

December 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my honor to enthusiastically recommend James Walker to fulfill the role of Assistant Principal in your school/district. As the school counselor at Dayton's Bluff Elementary School I have had the distinct pleasure to listen, follow, collaborate and lead with James since I became a part of that school community three years ago. Without a doubt, James embodies the critical characteristics of being an administrative leader in our school and will be able to transfer those skills of understanding, relationship building, leadership, and professionalism to the success of building staff and more importantly the students he has, and will continue to serve.

Enthusiasm. Positive energy. A willingness to listen first and seek to understand. As a first year employee at Dayton's Bluff those statements were my first and lasting impressions of James as he helped guide me and many other new staff members through creating, adding to, and delivering a culture of respect, honesty, and collaboration for staff and students. Still today, I can count on James to be a positive problem solver and always seek solutions that he will not only contribute to, but take a lead in.

As our professional relationship developed during my second year I noticed James continue to stretch himself professionally to gain new knowledge and expertise as our administrative intern. I was always impressed by his willingness to learn all sides of the story and include the perspectives of his staff peers, the student's voices, and his own strong experience and expertise from 20 years serving school and youth in multiple capacities. Most impressive was his ability to meet each level of interaction from where they were coming from, whether it was a fellow administrator, classroom teacher, teaching assistant, or student. When people are able to do that they are often driven by a much larger purpose and I see that being true for James. He is motivated to strive for student growth and success at an academic level as well as treating the whole student both in terms of their future career aspirations but social/emotional well-being included. Essentially, you are looking at hiring someone who is a big-picture thinker, a person who will do the work each and every day, and someone who is self-reflective and interested in growth.

James and I have had many opportunities to collaborate in the course of our three years working together. We have served on multiple committees including PBIS, SAT, Leadership Team, Behavior Team, SCIP planning and various other ad hoc areas where both of our voices were valued. In each of those venues his voice was heard, which speaks to his willingness to share his own truth when needed but also his willingness to be silent in order to allow others to share their ideas. Beyond that James, is someone who will always volunteer to do more than his fair share. Whether it is being willing to work

from the hallways instead of from his office, or signing up to do 20 weeks of small group work with several groups of at-risk boys he will always do what he says he is going to do.

As a person and professional who relies on a school of people willing to do their part it is always a huge asset when you have someone who does that and more. James is that person.

We are nine weeks from the end of our third year of collaboration. I will shy away from a prediction of what James can produce and inspire for those around him but I can assure you I know the remaining weeks will be met with the same vigor, commitment, leadership, and professionalism he has shown me and others in so many ways already. James is one of the people I will be thrilled to see how he continues to impact, move and forever grow those around him. It will be done with a great sense of loss as I know how much he has meant to our school and community at Dayton's Bluff. Without hesitation or reservation I enthusiastically recommend James Walker as an Assistant Principal for your school/district. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions or concerns. It would be my honor to continue to speak frankly about his worthiness for such a position.

Sincerely,

Benjamin Herman
School Counselor, Dayton's Bluff
St. Paul Public Schools
Adjunct Professor – UWRF Counseling Program
benjaminherman@gmail.com, 651-295-9734