



Harvard University, Center for International Development  
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7 January 2010

To Whom It May Concern,

As Field Director for WorldTeach-Chile, I have had the opportunity to collaborate with Laura Keeney and observe her professional growth throughout the past semester as she completes her service commitment as an international volunteer English teacher in Lebu, Chile. WorldTeach is a non-profit organization based at Harvard University's Center for International Development that contributes to educational initiatives in countries struggling to find qualified teachers. As a dedicated classroom teacher, an active participant in her community, and as a leader among her fellow volunteers, Laura has been invaluable to her students as well as to our broader work in Chile this past semester, and I enthusiastically recommend her to your program.

Laura is truly committed to helping others. Throughout her work in Chile, she has repeatedly demonstrated the compassion, humility, and interpersonal skills that uniquely equip her to span culture and language barriers to connect with people and empower them. While she has been placed in a challenging teaching environment, with little resources, minimal institutional support, and administrative disorganization, Laura seems to have thrived. Many other professionals in similar situations grow frustrated and resign themselves to lower expectations for their students, their host-institution, and their administration. Laura on the other hand, has relentlessly pushed to provide her students with increased educational opportunity. The dynamic and innovative teaching and learning that occurs in Laura's classroom is a stark contrast to many of the other classrooms in her school and throughout Chile. From the moment the students walk in her door, Laura instills within them a sense of urgency to learn. Their progress is impressive as is their willingness to take risks in the safe, comfortable, productive environment that Laura has created.

I have had the opportunity to observe Laura's teaching and see that her students were actively engaged in the learning process and visibly excited to be in her class. Even while teaching over 480 students this semester, Laura managed to make personal connections with her students with an impressive knack for remembering names. I was particularly impressed by Laura's ability to engage students with very different learning styles and ensuring that each and every student participated, progressed, and mastered ambitious learning objectives. Laura's attention to detail and artistic ability were evident in the materials she created by hand for each lesson. Her room was plastered with student work that incorporated both artistic expression and English skills. Her students were deeply invested in her lessons as she kept them moving and interacting with each other in English. She has also contributed to the



long-term impact of our organization by providing sample lesson plans to improve our programmatic training curriculum for incoming volunteers.

In addition to her successes in the classroom, I have been particularly struck by Laura's involvement at her teaching site, in the Lebu community, and within our organization. Laura has not only been a supportive member of her school community by collaborating with and supporting her fellow staff members, but she has also been actively creating extra-curricular opportunities for her students as well playing an integral role in our broader organizational goals. Beyond her classroom responsibilities, she coached her school's debate team that went on to qualify for the regional competition. She also collaborated with the school's art teacher to create a multi-cultural, multi-lingual mural in the school. She has also developed a strong relationship with her host family and has made plans to return to Chile and extend her service for another semester. As Field Director here, these are all clear signs that she appreciates the community, has established strong ties with its members, and has fully integrated into life in Lebu.

Laura is a leader in the classroom. She sets ambitious learning objectives for her students and then invests her students in those goals. She is meticulously organized as she plans her creative lessons starting with her objective and carefully constructing both short- and long-term plans that bring her on the most direct path possible to her goals. With her teaching experience, leadership skills, and dynamic personality, I am confident that she will contribute to your program as effectively as she has to our work in Chile. If you have any further questions regarding Laura, please contact me by email at the address below. You may also contact our Program Manager, Maggie Tabach, in our US office by e-mail at [mtabach@worldteach.org](mailto:mtabach@worldteach.org), or by telephone at 617.495.5527. In the meantime, thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Thomas Maffai  
Chile Field Director, WorldTeach  
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