Petitioner made a timely written request for review.

4. The Commissioner issued a letter to Petitioner dated July 11, 2011 denying Petitioner's application for a Nebraska certificate, a copy of which is attached to this Petition as Exhibit "A" and is incorporated by this reference.

5. Petitioner alleges that the facts and circumstances surrounding the application will support the issuance of a Nebraska certificate to Petitioner because: nearly 5 1/2 years have passed since arrest occurred, Petitioner was only 23 years old at time of arrest. Petitioner has made significant societal contributions since this time, including working at a drug and alcohol treatment center the past 4 years.

WHEREFORE, Petitioner respectfully requests a hearing and that the State Board of Education enter an Order directing the Commissioner to issue a Nebraska certificate to Petitioner.

Dated this 1st day of August, 2011.

Melissa Converse
Petitioner

VERIFICATION

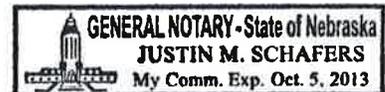
STATE OF NEBRASKA)
) ss.
COUNTY OF Lancaster)

I, Melissa Converse, Petitioner, being first duly sworn under oath, state that I have read the contents of the Petition and that to the best of my knowledge, information, and belief such contents are true.

Melissa Converse
Petitioner

Subscribed and sworn to before me this 1 day of August, 2011, by Melissa Converse, Petitioner.

[Signature]
Notary Public





Roger D. Breed, Ed.D., Commissioner
Scott Swisher, Ed.D., Deputy Commissioner

301 Centennial Mall South Tel: (402) 471-2295
PO Box 94987 Fax: (402) 471-0117
Lincoln, NE 68509-4987 Web: www.education.ne.gov

CERTIFIED MAIL

July 11, 2011

Ms. Melissa Converse
5840 Abigail Drive
Lincoln, NE 68516

Re: Denial of an Application for a Nebraska Certificate

Dear Ms. Converse:

On April 25, 2011, you filed an application to renew your Nebraska teaching certificate. On May 31, 2011, Kevin Peters, Director of the Teacher Certification Office, sent you a letter notifying you of an Intent to Deny your application. On June 21 this office received your letter and enclosures requesting my review of your application.

It is my responsibility to consider your fitness for issuance of a teaching certificate pursuant to Neb. Rev. Stat. Section 79-808 and Title 92, *Nebraska Administrative Code*, Chapter 21 (effective date: May 11, 2010). In reviewing the information, I have decided to deny your application based on the following determinations: 1) You have a 2007 Driving Under the Influence 4th Offense felony conviction for which you were sentenced to a term of imprisonment not less than one year nor more than two years, and your driving privileges were revoked for a period of 15 years; 2) This conviction is prohibited by 92 NAC 21, Section 003.11; and 3) Section 005.01J states that applicants be of good moral character.

Therefore, I am denying your application for a Nebraska teaching certificate based upon the aforementioned information. Section 009.03 of 92 NAC 21 provides that you may appeal my denial of your application to the State Board of Education within twenty (20) calendar days of receipt of this letter. A copy of Title 92, *Nebraska Administrative Code*, Chapter 61, is included.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Roger D. Breed".

Roger D. Breed, Ed.D.
Commissioner of Education

xc: Kevin Peters, Ed.D.

Enclosure

August 1, 2011

To the Commissioner of Education,

With the carefree years of youth, comes ignorance and oblivion. During my college years, I felt my only responsibility was going to class, and getting semi-decent grades. School had always come easy for me. I never had to devote much time to my studies, and still get mostly A's or B's. Like many young people on their own for the first time, I filled the rest of my time going out Thursday, Friday and Saturday nights. I met many new friends at college, but *unlike* many young people, I didn't know how to socialize and get to know these people without drinking. I felt that I was so much more fun to be around, and the person that everyone liked while I was drinking. I was funny, I was the life of the party. I could strike up a conversation with anybody, yet when I was sober, I didn't even have the courage to say hello.

