

The Secondary Schools
of Falls Church City Public Schools



Meridian High School - Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School
121 Mustang Alley
Falls Church, VA 22043

March 3, 2023

Dear Selection Committee,

It gives me great pleasure to write this letter of recommendation in support of Mr. Farrell Kelly's application to The Holocaust, Genocide and Human Rights Education Initiative at Penn State. The goals and outcomes associated with this professional learning opportunity align deeply with Mr. Kelly's core beliefs, values, and instructional practices. It is my hope that through this recommendation, I can share with you why he is deserving of this opportunity.

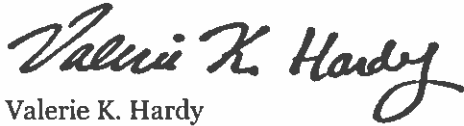
I have worked alongside Mr. Kelly at Mary Ellen Henderson Middle School since 2017. During this time, he has served as a World History I teacher and is currently serving as our Humanities teacher. Previously, he served as a US History teacher and English teacher. The foundation of Mr. Kelly's instructional practice is built on deepening student perspective as it relates to the content and concepts he is teaching to students. Rooted in real world relevance, Mr. Kelly's classroom is a space where students have the safety to engage in conversations that explore the complexities of history and culture from multiple perspectives.

In his Humanities course, Mr. Kelly has been purposeful in the literature and historical readings students explore. A few examples of these readings are: Dr. Martin Luther King, Junior's *Letters from a Birmingham Jail* and most recently, *The Sunflower: On the Possibilities and Limits of Forgiveness* by Simon Wiesenthal. In both of these examples, Mr. Kelly provides students a platform to reflect on the border life lesson found within each reading and seek intersection to a current day injustice or practice so that students can see the intersection and application to their lives today. Mr. Kelly is willing to engage students in difficult conversations knowing the power that these conversations will have on shaping the next generation.

Outside of the classroom, Mr. Kelly is a leader within our broader school and local community. He leads a variety of student clubs and is the co-sponsor of our SCA. Under his leadership, the SCA successfully brought student-led town hall meetings to Mary Ellen Henderson, a platform for student-voice to be amplified alongside staff's to make positive change within the school. It is, however, his leadership with our school-wide social justice and equity efforts that truly ignites a passion within him. This is the work that he is relentless about instilling within our students.

Mr. Kelly's goal as an educator is not simply to provide instruction to students on the standards, but to enable them to think critically about their impact as people on the broader world. His participation in this program will not only benefit the students he teaches as I know he will bring his learning back to our entire school community, which will make us all better. I truly hope that this committee finds him deserving of this opportunity. Please let me know if I can provide any additional information in support of his application.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Valerie K. Hardy". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Valerie K. Hardy
Head of Secondary Schools