To Whom It May Concern:

This letter is written in support of Ms. Janet Smith who has completed a single subject teaching credential program at UCSB. I taught her social studies procedures observed her in the field.

Ms. Smith is poised, possesses a kindly demeanor, and teaches with a tremendous amount of patience. Her lesson plans are well prepared and tend to include hands-on activities that motivate and involve the students. Her first assignment took place in an 8th grade class where the students took well to her supportive and caring disposition. In this class Ms. Smith learned to organize and deliver basic lessons that took into account the young age level of her students.

Ms. Smith’s second assignment was extremely challenging and consisted of a large group of 10th grade students whose academic performance and motivational levels were generally below par. Some of the students also had very limited English language skills. With the aid of a very supportive cooperating teacher, Ms. Smith quickly learned the necessary management skills that allowed her to take risks in designing interactive and creative lessons. This challenging assignment prepared her well for her full and final assignment, a tenth grade world history class in the same high school consisting of students who occupied a median range of abilities and motivation.

Among the strengths that Ms. Smith showed were her willingness to pay attention to students exhibiting special needs by closely reading their journal writings and allowing students to submit questions to her. Ms. Smith also made a concerted effort to use a variety of activities to engage her students and assess their understanding of concepts through the use of group work, web tasks, concept attainment lessons, guided inquiry, slides and videos, and simulations. At times her lessons became extraordinarily complex and one skill she tried to hone throughout the semester was that of paring down activities to their basic objectives and clarifying and writing down instructions so that all students could engage in the various group activities with a minimum of confusion. One other aspect that Ms. Smith focused on in her teaching was that of pacing herself to keep abreast of the content standards. In the beginning of the semester Ms. Smith taught a variety of lessons that aimed at deeper understanding of some basic concepts, particularly concepts and generalizations involving ethnicity, culture and religion. Ms. Smith quickly learned that she also needed to address a whole host of other content standards and, as a result, she focused on maintaining a balance between depth and breadth in her coverage of the California History Content Standards.

Ms. Smith has demonstrated consistent growth in her teaching skills during the year, especially during the last semester when everything began to come together very well for her. She is thoughtful and strives for perfection. She takes her professional responsibilities seriously and I feel completely comfortable in recommending her as a caring and dedicated teacher.

John Johnson
University Lecturer and Supervisor