Drinking every weekend, then driving home became my weekend routine. I only had to get through a few more days of school and then be back to the weekend again. Shortly after completing my first semester of college, in March of 2002, I went to a party with some friends celebrating Nebraska's acceptance into the NIT basketball tournament. We drank keg beer at a friend's house, and decided to go get food at Amigos, downtown. During the middle of a severe winter storm, I drove myself and two friends to the restaurant.

Upon leaving Amigos, my car would not start. I called my dad and he said he'd be right down to help me out. Unfortunately, my car started shortly after and I attempted to drive back to the party. I was swerving quite significantly, and a police officer pulled me over to see if everything was alright. I'd already drank too much before leaving the party. I failed all field sobriety tests and was cited with a DUI, Minor in Possession, and Open Container. Even worse,

my dad and stepmother had seen the whole thing because they'd been on their way downtown to help me. My Dad had me out of Detox in less time than it took to get me booked in. While I'd heard that a DUI was a very serious infraction, I was 18, had never been in trouble before, and spent only 12 months on Probation. During this time on Probation, I continued to drink the entire time. I really did not feel that the rules applied to me, that I'd just been in the wrong place at the wrong time, and that I was above the law. I simply thought nothing of it.

In December of 2004, I was downtown on a Tuesday night at Buffalo Wild Wings for their cheap wings special. I had considered asking my friend to drive my car home, but thought I could manage. I remember thinking that the likelihood of getting pulled over AGAIN was pretty slim, and surely I wouldn't get caught another time. I took it upon myself to drive. I was pulled over for having a headlight out that I was completely unaware of. Yet again, I did the routine of field sobriety tests, and failed again. I was taken to Detox, but this time I had to stay the night because my parents were in Chicago, Christmas shopping. I again hired a lawyer, and managed to do just 10 days at the Lancaster Correctional Facility, which was much like an adult daycare, and I still got out for 8 hours a day for college classes.

My mom asked me what it was going to take for me to learn my lesson, and if I was going to have to kill someone to stop doing what I was doing. I just rolled my eyes. I couldn't believe she could say something as far-fetched as this. The only time I had ever been in trouble with the law has been alcohol-related. I could not believe my mom would say that I was actually capable of killing someone. I just couldn't make the connection at the time.

Even with all the tickets, I never fully understood the ramifications and consequences of my senseless actions. My dad bailed me out of every situation I got into so quickly, that I barely had a chance to feel any of the pain. I was getting away with nearly everything with barely a

scratch. I had a false sense of confidence that I must be better than everyone else, and as long as there was money for a lawyer, I could manage to escape any charges unscathed again.

I selfishly continued to party every weekend, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday nights. Of course I knew that I was getting arrested much more frequently than my friends were, but I thought I just had really bad luck, always in the wrong places at the wrong time. It never crossed my mind that I had a drinking problem. I thought I was much too young for that.

Within the last five years of my life, and with extensive counseling, I have come to realize that much of my self-destructive behavior came from childhood issues I felt no control in resolving. My parents got divorced when I was at a very young age, and my mom moved me down to Beatrice, much to my dismay at the time. I had no control over anything that was happening to me, which as I aged, turned me in to a control freak. I used alcohol as a means to escape having to control things. Every relationship I was involved in from the time I was 16 to 26 was an absolute disaster due to my controlling behaviors. I turned to alcohol to block out all emotions, to make it so I didn't have to feel any true emotions. I put on a mask every weekend that I was okay, when truly, on the inside I wasn't okay at all.

Shortly before I graduated college, I was hired on through the Glendale School District in Arizona, to teach 7th grade at Bicentennial North Elementary School. But in between getting the job, and moving out there, I got my final DUI after the Red/White game in April, 2006.

