



Hartford Union High School District
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May 18, 2015

Dear Search Committee:

This letter is to serve as an affirmative endorsement of John Engstrom as a candidate for an educational leadership position in your district. I have had the privilege of working directly with John over the past 7 years in his role as District Administrator at Friess Lake School District, a K-8 district which feeds into Hartford Union High School District. His background as a social studies teacher, middle school principal, and high school assistant principal, before becoming a district administrator, have provided him a breadth of knowledge and experience to assist him in the complex, combined role of superintendent/principal/curriculum at Friess Lake.

Over the past 7 years, our work together includes collaboratively planning teacher professional development and curriculum alignment. We have also participated together in various PLCs on transforming public education and co-authored articles on the benefits of public education to local communities. During his time at Friess Lake, John's collaborative style of leadership has maintained a positive district climate during challenging times of school funding, open enrollment, policy, accountability, standardized assessments, and teacher evaluation systems. His strong and effective communications have kept all stakeholders well informed and engaged as his district continues to be held in high regard and student achievement results exceed averages at all grade levels. Students from Friess Lake continue their strong educational foundation and strive to have high academic expectations and performance in high school and post-secondary education.

John has clear focus on leadership priorities and navigates conflict and change with a balance of being both a member of the team and its leader. When confronted with conflict and complex change, John perseveres and ensures students remain at the center of decisions. While the Friess Lake School District may not be considered a large organization, John's innovative leadership is still evident. John is able to associate trends in successful organizations and make connections within his school district. He questions established practices and is willing to try new opportunities and ideas. He has brought a Maker's Lab to his school and is extending its use to the the community through the expansion of grants and communication with community officials and leaders. John has a strong commitment to ongoing positive message of improvement with staff and community.

John chooses a collaborative style of leadership, seeking input of all stakeholders impacted by a decision before implementing a plan of action. John has a commitment to innovation and to the relevant best practices needed to make his district move forward. He has strong people skills and has earned a reputation as someone who listens to and responds to other voices and opinions, always keeping what is best for students and families a priority.

While this letter is only to highlight some of John's accomplishments and leadership qualities, I welcome the opportunity to further discuss his qualifications. John is a very talented and compassionate leader and a strong advocate for students. His capacity for leadership is grounded in creative thinking and ethical behavior. I recommend John Engstrom, without reservation, as a strong candidate for any educational leadership position in your district. Please contact me at lisa.olson@huhs.org or 262-670-3209 for more information.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Lisa L. Olson".

Lisa L. Olson, Ph.D.
District Administrator

