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To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to offer my strong recommendation for Robert Billman for an elementary teaching position at your school. I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Billman as a science coach and testing coordinator for the last two school years.

Mr. Billman came to Abingdon two years ago with a strong foundation in early education pedagogy and an exceptional work ethic. He was assigned to work with fifth graders, which I believe was a new grade level for him. He faced the challenge head on and learned the curriculum at a fast pace. In his first year, he learned from his teammates, mentor, and coaches. Mr. Billman is an educator many coaches describe as “coachable”. While he focused on absorbing new information in his first year, by his second year he was easily making the curriculum his own. He is intentional in his lesson planning. At Abingdon, we have a morning meeting with students to build community. A part of morning meeting is an activity to encourage collaboration and tie in academic standards. Mr. Billman will often plan an activity that will tie directly into his planned lessons for later in the day. Such dedicated planning helps set up his students for success.

As his science coach, we have discussed best practices to encourage student engagement. Mr. Billman would often go above and beyond to stay after work hours to walk through ideas with me. By the next day, the ideas are being implemented. For example, Mr. Billman and I decided to put a system in place for the use of a science newspaper the school purchased for the fifth graders. Prior to our conversations, science rotations were difficult to implement. By giving students clear expectations and boundaries on how to use the newspapers, he was able to design small groups for science review and trust his students to be engaged with the newspapers so he can run his small groups with minimal distractions.

Due to Mr. Billman’s intentional planning and execution, his students show progress in their learning. We have the Fifth Grade Science SOL in the Spring, so a big focus is on how much science knowledge the fifth graders retain. There is an assessment at the beginning of the school year and middle of school year. As his science coach, we sat and discussed in detail his students’ progress. Abingdon is very transient, so some students who we tested in September are no longer a student in February when the second assessment was completed. He had fifteen students to consider for growth. Eleven of the fifteen improved their score, eight of which had a double-digit improvement. Seventy-three percent of his students showed progress in their mastery of the science standards. This data clearly demonstrates Mr. Billman’s effectiveness as a teacher.

Mr. Billman’s current class makeup is mainly composed of special education and English learning students. This has led to a co-teaching classroom model. He plans and works very closely with both the special education teacher and English Learner teacher. When visiting Mr. Billman’s classroom, you will see a well-oiled operation. All three teachers have a small group and there is a small amount of student who are working independently. The rotations are clearly posted on the SmartBoard with a visual timer so students know when their group time will end.

Students enjoy walking into Mr. Billman’s classroom. Not only do they know they will receive an engaging lesson, but they also enjoy his approach to connect with the students. You will often see a cartoon sketch of Mr. Billman

throughout his slides and classroom. He finds ways to connect with students through his joyful spirit, fun and relevant stickers for students, and creative methods to teach a variety of standards-based concepts.

Robert Billman will be an asset to any teaching team and a positive presence within your school community. He is an educator with a deep commitment to the craft of teaching. Mr. Billman is intentional in his instruction, makes data driven instructional decisions, and builds lasting connections with both his students and his colleagues. I have had the pleasure of working with Mr. Billman and observing his tremendous professional growth over the past two years.

I recommend Robert Billman without reservation and would be happy to provide additional information if needed.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "R. Upshur". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "R".

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