I'd been friends with many of the football players, and they were all having a party at the Embassy Suites in downtown Lincoln. I somehow believed that hanging out with Nebraska football players made me cool, and that just by being around them, I held some sort of special status. At the Embassy Suites, a friend and I ended up in one of the hotel rooms. The guys

became extremely aggressive, and I wanted to leave immediately. I knew I shouldn't be driving, but my friend wanted to stay, so I asked her if I could take her vehicle home. I honestly didn't think I'd had enough to drink to get in to any trouble as I thought I felt fine. I was pulled over for crossing the center line. The police officer asked me to do field sobriety tests, which I agreed to, "knowing" that I would pass. I was given a Breathalyzer, but still blew a .09, just above the legal limit. Here we go again I thought, going to have to hire another lawyer. Surely I thought I'd be able to get off of this one, since I was just barely over the limit. However, I remember being in Detox, wishing I could fall asleep and never wake up, knowing that I'd really done it this time.

I realized shortly after getting to Arizona, that I'd tried escaping from Nebraska because I could not tolerate the negative influences I had no handle on at the time. I knew I didn't want to get in any more trouble, but didn't have the willpower to tell friends "NO." I thought it would be as simple as moving away and starting over, and was not yet ready to face the consequences I knew were to come with the pending DUI. I did a classic "geographical change," thinking that would be the answer. I flew back to Nebraska 8 times for various court dates, as I still had a pending charge hanging over my head.

My lawyer on my final DUI had told me he wanted to take my case to a trial, but then decided I wasn't "strong enough" to hold up in court. Given my already damaged record, I was unable to get off the charge and finally was forced to face some serious consequences. I was incarcerated for nearly 10 months, which has had a serious impact on my criminal record, personal, and professional life. I've disappointed my parents, grandparents, sister, friends, and everyone else in my life, including myself.

I finally realized that this DUI would be my last citation ever. I came to the conclusion that this was not at all the way I wanted to live my life. I was becoming a person I wasn't proud

of every time I drank. I didn't even like myself anymore. This DUI was indeed "what it was going to take," as my mom had asked me years before. When the pain becomes great enough to endure, change will take place. I needed to get a DUI to shock me into the realization of how out of control my life had become. I definitely am not "above the law," and know that the only way I can ensure that this could never happen to me again, is to quit drinking entirely.

During my time in jail, I became actively involved in the AA program. I also gained a sponsor and began working with her diligently to complete the steps I needed to figure out where my life had gone wrong. My life isn't nearly as "social" as it once was, but I no longer have to wake up in the morning feeling awful, wondering what I did the night before, or how I got home, or if I had driven there. I no longer have to worry about the possibility of incurring more criminal charges, and ruining my life even further. I have separated my true friends from those who were simply "drinking buddies." Interestingly, those drinking buddies left my side once I went to jail, and many of them I have barely spoken to in years. I have established even stronger friendships with those real friends, who respect the fact that I cannot drink anymore.

I began working at Cornhusker Place, in May 2008, in attempts to give back to the community, and help others who are struggling with the same issues I have. While working there, I was faced daily with what my life could have been like, had I not taken a grasp on it to get myself together. After just 6 months of employment, I was asked to interview for the Case Manager position, and was given a promotion.

After more than a year in this position, I decided to go full-time at my part-time job, at Touchstone, another treatment center for drug and alcohol rehabilitation. I chose this route as I wanted to work with men AND women, as I can help identify with women's issues much more

easily. Cornhusker Place caters to men only. I have been working at Touchstone since August of 2008.

My personal life has gained many strides as well. I am an active member of St. Mark's Methodist Church. I have volunteered in many projects, including Project Homeless Connect, and Clinic With a Heart. I have met the love of my life. We live together in south Lincoln, and have his two-year old son five days a week. We keep ourselves busy playing coed softball, fishing, going out to dinner, and watching movies. We attend AA two to three times a week, and talk to our sponsors almost daily. I have been sober since June 7, 2007.

Through this experience, I have been taught humility, and shame. It took me nearly five years to apply to LPS because I was ashamed to report my criminal history. However, I have met with LPS Background Specialist, Mr. Jeff Gade, and Dr. Mary Beth Lehmanowsky who have cleared me, so that I could become an LPS employee. I actually feel that now I am more prepared to teach others than before. I have the life experiences that have taught me how I can help others, so that they may not make the same mistakes as I have. Dr. Lehmanowsky has said that she would like to get me involved in the SCIP Program immediately.

At the time of my last conviction I had just turned 23. I am now 28, and it has been five years and four months since the DUI that is the cause for intent to deny my renewal certificate. I have been serving the community by working in the drug and alcohol treatment field since May of 2007, over 4 years. Additionally, I am taking Master's Courses through Peru State College in Curriculum and Instruction, and currently have a 4.0 G.P.A.

Enclosed are letters of my character that have been written by multiple figures I have encountered throughout my short time in the Education field. The letters are quite outdated, but all have been written following the DUI in question.

I am very sincere in this career choice, and had been substitute teaching as a great opportunity to prove my character and worth to the Lincoln Public School system, in hopes of gaining a more permanent position in the future. Clearly, I have proven my dedication and success as I was called just last week by Dr. Lehmanowsky to personally offer a position at Culler Middle School. However, due to my certificate being up for denial, I was unable to accept the position.

Teaching is the profession I know I want to practice. I loved every day I spent teaching in Arizona, and student teaching for Debra Sharp at Pound Middle School. For these reasons, I am requesting a review of the intent to deny the renewal of my teaching certificate. I need this opportunity to move forward as an adult, and not continue to be penalized for the bad decisions I made as a child. I am committed to a sober lifestyle, as much as I am committed to being the best role model I can be for young students. I am begging the Board of Education to allow me to once again do the job I was trained to do.

With much gratitude,



Melissa Converse

TOUCHSTONE

HELPING PEOPLE LIVE PRODUCTIVE LIVES

June 16, 2011

Dear Commissioner of Education,

I have been informed of the intent to deny the renewal of a Nebraska teaching certificate for Melissa Converse. I am aware that the intent to deny is due to a conviction of Driving Under the Influence, taken place on April 16, 2006. This letter is written on behalf of Melissa, and in support of her fulfilling her dream of teaching once again.

Melissa began employment as a Counseling Assistant at Touchstone in August of 2008. Touchstone is a dual-diagnosis treatment center for men and women struggling with addictions to drugs and alcohol. We serve an extremely diverse, homeless, and nearly homeless population.

Melissa has done an excellent job demonstrating knowledge of substance abuse and mental health conditions. She has related instances from her own life to relate to issues our clients are battling, while still remaining professional. Melissa demonstrates awareness of chemical dependency and the ability to implement program policies and procedures efficiently.

Melissa has managed to balance her employment at Touchstone, as well as substitute teaching quite frequently in the Lincoln Public School system. She has been taking graduate courses at Peru State College working toward earning a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction. She is punctual and a reliable employee.

I believe that Melissa possesses all the ingredients of a good educator, as evidenced by her passion to help others be successful. She is able to facilitate and reinforce positive communication skills, and role model pro-social behavior, proper expression of feelings, and appropriate methods of conflict resolution.

I ask you to re-consider the intent to deny Melissa's teaching certificate. Although I do not necessarily excuse the mistakes Melissa has made in the past, I do believe that she has learned from those mistakes and made many positive social contributions to society. I also ask that you consider the time that has lapsed between Melissa's DUI conviction and the present, over five years. I also believe that Melissa is in a different stage of her life as a professional, whereas at the time she was a young college student. I am confident that Melissa will have an overwhelmingly positive impact in the classroom some day. If you have any further questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at (402)474-4343, (x124).

