



March 16, 2021

To Whom It May Concern:

I am delighted to write this letter in support of the application of Ms. Nicole Tucker for the elementary art teaching position in your district. As her professor in her undergraduate program and as a colleague in the profession since her graduation, I have known Nicole for over 10 years. I believe I can speak to her academic ability, her character, her knowledge of art and art studio skills, her understanding of art education theory and its application to practice, and, most importantly, her passion for and commitment to teaching.

Nicole was an outstanding student during her time in the Department of Art Education and Crafts at Kutztown University. Her excellent work was consistently thorough, thoughtful, and attentive to both theoretical and practical components. A student with a strong seriousness of purpose, she always went far beyond what was expected, raising the bar in each and every course in which she was enrolled. I always had the sense that she was acutely aware that she was entering a profession and thus handled herself with the upmost professionalism.

I had the advantage of seeing this up close on a regular basis because Nicole was an assistant to our Office Manager for part of the time while she was a student, and as such, she had a consistent presence in the Department. We all could depend upon her tremendous work ethic in addition to her calm, pleasant and responsible demeanor. She was especially helpful, always anticipating needs and potential problems, when I chaired the Kutztown Art Education conference, Teaching Art with Gender in Mind. Nicole's studio concentration was in fine metals, following her great love for jewelry design begun early as a middle school student. She was a serious student, establishing a focused studio practice that she continues even now, on top of having a full-time art teaching position. Her undergraduate work at Kutztown was so extraordinary that she was awarded *both* the Clinical Experience Award, given to the outstanding student teacher across *all disciplines* in education, and the Ella M. Schaeffer Commencement Award, the most prestigious award given to an art education graduate. Note that in her third year, she was also given the Art Education Service Award and was recognized as an NAEA member with Distinction. Nicole emerged as a leader and an award-winning art

educator from a large class of more than 75 graduating students in her 2009-1010 cohort. At that time, this said much about her potential, but please note what she has accomplished as an elementary and then middle school teacher since that time.

Since it is appropriately not on her resume, I feel the need to tell you about a curriculum that she developed when she began her teaching in the Bellefonte School District (and which I have saved in my file of exemplary curriculum materials). After graduation from Kutztown, Nicole participated in a summer professional development institute focused, in part, on women in history whose accomplishments had been overlooked. I shall never forget the unit she created for Grade 5, entitled, “Her Stories: Connecting the Past, Present and Future Voices,” in which she would have her students explore the notion that “art can be a means for uncovering the past.” In order to create this unit, Nicole dug into the history of the community and discovered Bellefonte SD graduates—women who had made a difference. From the past, she learned of an architect, inventor, Suffragist, Military Intelligence Agent; from the present, a CEO of a major US corporation. (I recall that in her typical style of going beyond expectations, she even attended historical society meetings and got involved in an effort to save one of the local buildings.) Her fifth-grade students were to learn how to engage in this kind of historical research and would use art making as a way to honor women from the past. Her vision for and work on this unit was consistent with the kind of curriculum development I’d seen from her as an undergraduate, and I was selfishly disappointed that because of her new location, she made the decision to pursue her master’s degree from Penn State instead of with us.

I have found a way to continue my work with this exceptional teacher, however, in asking her to consult with me on the third edition of my middle school textbook series, *Art and the Human Experience*, published by the primary publisher in art education, Davis Publications. Nicole has been a force in this effort, providing ideas and also student work to be featured in these books. I am looking forward to my continued work with her on this project and hopefully on the third edition of my elementary series, *Explorations in Art*.

It was fun for me to explore Nicole’s portfolio and note her many accomplishments since her time with us at Kutztown. She remains, in my 37 years there, one of the top three or four students to move through our art education program. As the largest undergraduate art education program in the nation, that’s saying something, to be sure.

I would be remiss not to mention one more thing to consider as you contemplate Nicole’s qualifications for the position in your district—her delightful and engaging personality. This will not be lost on her students, who will no doubt enjoy the time they spend with her, but it will also be a welcome addition to the culture of your school, where she will become a trusted, respected and beloved colleague.

Please do not hesitate to contact me at 610.987.3263 or at [mstewart@ptd.net](mailto:mstewart@ptd.net), should you have additional questions.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Marilyn G. Stewart', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Marilyn G. Stewart, Ph.D.  
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Past Co-Coordinator of Graduate Programs in Art Education  
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