

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing this recommendation letter on behalf of Lakshmi "Cha" Asokan. Cha is employed currently as part of the visual arts team at Lake Travis High School in Austin, Texas. I have worked alongside Cha, at Lake Travis High School, since the 2012-2013 school year and as part of the district visual arts alignment team since 2008 when she was the art teacher at Hudson Bend Middle School. I first met Cha in 2002 when I was student teaching and she was leading a district in-service for elementary art teachers in Eanes ISD. My first impression of Cha in 2002 was that of impressive skill as an artist and a teacher, as well as someone that I enjoyed being around. My first impression was correct and I still hold Cha in the highest regard as an art teacher, artist and a work colleague.

Cha teaches art 2, 3, 4 and AP for our 3D classes and also teaches the foundation art 1 class. She and I have a team within a team as we are both teaching AP portfolio at Lake Travis High School. I teach the 2D advanced and AP classes and she teaches the 3D equivalent. Cha is extremely talented as an artist which is something that I highly value in art educators. She has a keen eye as a photographer, a love of printmaking and creates beautiful hand thrown pottery. She also has a strong knowledge base in all types of painting and drawing.

Cha replaced a highly valued and successful art teacher at Lake Travis High School in 2012. Normally when a teacher comes in after someone so loved and successful, the best expectation is that the new teacher will maintain the program. That was not the case with Cha. Very quickly, she came in and took the program to new heights that we had not even imagined. From day 1, she was writing grants to upgrade the 3D facilities and improve existing equipment. She brought with her a history of philanthropy and fundraising via an annual clay sale. She implemented the clay sale at the high school and the community has become dependent upon that clay sale for handmade holiday gifts annually. Additionally, she started to exceed the expectations we had for 3D work at art competitions. Within a few years Cha was bringing record numbers of 3D and art 1 students to our state competition, Visual Arts Scholastic Event. She joined me in participating in Scholastic Art and Writing competition and started to achieve national success with 3D artists, whereas we had only previously found success at the national level with 2D work. Cha also led multiple students to national awards at NCECA, which is the national standard for ceramics education. All of this success with art awards and Cha doesn't even really enjoy competition in visual arts. However, she knew that creating competitive artists was valued at Lake Travis High School and she rose to the challenge and again exceeded our expectations. When I encouraged Cha to apply for the job, I did so because I liked her as a person and wanted to work alongside her. I encouraged her to apply because I valued her as an arts education leader and because I knew that she worked with students of all backgrounds and needs. I have been beyond surprised and pleased with how far Cha exceeded my hiring expectation.

To say that Cha will be irreplaceable at Lake Travis High School is an understatement. I cannot imagine a better art teacher than Cha, for all of the reasons listed above and so many reasons that I didn't list. There isn't a letter long enough for me to tell you about the greatness of Cha. She is a one in a million teacher, arts educator, arts advocate, team member and overall human being. Our tremendous loss is going to be some other school's find of a lifetime. No one will be able to fill Cha's shoes as a 3D teacher, AP teacher and foundations art 1 teacher. If you have any questions, please contact me at forgeya@ltsidschools.org or 512-533-5803.

Sincerely,

Amber Forgey