Sincerely,



Maria Zutavern
Technician Supervisor

○ July 26, 2011

I was on the founding board of the SCIP program. It was the original idea to have people located all over in the schools who were in recovery so kids with alcoholic parents or kids trying to get off alcohol and drugs would have someone who spoke their language. They are a vital healing force in society and in a school. Being in recovery is getting harder and harder for kids because recovery is seen as an obstacle to employment. Most people in recovery have developed an inner vision to see beyond the superficial and this is an enormous asset to have.

We had a place for teenagers called TOAD HALL. We were loosely associated with SRI now Gallup and we used the formula Relationship + talent = growth. We had a staff that was all in recovery and they really knew how to build relationship. The kids who were at TOAD HALL turned out to be amazing. They are grown up now and I couldn't be more proud of them.

I would put someone in recovery in a position in a heartbeat because of that very reason. They have heart and they have beaten the main problem of American life - alcoholism and drug addiction. They have had a very thorough and expensive education in emotions, addiction and integrity to get to where they now are.

- Paige Namuth, Director of Antlers Recovery Center

402-434-3695

2501 South Street

Lincoln, NE 68502

antlerscenter@yahoo.com

April 4, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is offered in support of Melissa Converse's application for a teaching assignment with your school. I have known Ms. Converse since the fall of 2005. She was my student for one semester in Learning and Motivation, an applied, upper level course for secondary majors offered through the Educational Psychology Department at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. Through my class, I came to know Ms. Converse well as a student, and more importantly, as a teacher.

As part of the course requirements, Ms. Converse and three of her classmates co-taught one full week in my class on the topic of cognitive development. Melissa was responsible for all aspects of teaching the content: learning the material, planning instructional activities, leading class discussion, and answering questions, with minimal input from me. Her performance as a teacher was outstanding.

Ms. Converse wrote a reflection paper on her teaching experience, outlining the professional planning process she followed to prepare for her teaching assignment. She first carefully and exhaustively built her knowledge base regarding cognitive development, going well beyond the course text by consulting reputable online resources and synthesizing these with teaching and learning principles she had learned from several courses she has taken in her program. Next, she worked with her co-teachers to craft instructional activities addressed specifically toward her audience, future secondary teachers. She approached this task with a teacher's problem-solving mind-set, making decisions about what material to present to her learners, how to help them construct for themselves an understanding of the content, how to guide them in making connections between the content and their roles as future educators.

I noted specifically Ms. Converse's behavior as a teacher. First, she checked for and activated her learners' prior knowledge regarding cognitive development and its role in teaching and learning. She used technology in the form of a slide show to help scaffold and organize the learning experience. She did an excellent job with classroom discourse, motivating discussion with higher-level questioning and asking secondary and follow-up questions to help her learners elaborate on what they were thinking. She managed classroom discussion with finesse and was always respectful of learners' comments and perspectives. She also designed activities for small groups and for the whole class that engaged her learners meaningfully in the content. One activity was a game designed to build declarative knowledge of the target content. This was followed by another, higher learning writing activity in which the learners assessed cognitive development theories based on their own experiences and viewpoints. Melissa then had the learners engage one another in discussion to encourage understanding others' perspectives.

Converse, April 4, 2006, Page 2

Ms. Converse is excited about her students' learning as well as her own. She is personable and carries herself with confidence and professional bearing. Ms. Converse will make an excellent contributor and collaborator for any educational team.

Sincerely,

Michael S. Dempsey
Instructional Technology Coordinator/Instructor
120 Mabel Lee Hall
Lincoln, NE 68588-0234
(402) 472-4946
mdempsey1@uni.edu

May 17, 2007
TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Re: Melissa A. Converse

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Melissa Converse who has been teaching at Bicentennial North Elementary School since July, 2006.

Bicentennial North is a Title 1 school which caters to at-risk students.

Melissa was assigned to the Bicentennial North School to support students in the seventh grade. In this role, Melissa has provided consultative support to teachers as well as working directly with students. Melissa has worked closely with the special services team comprising of counselors, speech/pathologists, psychologist to assess students' needs and to develop individual student plans to help students develop skills needed to be successful in the classroom.

Melissa is a skilled, professional teacher. She quickly gains the confidence of the parents and her colleagues. They view her as a valuable resource and solid educator. Of worthy mention is Melissa's ability to accurately diagnose learning limitations inherent in her students and she is able to effectively prescribe the appropriate support to help these children. Melissa relates well with her students, colleagues and parents.

During her experience at Bicentennial School, Melissa was involved with providing in-service to teachers on reading and spelling (teaching spelling generalizations and rules along with syllabication principles). She also conducted a training session for parents about the reading process and strategies to help their children with language development and literacy skills. Together with our speech/language teacher, Melissa conducted an after-school program to facilitate to students with an English Language Learner background.

I have found Melissa to be an equable person with above average common sense, good humor and a comfortable amount of self-confidence. In summary, Melissa is a committed and competent educator. I believe Melissa to be a very valuable faculty member for her school, as they are in need of a high quality and dedicated Reading teacher. I endorse her candidacy enthusiastically and without reservation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Perry Hill Ed.D.", written in a cursive style.

Perry Hill, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Glendale Elementary Schools

Pound Middle School

4540 So. 45th Street Lincoln NE 68516 402-436-1217 fax 402-436-1205

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing this as a letter of recommendation for Melissa Converse. Melissa was a student teacher at Pound Middle School from January to May in 2006. As associate principal, I had opportunities to work with Melissa and also observed her teaching her 7th grade differentiated English class.

Melissa had a very successful experience at Pound Middle School. She related well to students and staff. I was especially impressed with the relationships she built with her students. Melissa displayed a knack for reaching out to all students and was especially connected to those students with more demanding needs and those that were not as successful. She made all students feel welcome and a part of her classroom and the school.

During my observation of Melissa's teaching, she demonstrated many techniques that enabled her success. Her classroom was organized, an agenda for the day was on the white board, and students were always aware what was expected of them both behaviorally and academically. It was a very composed and impressive display of teaching for a student teacher!

Melissa will be a successful teacher because of her rapport with students, her work ethic, her ability to be organized, and her obvious enjoyment of working with students. I highly recommend Melissa for any teaching position for which she is qualified.

Sincerely,



Ross Dirks, ED.D.
Associate Principal
Pound Middle School



May 13, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

It pleases me to write this letter on behalf of Melissa Converse, my student teacher during the spring 2006 semester. She enthusiastically started taking over the regular and differentiated English classes the second day she was with me. It was rewarding to see Melissa grow in confidence and professionalism.

Melissa's strengths are many but the talents that complement her teaching are perfectionism in planning, yet flexibility in execution. She quickly developed relationships both with students and faculty members. She has a dry wit and showed a strong appreciation of middle school humor. When I watched her teach, it made me smile. The students were sad to see her go, as was I. Melissa exhibited foresight and consistency when disciplining. She was reflective before making decisions, yet could "think-on-her-feet" when the situation required it. Frequently, she would mention how she acted and thought in seventh grade; this helps develop a sense of understanding.

I have no reservations in recommending Melissa Converse for a teaching position. She is hard working, loyal, and always striving to improve. Melissa is an enormous asset to any faculty.

Feel free to contact me to further discuss Melissa's qualifications at my home, (402-421-2848).

Sincerely,

Debra L. Sharp
Co-operating Teacher
Pound Middle School

Bicentennial North School
7237 W. Missouri Av.
Glendale, Az. 85251

September 1, 2006

To Whom It May Concern:

It is with great pleasure that I write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Melissa Converse. Melissa has been at our school since July, 2006 as a 7th Reading teacher. As the Assistant Principal at Bicentennial North School, I have had the opportunity to observe and evaluate Ms. Converse's instructional practices since the beginning of the year.

