



Letter of Recommendation for Kathren (“Kat”) Martin

I am delighted to write a letter on behalf of Kathren (“Kat”) Martin. I have gotten to know Kat over the past year because she has worked with students at a variety of levels at Norfolk Academy as a part of a Shakespeare residency program from the Virginia Stage Company. Both a scholar and a thespian, Kat led her colleagues and actors in their work with students in both our middle and upper schools, and she was the lead lecturer, director, and seminar guide.

I have been an English teacher for 26 years, and I know how challenging it can be to teach students texts as sophisticated and demanding as Shakespeare’s plays. When a teacher has a full year with students, then that teacher can develop deep relationships with those charges and find exactly the ways to motivate and challenge them. The residencies that Norfolk Academy had this year with the Virginia Stage Company were structured so that Kat and her team came to work with us at the 9th grade level about *Romeo and Juliet*, at the 11th grade level about *The Tempest*, and at the 12th grade level about *Hamlet*. (I believe that there may have been even more work that Kat and the VSC did with Norfolk Academy, but it was outside my department’s boundaries.) Each residency was about five class visits, and that offered a small window of opportunity to get to know Norfolk Academy and our students. Nonetheless, knowing full well the challenges of such a limited window, Kat immediately struck up a rapport with a variety of classes and students, and she was able to get them to do really sophisticated things in understanding and in interpreting Shakespeare.

Before Kat’s Virginia Stage Company team got to the classroom, she met with our English department and planned out a course of study for the residency. During that time, Kat demonstrated both a superior understanding of Shakespeare’s plays, bringing both a scholarly and a theatrical understanding to bear on our work, and she also was able to work with a number of different English teachers who all hail from different academic orientations and who are at

stages in their career ranging from early to late. Such a complex endeavor (fifteen visits about three plays across two school divisions with two different schedules and involving at least eleven different teachers, all of whom have particular expectations and ideas) was not without its setbacks and crises, and Kat brought a great deal of positive energy and professionalism to even the most challenging parts of that work (unfortunately including the peevish ideas of our oldest scholars and the urgent, sweaty questions of new English teachers). In different sessions, she worked with groups ranging from a dozen students to over a hundred, and she was able to inspire and push students of various ability levels ranging from our most verbally clumsy 9th grader to our most sophisticated senior bound in a few months for Princeton, UVA, or Middlebury. In my senior English class about *Hamlet*, Kat had seniors of a very high caliber, and she fielded even their hardest questions with grace and insight. In my junior English class, Kat was able to guide students through complex historical interpretation of *The Tempest* as well as enabling them to dream about different ways that the play could be reimagined and staged, all the while getting some of the quietest kids on their feet and engaging the play.

I believe that Kat is at the beginning of a great career with education and the stage, and I think that she would be an asset to any school or theater. Please feel free to contact me if I can be of any help or if I can provide you some more information on her behalf.

Sincerely Yours,

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