



Physical Education Teacher Education
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November 14, 2014

Dear Search Committee,

I am happy and privileged to write this letter of recommendation for Ms. Niki Bray concerning your position of Instructional Design and Training Specialist at the University of Mississippi. I believe Ms. Bray possesses many notable skills that will lead to being an outstanding candidate for the position offered, but I want to expand on our professional collaboration that we have been engaged in for the past 10 years with physical education and physical activity programming. Although the use of technology is not as popular and widespread in the physical education world as other educational content areas such as literacy, this has not deterred Niki. Ms. Bray's abilities to fuse technology and learning are organic in nature as she knows inherently how instructional design can better serve her students' understanding of and subsequent lifelong participation in physical activity. She has, in my humble opinion, become one of our local, state, and national experts concerning technology in physical education and physical activity.

From 2004-07, I was the curriculum coordinator for health and physical education in the former Memphis City Schools. I first became aware of Ms. Bray when she sought me out to support her efforts to not only become a better teacher, but to become the best physical educator that she could be. This attitude impressed me immediately, and drove Niki to attain the National Board Certification for Teaching in physical education; only a few physical education teachers in Tennessee have ever accomplished this monumental achievement. Her innovative instructional skills have grown exponentially since that first meeting. I have observed her capabilities to create web sites, lesson plans, and assessments that have captured the attention of her high school students. She is the first teacher that I know of to use heart rate monitors as a regular tool within her classroom. She has also used instructional design to differentiate her teaching to reach ALL students. One example of many is that she was the first to use narrated PowerPoint presentations at Memphis Central High School to better teach to "English as a Second Language" (ESL) students. The last time I observed her classroom, I experienced a flipped lesson where the students were incredibly engaged. Eventually, our relationship over the years has flipped as well in that I now go to Niki to seek out support and new information around technology. The University of Memphis Physical Education Teacher Education graduate program recently has gone on-line as a program of study, and whenever I had a question, I would beg Niki to help me.

Ms. Bray embodies professionalism in all she does. She is a team player and has a work ethic that is second to none. Her past athletic accomplishments and coaching successes have built a solid foundation toward achievement in the workplace. Niki deeply believes in giving back to other professionals and has presented at district, state, and national conferences. She has been a member of the Tennessee Association for Health, Physical Education, Recreation, and Dance (TAHPERD) board and profoundly believes in the need and importance of professional development and research. Recently, Ms. Bray collaborated with the U of M Department of Health and Sport Sciences to conduct a concussion study of which I was a Co-Principal Investigator. Without her leadership and dedication to better understanding this debilitating and common injury, this study would not have happened. Niki is truly an honest and giving person.

Again, it is my pleasure to recommend Ms. Niki Bray for your position. Niki has been an outstanding colleague of whom I am so grateful to know, and will be a noteworthy asset to the University of Mississippi if you choose to hire her. Ms. Bray's productivity is illustrative of her persistence and capabilities. If I can be of further assistance, please feel free to contact me.

Best regards,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Carol C. Irwin". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned to the left of the typed name.

Carol C. Irwin, Ph.D.
Associate Professor