

To: Dean Jean Haar, College of Education
From: Dr. Andrew P. Johnson, Department of Special Education
Date: December 17, 2010
Re: Letter in support of Dr. Elizabeth Sandell

I have reviewed the promotion and tenure documents of Dr. Elizabeth Sandell. Being a past member of the Department of Curriculum and Instruction (the predecessor to The Department of Educational Studies: Elementary and Early Childhood), and having reviewed PDP, PDR, and promotion and tenure documents in the College of Education for the last 14-year, I feel have a unique perspective and special expertise to analyze and evaluate the material submitted.

The documents submitted clear show that Dr. Sandell has consistently demonstrated the best qualities in teaching, scholarship, service to our college and community, and service to our students. Thus, it is my great pleasure to write a letter in support of her tenure and promotion in the Department of Educational Studies: Elementary and Early Childhood here at Minnesota State University, Mankato.

CRITERION A
DEMONSTRATED ABILITY TO TEACH EFFECTIVELY

To document her teaching effectiveness, Dr. Sandell has included instructional evaluations for 16 different courses taught from AY06 to AY 10 as well as reflections related to courses and course evaluations. Two important things to note here: First, she has been willing to prepare, develop and teach 16 different courses. It takes considerable time, effort, and intellectual acumen to develop three courses let alone 16. This demonstrates that she is willing and able to go above and beyond expectations in order to contribute to our programs here.

Second is her focus on the reflective element of these evaluations. Without reflective analysis, any data related to courses and course evaluations are of limited use. The reflective element demonstrated in these documents is very closely aligned with Kenneth Zeichner's work on reflective teaching and enables her to model for her students the NCATE and Minnesota BOT mandates on teachers as reflective practitioners.

Composite scores of course evaluation scores from AY06 to AY10 (N =421) show that she has been rated by students near or above 4 on a 1-5 scale. This is well above average for most of the faculty course evaluations I have seen over this amount of time. As well, she has taken it upon herself to get feedback from students via SCOT (Students Consulting on Teaching) from the Center for Excellence in Teaching and Learning and as peer review from colleagues.

The material submitted for Criteria 1 demonstrates a master teacher at work. In her syllabi you can see course objectives that are clearly specified, field experiences and other expectations that are well defined and easy to understand, and course schedules that have been well planned and integrated with

assigned standards and course objectives. Also, it is evident that students are actively engaged in a variety of activities in her courses.

CRITERION B

SCHOLARLY OR CREATIVE ACHIEVEMENT OR RESEARCH

Dr. Sandell is to be congratulated for maintaining a substantive agenda related to research and scholarly work in spite of her heavy workload and her many contributions to her department and the College of Education. Her documentation shows that she has published 7 articles in peer-reviewed journals and three book chapters. