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March 12, 2025

Jane Roth, School Head  
Thomas Jefferson School  
4100 South Lindbergh Blvd.  
St. Louis, MO 63127

Dear Ms. Roth and Members of the Selection Committee,

As a longtime resident of the St. Louis metro area, I am aware of the reputation and standards the Thomas Jefferson School represents. Bearing that in mind, it is with a deep respect that I ask you to please accept this letter and attached documentation as application for the position of Upper-Level Social Studies Teacher at TJS. With a Ph.D. in American History from the University of Missouri (2024), two years of high school classroom experience, and nearly a decade of instructing dual-credit and accelerated high school students at Lincoln Land Community College, I bring a tested, engaging and dynamic approach to teaching history and government whether in person or online. I am eager to contribute to the Thomas Jefferson School's tradition of academic excellence by preparing students for their exams and college as much as encouraging lifelong learners and informed civic engagement.

As an experienced instructor across a broad array of topics including early and late American history, world history, and western civilizations, my teaching is further enhanced by a deep familiarity with the College Board's AP U.S. History framework, gained through work as a practice assessment developer and editorial assistant across two editions of an AP History textbook between 2019 and 2024, *Fabric of a Nation (FOAN)*. This experience strengthened my ability to design rigorous, skills-based coursework while ensuring alignment with collegiate level expectations set by the College Board through the cultivation of historical thinking skills essential for higher education and a lifetime of civic engagement.

I take full advantage of my educational and teaching experience as much as my work as a public and digital historian in the classroom. Through backward design principles, I practice a multimodal, and inquiry-based teaching philosophy that ensures students actively engage with content, refine analytical skills through self-directed projects, and educate students on the craft and practice of the historian. My classes incorporate scaffolded, multi-stakes assessments, from low-stakes video reflections and structured debates to high-stakes research projects and timed writing assignments. Each reinforces critical thinking, evidence-based argumentation, and content mastery. Students work hard, but in a collaborative and spirited environment of continuous hands-on and discursive engagement.

My background in special education and experience reinforces my continued commitment to scientifically backed pedagogy and course design principles to ensure every student, regardless of learning style, background or ability, has multiple avenues for demonstrating their mastery of the content and skills. Always open to improvement and as demonstration to my commitment to education I have taken full advantage of continuing education and professional development training to better my assessments, course design, and objectives as much as technical competencies.

One of the things I love most about teaching is seeing my students grow over the course of a lesson, unit or semester. My courses reflect this reality, as they are designed to guide students through increasingly complex material while fostering academic independence, intellectual curiosity, and self-advocacy. My ability to support students in time management, critical reading, and historical writing ensures they develop the confidence and skills necessary to thrive throughout high school, college, and beyond.

I welcome the opportunity to discuss how my commitment to student engagement aligns with the mission of Thomas Jefferson School. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Dr. Shannan Catherine Mason