



R.W. Emerson Junior High School

Scott Thomsen, Principal

April 30, 2020

Dear Hiring Committee:

I am writing to recommend Leigh Choate for an athletic/co-curricular administrative position within your district. I have known Ms. Choate professionally for ten years, and she has served as Interim Vice Principal at Emerson Junior High School since January of 2020. Through our work together, I can attest to Ms. Choate's professionalism, work ethic, organizational ability, and above all, her commitment to student success.

Prior to Ms. Choate coming to Emerson, she was a top administrative substitute in our district. In March of 2019, she stepped in for me for an entire week. In the 2019-2020 School year, Ms. Choate first was interim Vice Principal at Davis Senior High School for the first semester. She has also served as Athletic Director for two Junior High Schools. These responsibilities have showcased Ms. Choate's abilities to adapt and work in varying circumstances at different levels. Ms. Choate is often the first person asked to take on these responsibilities as she is known for "getting things done". When she stepped in for me, she worked extremely well with staff, parents and students, and was constantly wanting to contribute. She is a leader in athletic circles in our region, with athletic directors, coaches, and referees seeking out her advice and counsel. She is confident in her abilities, yet seeks feedback to improve consistently.

Her exceptional organizational skills have been a huge benefit to our site since she joined us in January as interim vice-principal. Our first week back from winter break, she made adjustments to our cell phone and tardy tracking protocols, set about expanding our campus climate student group, and visited all classrooms to introduce herself to the student body. With minimal direction, she is able to see and act on issues as they arise with student discipline, classroom management, and extra-curricular activities. As principal, I was able to hand things off to her and often within the day, there would be concrete action. Ms. Choate keeps all of her responsibilities well-organized so that her follow-up can be efficient and staff, students, and families see results quickly.

As many districts have done, we moved to Distance Learning in April of 2020. Both in the preparation and execution of distance learning, Ms. Choate has adapted her organizational skills to manage online discipline and attendance for our school. She also took on contacting our 8th grade students that were not connecting with our online curriculum.



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<https://emerson.djUSD.net>



Dr. John Bowes, Superintendent



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Ms. Choate's ability to connect with students is a strength I observed many times in the course of this semester. She provides boundaries and expectations for students, and is fair in her approach to discipline. She has successfully connected with some of our more challenging students by listening to them, helping them come up with an organized plan, and then checking in with them along the way. With her athletics background, she was instrumental in improving the ways in which all students could maintain grades to keep playing and practicing. Her clear communication with parents quickly established trust and confidence.

With the wide variety of experiences that she has managed this year alone, together with her background in education and athletics, I am confident that she is ready to take on a larger role in athletic administration. She brings a solid understanding of middle and high school education and extra-curricular programming, and combines it with the personality necessary to make tough, critical decisions while responding to feedback. I fully support Ms. Choate in her application, and am happy to speak with you personally should you have questions or need clarification.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Scott Thomsen", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Scott Thomsen, Principal
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