

Return address  
Phone number  
E-mail address  
June 12, 2010

St. Paul Academy and Summit School  
1712 Randolph Avenue  
St. Paul, MN 55105

To Whom It May Concern:

I am writing to apply for the position of Middle School Social Studies Teacher at St. Paul Academy and Summit School. I am a fully credentialed social studies and English teacher in Oakland, California, where I have been teaching at a public middle school for the past five years. My wife and I are moving to the Twin Cities this summer, and I was thrilled to learn of your need for a social studies teacher in the Middle School.

I introduce myself to my students every year by emphasizing that I, too, am a student of history. As such, I will not be merely telling them how history happened. Instead, I join them in a collaborative investigation, deepening my own understanding of history alongside them, and expecting them to challenge my assumptions and interpretations. A history class must be much more than a review of dates and events. Basic historical knowledge is essential, certainly, but it is not sufficient. Students must be able to critically engage with history, using their historical insights to inform their understanding of present and future circumstances. I structure my classes to facilitate student inquiry and dialogue about significant historical questions. History comes alive when students are invited to join the great ongoing conversations of history, grappling with real questions that defy easy answers. How does the legacy of slavery impact society today? Is the “melting pot” a useful metaphor for understanding the experience and contributions of immigrant groups? How do we evaluate controversial figures like Malcolm X or President Nixon? Questions like these are debated by scholars, political leaders, and educated citizens; the answers are directly relevant to how we interpret current events and assess future alternatives. I have found that students are proud to engage in this profound conversation.

In California I am licensed to teach both English and history, and have also had extensive experience teaching remedial reading classes. My training as an English teacher has been a powerful tool in my history classes. The core elements of an English class — reading diverse and challenging texts; academic writing with correct usage; and speaking, whether formal or dramatic — are skills that should be leveraged in all subjects, and are particularly relevant in a social studies class. Five years of teaching mixed-grade remedial reading classes has challenged me to develop creative ways to help struggling students master tough standards and to nurture the sparks of academic curiosity that exist in every student, no matter how deeply buried. Teaching in multiple subjects across all three grade levels has also helped me to develop as an advisor for adolescents during this difficult phase of life. No matter their age or circumstances, middle school students are all engaged in a process of reinvention, developing from the children they were into the young adults they will be. This is a daunting project, and it is important for educators to respect students and nurture their evolving sense of self. In my advisory period

every morning, we divide our time between community building activities and practicing the organizational and time-management skills that will become essential to their success in high-school and beyond.

My personal background, growing up overseas and attending a private boarding school, gives me a unique perspective as a potential teacher at St. Paul Academy. I was born in Helsinki, and lived in Beijing, Moscow, Bangkok and Singapore before my 16<sup>th</sup> birthday. I returned to the United States for my sophomore year in high school, enrolling at Northfield Mount Hermon, a boarding school in rural Massachusetts. My experience at NMH was profound. Unexpectedly, I faced the paradox of being a foreigner in my own culture: my music was hopelessly dated, I hadn't watched TV in more than a decade, and when people said "football" I thought "soccer." I was not only playing catch-up on American popular culture, but I was held to the rigorous academic expectations of a premier college preparatory school. The teachers I studied with at NMH inspired me to blossom academically as I never had before, and they remain my personal and professional role-models. In addition, being a cultural outsider for most of my youth fueled a lifelong commitment to honoring diverse perspectives. I attribute much of my success working with diverse students in Oakland to this commitment, which is reflected in all levels of my curriculum and in individual relationships with students and their families.

It would be a privilege to be considered for a teaching position at St. Paul Academy and Summit School. I believe my skills and experience will be an asset to your academic community. I have listed my permanent address in Minnesota above, though we will be in Oakland until early July. I am easily reached by e-mail or phone, and I look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Andrew N. Roy