

Joetta M. Schneider
P.O. Box 51
Worthington, WV 26591

January 22, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

Mary Ellen Ledbetter is entertaining, engaging, and smart. I learned all this while working with her in her role as a professional development consultant for our school district on a Continuing Education day. My role was to handle the logistics of the training, including support for Mary Ellen as our presenter.

When I first approached Mary about the training, I wanted her to present reading and writing across the curriculum to about 35 teachers in such a way that they would be able to use strategies to increase test scores. Because she is so professional, Mary rolled with the punches as change after change was made to the agenda at the district level. This eventually led to a training for about 125 teachers. I also added more specific content deficiencies to address: reading comprehension, transitions, words in context, citing evidence to support opinions when writing, and several more areas, as well. Each time I approached her with the new changes, she was adaptive and had great ideas. Mary Ellen is easy to work with.

In addition, her depth of experience in providing professional development for teachers allowed Mary Ellen to analyze the work set before us and make important recommendations. For example, we had thought to add math teachers to her session; Mary's recommendation was to not do that if possible and allow her to create a mini writer's workshop experience. This ended up being a phenomenal training thanks to Mary Ellen's understanding of the work at hand. I'm thankful she understood what needed to be done.

My job was to set up the training, and Mary Ellen provided me with an individualized professional development session book for the use of our teachers. The books contained practical strategies and lessons the teachers could use in their classrooms, which was very helpful to the teachers.

My favorite moments during the training were seeing and hearing our teachers working with content that required an enormous amount of critical thinking on their parts. The teachers were learning and could see how their students would need to think just as critically in order to complete the tasks. The activities Mary used with the teachers elicited the same kinds of thinking we want our students to engage in. This provided an a-ha moment for me as I also engaged in the activities about how to make my students more accountable for learning—which would result in better high stakes test results. In fact, upon hearing our need to raise test scores, Mary's immediate response was, "You need to make students accountable." This was a popular sentiment with teachers who needed the concrete example Mary modeled as she presented.

I'm glad Mary Ellen had the confidence to know what works for teachers and students. Her experience and expertise were evident in the results of the workshop. Teachers who hadn't wanted to attend a required training the first day back from Christmas break sent emails saying how wonderful the workshop was.

I began this letter saying that Mary Ellen Ledbetter is smart, and that is because she truly knows her content and pedagogy and she knows how to train teachers. She's also a little droll and funny when it's helpful for keeping teachers' attention. It's no wonder she is a sought-after presenter. I look forward to opportunities to work with Mary Ellen in the future both as a teacher and as a PD liaison for our district, and I can confidently recommend her to anyone seeking serious instruction in teaching strategies for improvement of reading and writing.

Sincerely,

Joetta M. Schneider
Instructional Specialist and Academic Coach