



Chicago Academy High School

Providing a supportive, reflective environment for students committed to attending college

May 9, 2014

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing in testimony of the continuous and rigorous professional development that Sara Carroll provides the English department here at Chicago Academy High School. As English Department Head, Sara ensures that each English teacher has access to the most current pedagogical innovations and best practices. One specific practice that has benefitted our students is the real-time, online shared reading.

In a shared online reading, students read the same text at the same time, annotating and commenting as they read. The teacher is able to see where each student is in the text and push thinking by responding to comments and annotations made by the students. Similarly, students can “see” their classmates’ thoughts about the text as reading of the text and reading of the comments happen simultaneously. It is an activity that not only ensures a 100% engaged reader but also lays bare student understanding and perhaps misunderstandings. It allows everyone to “speak” in a way that can’t happen during a silent, individual reading or traditional oral group readings or discussions. Students that don’t normally offer oral discussion contributions find a space for their voice within these shared online readings. Furthermore, a written record of the discussion is immediately available for review. It is Sara who taught her colleagues how to effectively run an online shared reading. I can affirm that my students have benefitted as readers and critical readers through the shared reading.

Sara brought the shared reading to the English department and demonstrated how to run the activity. She shared video of the process happening in her classroom. She also invited teachers into her classroom to see the process in real-time. In fact, Sara constantly invites other teachers into her room to see best practices in action. Even without a formal invitation, teachers at Chicago Academy High School know that they can walk into Sara’s classroom and observe distinguished instruction and innovative practice. Sara has the perfect combination of intellectual leadership and intellectual humility. I am privileged to work with Sara, but more importantly, our students reap the rewards of having a teacher who is constantly looking for new, effective ways to increase student engagement and learning.

Sincerely,

Matthew Schultz
English and AP Language & Composition Teacher
Chicago Academy High School