



May 30, 2017

To Whom It May Concern:

This is an open letter of recommendation for the curriculum products and teacher training services of Mr. Jonas Basom and Drama Education Network. As the K-12 Fine Arts Manager for the Houston Independent School District, I oversaw the Houston ISD textbook adoption process as part of Proclamation 2015. We adopted ***Drama Works! Teaching System*** to empower our elementary classroom teachers to meet the K-5 Theatre TEKS mandated by Texas House Bill 5. We purchased the complete package of digital and print components for every one of our 176 elementary schools and arranged for Mr. Basom to lead multiple trainings for teachers.

Our experience adopting textbooks with Drama Education Network has been exemplary. Print materials were delivered in excellent condition and delivered in a timely manner. Teacher login credentials are well-organized and changes can be made at no additional cost. Mr. Basom, a theatre teacher and former actor, delivers the professional development himself. The training is hands-on and teachers are highly engaged. It has a high-quality built-in classroom management component. The targeted audience is both degreed theatre teachers, as well as properly certified generalist teachers. The teachers thoroughly enjoyed the trainings and successfully implemented the theatre strategies when they returned to their classrooms.

Drama Works! Teaching System is a comprehensive curriculum for both theatre and elementary classroom teachers. It is the only Texas state-approved textbook for Theatre Arts in grades K-8. It is very cost effective compared to traditional textbooks because only one kit per teacher has to be purchased; there are no books to purchase for every student. Not only does it meet 100% of the K-5 Theatre TEKS, but it empowers the generalist teacher to integrate drama in all subject areas, reach ELL students, reach academically challenged students, and develop students' academic and social skills. It is perfect for adding arts integration to any school or district moving from STEM to STEAM. The activities and lesson plans are written in clear detail for teachers with no drama experience to succeed. The "Creativity Cards" increase variety for acting and story choices by teachers and students while also building English vocabulary. The "Vocabulary Cards" cover theatre and literary terminology from the TEKS standards in clear detail with helpful examples.

I witnessed Mr. Basom lead a number of full-day and half-day workshops with our teachers. As a staff development presenter, he is truly outstanding. He kept all of our teachers engaged throughout the training, participating and reflecting on his exciting drama activities and arts integration strategies. By the end of the day, the teachers understood why and how to integrate drama effectively. Mr. Basom took them through his complete classroom management system, which was essential to helping them feel more comfortable and confident to try drama on their own. Teacher feedback was very positive. We also had Mr. Basom lead model demonstration lessons with our elementary students while teachers observed. He then led them in guided reflection after each lesson. Mr. Basom motivated and inspired both our students and teachers during his demonstrations. Teachers saw the immediate positive benefits for students and learned more about how to incorporate the *Drama Works!* posters, flash cards, activities, and classroom management system.

Houston ISD teachers and students have benefited enormously from Jonas Basom's curriculum and teacher training services. We plan to continue bringing Mr. Basom here to train more teachers as we expand the implementation of *Drama Works! Teaching System* across the district. I strongly recommend any school or district to invest in these outstanding curriculum materials and Professional Development trainings.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Walter Smith, Jr.".

Walter Smith, Jr.

Manager, K-12 Fine Arts

Houston Independent School District