

April 20, 2021

To Whom it May Concern,

It is my pleasure to recommend DaraLyn McColl as an amazing and dynamic educator. I have had the genuine privilege of getting to know and work with DaraLyn over the past six years, in many capacities.

I first met DaraLyn when she became my (long-term) Art substitute; and afterwards, while she taught the Alternative Ed. Program, we worked very closely to coordinate successful Art experiences for all of our students. Through our collaboration, DaraLyn resourcefully guided “more challenging” students who were unable to attend the regular Art classroom.

As an Alternative Education Specialist, with both an Art Education and professional Graphics background, DaraLyn is extremely creative and resourceful in working with students who need an “alternative” approach in Art and education. She’s extremely versatile in her positive and holistic approach to each student.

Her students are fully engaged in creative thinking and problem-solving, and she sets very high expectations for her students, including the “mindset” that “failure isn’t final”. She teaches students how to give support and accept constructive criticism, and she encourages respect for themselves, their peers and others. Students celebrate their individual *and* collective Artwork through school, district and community Art exhibits.

She employs a wide variety of innovative and adaptive teaching strategies, processes and programs, to motivate students to strive for personal success. Students love to go to her classes, and even show up *early*, because they are *so eager* to learn new things with her! Her hands-on projects and authentic learning units “connect” academics with Art, and “connect” students with their school, community and each other.

DaraLyn interacts positively and intuitively with all ages of students (especially including middle school age students), as her own daughter, two sons, and all of *their* friends, have likewise grown through the Gorham school system. In addition, she offers private Art lessons in her home, to multi-age students.

DaraLyn loves to collaborate with other professionals both in the school and in the community, in order to explore many options for her students to utilize their strengths and interests to achieve success, including Service Learning units.

DaraLyn has been a professional Graphic/digital artist, and has taught students a variety of Art processes and communication strategies in Gorham for 9-10 years. She has shared her corporate experience and expertise as the facilitator of the Village Times, a student-led newspaper that engages students to share their interests, strengthen communication, hold interviews, and take photos and videos. Village Times articles have been shared with the Gorham community newspaper (the Gorham Times); and all Village Times Newsletters are shared with staff and the parent community online. The results of her co-ordination of the school newsletter and its student participants, is absolutely phenomenal! You have to see it! (During the 2018-2019 school year, the Village Times students even interviewed Gov. Mills, as our first female Governor of Maine!)

DaraLyn has also engaged students in Community Art such as “The Sensory Movement Path”, which is a Collaborative Interactive (wall and floor) Mural involving multi-age students (ranging from elementary age through high school), volunteers, and the Occupational Therapist (for Body Movement expertise). Students of all ages absolutely love participating in, and interacting with, the Sensory Movement Path! A story about this Interactive Project was published in the Gorham Times, the Village Times and the Maine Art Educators Association Newsletter.

DaraLyn has been very active with the Gifted and Talented program, offering both enrichment and therapeutic Art experiences for students who need and thrive on “more Art” experiences. In addition, she also offered Art Club (before school), for students of mixed-age levels.

DaraLyn, who has a Masters in Educational Leadership, has participated on many committees, including a Leadership Team and the Alternative Education Committee for two years; she worked with the Social Worker and Administration, through the Gorham SEL program, to conduct positive behavior interventions, in order to promote the success of all students.

DaraLyn has experience with Art curriculum design, authentic/project-based learning units, and individualized lessons. She employs proficiency-based learning, rubrics, assessments and data planning/ collection/reports.

She has experience in procuring innovative educational grants: last year, she acquired a grant for a 3-D printer and the students' design projects are impressively on the "cutting edge"!

DaraLyn has abundant personal and professional energy, and loves to initiate collaboration with staff, parents and local businesses. I admire DaraLyn's huge range of both creative individualization, extending to a larger scale of dynamic group projects!

DaraLyn is a model of teaching excellence, and she would be extremely successful in "bringing out the best" in all students, through her various strengths in Art Ed., technology, Graphics, Gifted & Talented and Alternative Education.

She is also uniquely qualified to ensure that students (with varied interests, personalities, abilities and styles of learning) will greatly benefit from her caring, knowledgeable, experienced and creative leadership.

I highly recommend DaraLyn McColl. If you would like further details or insights, please feel free to contact me at #207- 892-0443, or email me at [paula.balcom@gorhamschools.org](mailto:paula.balcom@gorhamschools.org)

Sincerely Yours,

Paula Balcom, Art Teacher (Village Elementary School, Gorham, Me.; Retired, summer 2019)