

ESTACADA TOGETHER
P.O. BOX 547
ESTACADA, OR 97023

May 23, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I am pleased to be writing this letter of recommendation for Ellen Whyte. As Vice-President of Estacada Together, a non-profit presenting and arts education organization, I worked with her on a great community/school project that went over and above all our expectations for success. She is an extremely talented musician, songwriter and performer as well as a fine educator. These attributes don't necessarily go together, but they certainly do with Ellen.

"Ellen Whyte: Bringing the Blues to Estacada" was a partnership between Estacada Together, the Estacada School District and Ellen. We wanted every student in the district to have at least one experience with this nationally recognized performing artist. Activities between February and April 2014 included assembly performances for both elementary schools and an extensive residency through social studies classes for the Junior High. These 7th and 8th graders learned the history and geography of the blues, engaged in lyric writing, collaborated on a class blues song, learned performance skills and performed these songs in a culminating performance for parents in the Estacada Auditorium. Ellen also worked with our high school concert choir on an original piece that they performed with her 8-member blues band. Along with learning the history of this genre, students deepened their understanding of cultural diversity and the life skills of communication, cooperation, perseverance and respect. The community also was invited to take part in three blues-singling workshops that culminated in a "recital" at a local coffee shop. Estacada fell in love with Ellen!

This was a large project with many moving parts. How did Ellen keep it going so smoothly?

- She communicated! Emails, meetings, phone calls – whatever it took to make sure everyone was on the same page.
- She was organized and always on time.
- She understood the challenges of the school day and went with the flow.
- She is a creative problem solver who welcomes advice and enjoys collaboration and reflection.
- She knows and deeply understands her subject and is able to make strong connections and bring excitement to existing curriculum.

- She truly loves to connect with students – and they with her! Especially those with learning or social challenges.
- She is positive, optimistic, kind and full of humor.
- She lives to give praise and share the spotlight.

I can unconditionally recommend Ellen Whyte for any school- or community-related project. She is a joy to plan and work with. If you have any questions about Estacada's project, feel free to contact me.

Sincerely,

Jane Reid
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