



**Ericka S. Lawton**  
Associate Director for Educational Leadership  
and STEM Initiatives

To Whom It May Concern:

It is an honor and a pleasure to recommend to your attention Alex Jones for the position within your organization. It has been my privilege to know him in both a professional and personal capacity. During this time, I have noted the following qualities and best practices in Alex that I believe characterize him as an ideal candidate for this award.

*Master of Content-* Alex has successfully taught elementary students for the majority of his career. He is a believer in inquiry science allowing his students to discover and grow as they experience the natural world around them. He has a talent for engaging students in compelling science discussions, motivating them to be inquisitive and to think outside of the box. Alex consistently works with to maximize the retention and application of newly learned content with his students.

*Facilitator of Effective Instructional Methods and Data Analysis-* Alex has demonstrated he is knowledgeable in a variety of facilitation techniques. As a skilled facilitator, he has a range of strategies that can meet the unique needs of his diverse learners. Alex also effectively uses data to support instructional decisions by prioritizing instructional time, targeting individualized instruction for students who are struggling with content, and by gauging the instructional effectiveness of classroom lessons.

*Leadership in Action-* As an experienced leader with 15 years' experience in a variety of roles throughout his career in education, Alex previously served as a STEM Lab teacher for PreK-5<sup>th</sup> grade students within Houston Independent School District, one of Houston's geographically large, as well as economically and socially diverse school communities. He has successfully navigated the issues that this type of diversity can create, working diligently to support his district in being sensitive to the needs of all students while balancing the demands from outside entities.

*Life Long Learner-* Among his many achievements, Alex was an NSF Robert Noyce Teacher Master Teacher fellow with Rice University. The Texas Leadership Initiative for Inquiry Science Teaching (TLIIST) is a 5-year program for K-12 science teachers to further the science content knowledge and pedagogical skills of exemplary teachers while transforming them into effective leaders who can support change at the school, district, and state level. With an eye always directed towards the acceleration of learning, Alex remains current in his efforts to research the best science practices that will progress his organization. His willingness to explore new ideas in order to meet the needs of students is invaluable.

In short, Alex has proven himself to be an outstanding educator, and one you would do well to consider him for this position. It is without reservation that I highly recommend Alex Jones.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ericka Lawton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ericka" and last name "Lawton" clearly distinguishable.

Ericka S. Lawton  
Associate Director for Educational Leadership and STEM Initiatives  
Rice University Office of STEM Engagement  
Rice University Office of Research