

Dear Principal Selection Group,

January 14, 2022

I am honored to provide a recommendation for Mr. David Kennington to be considered for the position of principal at your school. I have worked with Dave for more than three and a half years and can attest without reservation that this is the “boots on the ground” man to lead staff and students. He will effectively and loyally support your mission, develop your teachers to full potential, and guide your students and families with love. I have a multitude of evidence supporting my claim. I hope that I can adequately relate the powerful, positive effects Dave Kennington brings to education communities.

One of my first and most powerful mentors often quoted Peter Drucker: “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” For a research scientist, that took me a while to decipher and actually believe. Now I understand that’s the “magic” that makes a school a special place. Dave landed at The Vanguard School in the spring of 2018, and the first time I spoke with him was after our graduation ceremony. He was appropriately impressed and astounded by the mutual love and respect woven among the administration, teachers, and students. I could sense his buy-in immediately. He has never disappointed me in this arena. Dave embraces and extols the healthy, growth-oriented culture that makes certain schools exceptional. He’ll quietly take a teacher’s duty, call a parent for the *smallest* improvement in student attitude or performance, and I have been reminded constantly of his abiding appreciation and respect for his teachers, administration colleagues, and families by his intentional and consistent choice to accentuate the positive (often with hand-written notes) and diminish the “errors.” Dave is masterful in student/parent conferences. I have witnessed the power of his belief in healthy student growth with rigor and accountability, his appreciation for the unique challenges of each of our families, and his determination to carve a path to success in both character and academics for our students.

When one of my teachers struggles, Dave is always there to help me and the teacher resolve the issue to the benefit of the school. He’s helped me course correct an AP syllabus problem that would have resulted in our loss of accreditation without his intervention. He has consistently emphasized the chain of command infrastructure and authority of the department chair that has finally repaired the cancerous effects of one outspoken, passive-aggressive personality that predated his arrival and caused reverberations that undermined department cohesiveness for many months. Dave never lets sloppy procedures or ineffective instruction stand. His observations always applaud effectiveness and coach improvement. There is no teacher in the Science Department, including me, that would be as good as they are without the consistent mentoring and direction of Dave Kennington.

Dave is an exemplary leader and has made me a more effective department chair. He works hard to promote investment and understanding for policies and consistently tries to find ways to answer, “Yes!” when possible, compromise when beneficial, and deliver the “No” with empathy and reasoning. I have never sought leadership roles in my work life. Somehow, that’s always where I’ve landed in my various positions. The coaching I’ve received from Dave is the first time someone hasn’t just assumed I know what I’m doing. He has invested so much time and effort to develop my leadership skills that while I’m

still not exactly comfortable, I feel I'm more confident and effective a leader than I've ever been in the past. My department is stronger because Dave has taken the time to help me improve my command and relationships with my team.

An effective principal shows genuine care and interest in students. I see Dave in the halls daily engaging in conversations with students, correcting dress code, praising accomplishments, and almost vibrating with the energy of the students around him. He is grateful, joyful, and perceptive. Students and teachers respond to and channel his enthusiasm and positive attitude. That's an intangible *necessity* in someone who has dedicated his life to secondary education. His commitment is evident and intrinsic. He's a powerful model for everyone.

Grit in the face of adversity defines success. While I've always tried to develop my own personal grit, I think it's important to know that grit wasn't keeping me afloat at Vanguard during the last two "COVID" years. What made me stay and strive for the students through the most challenging and ridiculously illogical, but unavoidable, set of policy and procedure changes in my entire working life was the firm belief that we were all doing the very best we could, and we were all in it together. Vanguard's leadership team held us together. Dave Kennington was the face of that leadership. He met us online, in our classrooms, in the halls, and at our duties. He found ways to improve communication and effective problem solving between upper administration and teachers, teachers and IT, families and staff, and kept the Vanguard culture alive and thriving when other institutions were forced to make other choices. He helped us believe. It's important to note that Dave continues to command the respect and admiration of the teachers he helped to lead through a precarious and challenging time. It's telling that he credits any success to those same teachers.

I am excited for your opportunity to get to know and potentially work with this extraordinary educator and inspiring leader. I will miss his guidance, perspective, and the daily injection of energy in my day. I am confident Dave will be a strong asset to your organization, and I am grateful for your consideration of this remarkable man.

Sincerely,



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