Melissa has been a wonderful asset to our school. She comes to school each day with well planned lessons that engage the students at a high level. Ms. Converse makes reading fun and exciting for her students. She utilizes high interest reading passages and practical comprehension strategies to increase student achievement. Melissa has effectively involved 1 Minute Reading Fluency assessments to help promote reading with fluency.

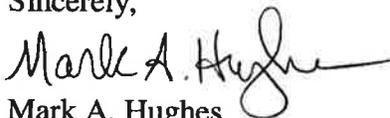
Melissa has an excellent rapport with her students. She uses a variety of ways to connect with her students and shows a sincere care about them.

Ms. Converse's classroom management techniques are very consistent and effective. She clearly states for her students the routines and procedures expected.

In closing, I would like to say that we are very fortunate to have Ms. Converse on our staff. It is very clear that Melissa has a commitment to children and to the teaching profession.

Please feel free to contact me for information you might need.

Sincerely,



Mark A. Hughes
Assistant Principal

Bicentennial North School

7237 West Missouri Avenue

Glendale, Arizona 85303

Telephone 623-842-8290 Fax 623-848-6133

Kenneth R. Fleming, Principal

Mark Hughes, Assistant Principal

January 3, 2007

To whom it may concern:

This letter of reference is for Melissa Converse who has taught language arts for the seventh grade students during the 2006-2007 school year. Miss Converse has proven to be an asset to the Bicentennial North School as an instructor. She has been diligent in attendance and volunteered to work with several committees. Ms. Converse has led her students into different reading series that maintain their focus and high academic abilities. As a young educator she has maintained a professional attitude and relationship with students and staff. Her classroom management is excellent and she has planned for student learning to compete with higher level learning institutes.

Ms. Converse is a proven educator in the area of language arts. She has my recommendation in her pursuit of this educational career. Should you have any questions, please contact me at the above telephone number.

Respectfully,

Kenneth R. Fleming
Kenneth R. Fleming
Principal
Bicentennial North School
Glendale Elementary School District #40

To whom it may concern:

It is my distinct pleasure to write this letter regarding the character of Ms. Melissa Converse. Ms. Converse has served as a reading teacher here at Bicentennial North for the past six months. Currently as a reading teacher, Ms. Converse, along with her five other team members, provides direct instruction to seventh grade students. As one of those team members, it has been my good fortune to work closely with Ms. Converse throughout the course of her time here.

Melissa Converse is a skillful, conscientious, dedicated teacher who thoroughly understands how children learn. She has a wealth of experience from working with students from a variety of cultural backgrounds and educational systems. She is an expert at the use of different multi-sensory, structured, language programs to teach reading.

In her classroom she brings her experience and excellent intuition about children together by focusing on each child. In a very natural and caring fashion she sets about finding the natural balance of reassurance and challenge each of them need , and they respond.

I have been witness to countless examples of how the timid or less than confident child has been helped to become an outgoing, enthusiastic learner by virtue of the support Melissa has supplied. I believe her success with struggling learners is rooted in her ability to support them not only academically but emotionally as well. Melissa notices the small things that matter with each child, celebrating their accomplishments, comforting them when necessary and instilling in them the belief that they matter, are important and can handle anything they need to.

Besides her ability to supply high quality meaningful instruction to students, Melissa has allowed us to rely on her in a variety of ways. She has been the coordinator of our reading program and instrumental in not only developing and refining many of our procedures but in documenting the daily practices of this program.

Regardless of what is asked of her, Melissa has always been gracious in offering her support and in the regard her efforts have made her a building wide resource. She works in support of students, parents and teachers and tends to not draw the spotlight to herself but her contributions are many and we have all been made better by her actions.

I give Melissa Converse my highest recommendation as a quality teacher who believes in the dignity of her profession. I have no doubt that she will remain a valuable asset to our team, school, and community.

Please feel free to contact me if there is any other information I can provide.

