

Board of Education of the City of New York
UNIVERSITY HEIGHTS SECONDARY SCHOOL

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Deborah Harris, Principal
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To whom it may concern:

I am writing this letter for Bram Moreinis, a colleague since October 2000. Bram and I have collaborated on a senior technology project using the First Class network he brought to our school. In addition, I have observed him teaching his Tech Leaders classes on several occasions. He has also taken on the responsibility of being a mentor for two seniors and guiding them through their independent senior projects.

Our humanities classes explored the essential question “Is violence ever justified?” through a study of the dropping of the atomic bomb and capital punishment. As students explored sub-questions to these topics, Bram made it possible for students to use the Internet and our new network to emulate the inquiry process of historians. They gathered sources for an on-line library, which served as a pool of information to apply in examining the above topics. Students built the library by searching the Internet for appropriate resources and then tagging them for review and inclusion. The library/pool was moderated by teachers, and consisted only of appropriate resources (sources that were legitimately documented, contained information about the topics we’re studying, and were written by people directly involved in the issues under study.)

The advantage of using resources collected by students and teachers is that once the resources were collected, a student’s search for information became much more efficient, and their research pool could be accessed by other students throughout the cycle and in subsequent years. Students used the First Class bulletin board system to engage in online discussions centering around the essential questions, developing their own arguments (supported by references to online documents) and critiquing the positions of others. We then projected these discussions onto the screen to facilitate whole class discussions.. Bram set up the entire project and helped facilitate class lessons.

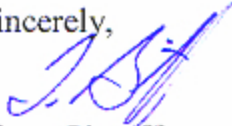
While observing Bram’s Tech Leaders classes, I noticed he balanced whole group interactions and one-on-one tutoring. He paired up students to address their different comfort levels with technology. Project goals and guidelines were all clear and updated each class, with daily instructions posted on the network for students to check. Each student had a clear role in the project (which, when I observed, was a contest to create a website for the alternative superintendancy), and a task and team for each day.

When student teams finished designs for the website, they effectively presented their work to the class for review using the projector. Bram often gave positive feedback to encourage students to explore new skills and tasks. He found appropriate tasks for their skill levels that gave them a feeling of success without limiting their creativity. Trust and caring were particularly evident in the acknowledgement and celebrate student birthdays. However, students were also held accountable for behaviors that adversely affected the group.

In addition, Bram took on two seniors for our Wise Individualized Senior Experience mentoring program. This responsibility involved meeting with mentees each week and guiding them through their independent senior projects, which involved computer programming and web design for our in-house infant care facility. He was also the keyboardist and resource person for a third student who was doing her project on Jazz vocalists.

Bram works well in a wide variety of areas with students and machines, and would make an excellent addition to any staff.

Sincerely,



Linas Gintoff
Humanities teacher