

To whom it may concern,

I am writing to express my strong interest in serving as a mentor and cooperating teacher. My journey in education has taught me that impactful educators are shaped not only by their formal education but by the community that surrounds them during their pivotal early years. I want to pay forward the exceptional mentorship I received and guide new teachers as they navigate the complexities of this everchanging profession.

When I began my student teaching in Glastonbury, I experienced firsthand the transformative power of a dedicated mentor. I will never forget presenting my first independently created lesson plan to a group of eighth graders, only to realize the material was entirely overwhelming for them. It was an experience that could have crushed my confidence. Instead, my cooperating teacher collaborated with me between classes to adapt the material, helping me hone my scattered thoughts into accessible, engaging instruction. By my final class period, the lesson was a success—one I could be proud of entirely on my own. Without her intervention and empathy, I might not have continued in this profession. I am committed to providing that same lifeline and constructive environment for a beginning teacher.

My transition to teaching in Bristol fundamentally altered my self-perception as an educator. Initially, I believed my enthusiasm for deep, inquiry-based assignments like I created at UCONN would naturally translate into student success. I quickly learned, it is just not that simple. As part of the founding faculty at BAIMS, I quickly realized I had undervalued Domain 1 of the Connecticut Common Core of Teaching: creating a strong, positive classroom environment that promotes student engagement.

Recognizing this gap, I collaborated with my TEAM mentor and our school's instructional coaches to integrate radar strategies. Through these strategies I learned to take some time to review expected outcomes before a lesson. As a result, I became much more intentional in my practice. Today, I am proud to embody the role of a "warm demander." Although sometimes used as an educational buzzword, I have cultivated a rigorous yet welcoming environment where students feel safe attempting challenging tasks. Through our building-wide focus on high-quality work, I have also strengthened my professional responsibilities, utilizing concrete student examples to foster transparent, productive communication with parents.

As my teaching practice has grown, so has my involvement in teacher leadership. Serving as the curriculum coordinator for my building, I worked closely with OTL and Leszek to expand our instructional approaches. Later, when I stepped in as interim team leader, I had to navigate the dynamic of being the youngest member of the team while acting as the crucial nexus between administration, school counseling, and my peers. I learned immensely from the inevitable missteps along the way. I am eager to apply those lessons to a mentorship role, anticipating the pitfalls new teachers face and helping them navigate their own team dynamics. Furthermore, successfully facilitating district-wide professional development for the entire history department has honed my ability to relate to and guide adult learners.

My commitment to education extends well beyond the mandated curriculum. I have actively participated in the AI Committee, exploring new technologies and applying them directly to my classroom practice. Additionally, I have been an integral part of the Triple Threat program at BAIMS, taking the initiative to learn video production and editing software so I could offer engaging, hands-on electives for arts students who had never experienced this type of media creation before.

Starting my career during the COVID-19 pandemic, helping to open a brand-new school, and working as the sole seventh-grade social studies teacher at BAIMS have given me a unique perspective on resilience. I know what it takes to establish both classroom and school-wide expectations from the ground up, and I understand the professional isolation that new teachers can feel. I am ready to give back, provide crucial feedback, and foster the next generation of highly capable educators.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Nathaniel Austin-Mathley