

December 2, 2011

Dear Sir or Madam:

It is my pleasure to submit this letter of recommendation for Ms. Lori Snell for consideration for the Alabama Teacher of the Year. I had the privilege of working with Ms. Snell for approximately 12 years in the Enterprise City School System, and during that time I came to respect her as a teacher and a person. I have written many letters of recommendations for teachers, and I usually focus upon their classroom skills. I could do that for Ms. Snell because she does demonstrate the effective characteristics of an effective teacher, but I'm sure you will receive other letters that will document her competence as a teacher. For that reason, I would like to deviate from the typical letter and let you know what I have witnessed first-hand about her character.

As you probably know, our school system was hit by an EF4 tornado on March 1, 2007. The tornado destroyed Enterprise High School and killed 8 of our high school students that day. As a member of the faculty of the high school, Ms. Snell demonstrated valor and heroism as she dealt with the tragedy. Her leadership in counseling and comforting her students is something that cannot be measured quantitatively or with an evaluation instrument. She was a rock on which students, the high school faculty and staff, parents and members of our school system and community could rely upon.

From March 13, 2007 until August of 2010 when the new high school was completed, Ms. Snell taught in less than desirable conditions when portable classrooms became the norm, when the daily schedule was modified (for a while the school day did not end until approximately 5:00 P.M.), when moving about in inclement weather was a necessity, when being a "psychologist" for her students who were still experiencing emotional problems was required and when many of the things we were taught in our college education classes did not apply to her situation. Through it all, however, Ms. Snell persevered and did her job in outstanding fashion. She did this while also being a loving wife and mother.

The second thing I would like to share about Ms. Snell's character comes from a personal perspective rather than a professional one. My wife and I have a 5-year old grandson, Mattox, who is mildly autistic. One of his symptoms is getting frustrated when he cannot do something, although he is rather bright (he can name all of the capitals of the states in the United State – something I have trouble doing). Last spring Ms. Snell picked Mattox to be on the T-Ball recreation baseball team she coached.

I cannot adequately describe the love, compassion and patience that Ms. Snell showed to Mattox. Someone once told me that "character is what you are when no one is watching you." There were days when I would attend Ms. Snell's practices and, without her knowing that I was observing, she would be working with Mattox and teaching him skills that most T-Ball coaches would not even attempt. When Mattox would get frustrated, Ms. Snell would put her arm around him, encourage him, but most of all love him. She made sure that he felt part of the team. The character traits that Ms. Snell demonstrated to our grandson are ones that, in my opinion, cannot be taught. They come from deep within one's heart and soul. That is why Ms. Snell is a candidate for Alabama Teacher of the Year.

Sincerely,



Jim Reese, Retired Supt. of Education Enterprise City Schools