

July 11, 2013

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Tami Austin and I have been a teacher for the San Dieguito Union High School District since 1998. I met Elton Richards in the spring of 2013 while interviewing potential substitutes for my maternity leave to cover my studio art and yearbook classes. Elton stood out as someone who cared about students, had a wide range of art experience in both a studio setting and computer graphics, and was excited to step in and carry out my plans for the last 11 weeks of school while I tended to my growing family.

I knew I'd be on leave during a final yearbook deadline scheduled just a week after my leave began, and my studio art classes were involved in our VPA Department's spring Arts Festival—a major fundraiser for the department. I had to ensure I had a substitute I could count on. Elton's dedication and commitment to teaching during this long-term studio art and yearbook assignment was evident from the start and stayed consistent throughout my entire leave. During the first week of my leave, Elton led the yearbook students in wrapping up loose ends in order to complete our final deadline. Once the yearbook was completed, he led a theme project for students to brainstorm a potential theme for next year's yearbook and took them through an engaging Photoshop unit both of which culminated in a performance-based assessment involving individual student presentations. For general studio art, he readied my students' art work for the spring Arts Festival, while leading them through three art projects. He also carried out my end-of-year clean-up procedures for the art room—an extensive to-do list! Going above and beyond when shelving was installed in both my classrooms, Elton took the time to clear out both storage rooms so that the custodians could install the shelves in a timely manner and not have to work around my supplies.

Throughout my 11-week leave, Elton kept in touch with me via e-mail to update me on my students' progress, kept to my lesson plans, let me know what art supplies were running low so I could reorder them in time for the opening of school in the fall, and facilitated a smooth conclusion of the school year. He also afforded me peace of mind while I was home with my newborn. Clearly, these efforts are an indication of his enthusiasm and his sense of ownership in teaching young people.

I'm confident Elton will become indispensable to any school lucky enough to secure his services. Please don't hesitate to call me on my cell at 619-252-8166 if you need anything further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Tami Austin".

Tami Austin
Earl Warren Middle School
Yearbook and General Studio Art Teacher