

Jacob R. Waluconis

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To whom it may concern,

I'm writing to strongly recommend Jimena Flores Martinez for the Masters in Teaching program at The Evergreen State College.

I've worked as a paraeducator at Olympia Regional Learning Academy (ORLA) in a 3-5th grade elementary classroom for the last 5 years. Last academic school year I got the pleasure of having Jimena in our classroom on a weekly basis, including some field trips. It was a complete delight to have their presence in our classroom.

From day one, Jimena's passion for education and working with all types of students and learners was apparent. The genuine joy Jimena has when working with kids in an educational setting is wonderful, and in my experience, helps the kids feel more comfortable with the adults which allows for learning built on trust. I also always appreciated how they felt comfortable sharing their own cultural and life experiences in a way that would help kids understand questions they had. From working with elementary students for my time I've come to see that truly the best educators are those who can connect with their students in a social-emotional way, as well as help them learn the knowledge that we are trying to demonstrate, and Jimena absolutely does this.

Perhaps my biggest recommendation though comes from the students themselves. In our program we have many kids stay in the same classroom 3-5th grade. I watched so many kids coming to school this academic year with the uplifting stickers and messages Jimena had made for the students on their last day. Leaving a positive, lasting impression with all those wonderful children is the best recommendation I could give, and Jimena had that impact completely. We miss them at ORLA, but are so happy we could be a part of the academic journey they are on.