Elizabeth L. Neeser (605)-376-4178

Bicentennial North Elementary- 7th Grade Writing Teacher

Venus Bachelder
4405 N 103rd Ave #253
Phoenix, Arizona 85037
(623) 872-9344
olsonvenus@hotmail.com

RE: Letter of Recommendation for Melissa Converse

To Whom It May Concern:

I have had the pleasure of knowing and working with Melissa Converse. I have watched Ms. Converse go through numerous challenges and efforts in her ability to work with individuals and to apply creative techniques in order to get a job done. Ms. Converse works with at-risk children, one-parent families, and a large minority population with diverse cultural backgrounds. Ms. Converse showed the ability to connect with children easily and naturally. Her rapport with students is based on genuine interest, mutual respect, and understanding. Students feel welcomed in Ms. Converse's class by her firm but fair discipline, positive classroom tone, and ability to be flexible with lesson plans. Furthermore, Ms. Converse's knowledge of many subject areas creates an environment conducive to learning.

Ms. Converse has spent tireless hours working on professional team ideas to aide in student achievement. Ms. Converse has demonstrated on going dedication to her students by assuming roles within the educational community to help adapt curriculum and to meet the ever-changing educational standards. I have been awed by Ms. Converse's dedication and personal strivings to be a public servant in so many faucets. I find her wealth of experience and knowledge an asset to her profession and I have great respect for anything Ms. Converse chooses to do.

Yours truly,


V. Bachelder
Glendale Middle School Academic Instructor,
Rio Salado Adult Basic Instructor &
Arizona State Correctional Instructor

Melissa A. Converse
7331 S. 28th
Lincoln, NE 68516
(402) 239-6680
melcon11@hotmail.com

EDUCATION

March 2011- September 2012, **Peru State College (Peru, NE)**
Master's of Arts in Curriculum and Instruction

August 2001 – May 2006, **University of Nebraska-Lincoln (Lincoln, NE)**
Bachelor's of Science in Education and Human Sciences
Major: English Minor: Secondary Education

WORK HISTORY

January 2011- Present

Substitute Teacher, Lincoln Public Schools- Lincoln, NE

Responsibilities:

- Implement teacher lesson plans,
- Assign student class work and homework,
- Maintain classroom control and discipline.
- Complete daily report or evaluation to communicate any pertinent information

August 2008- Present

Counseling Assistant, Touchstone Treatment Center- Lincoln, NE

Responsibilities:

- Certified in Crisis Prevention Institute's "Nonviolent Crisis Prevention"
- Daily charting on multiple clients diagnosed with co-occurring disorders
- Enforce strict boundaries and rules within the treatment environment
- Lead groups for 22 clients on a variety of treatment topics

April 2006 – August 2008

Literacy Coordinator, Summer Camp Staff,

Lincoln Parks and Recreation Association

Air Park Neighborhood Center – Lincoln, NE

Responsibilities:

- Create and implement lesson plans for before and after school program
- Plan and teach lessons for Technology & Writing Club
- Communicate with parents and collect weekly payments, maintain spreadsheet
- Train staff on Community Learning Centers standards
- Supervise and schedule building rentals

July 2006 – January 2007

7th Grade Reading Teacher

Glendale Elementary School District

Bicentennial North Elementary School - Glendale, AZ

Responsibilities:

- Prepare curriculum according to Arizona state standards and Glendale Elementary School District power concepts
- Help facilitate extra-curricular activities and implement new reading incentive program
- Analyze student testing scores; develop and align lessons according to results
- Follow all Special Education state laws and requirements concerning IEP's
- Modify lessons for learning disabilities and English Language Learners

March 2002- March 2004

Clerical Assistant

Great Plains National, Reading Rainbow, NETV- Lincoln, NE

Responsibilities:

- Operate switchboard
- Help judge Reading Rainbow's Young Writer's and Illustrator's Contest
- Update website in accordance with state educational standards
- Open and process all incoming mail
- General office work, filing, mailing catalogue information, etc...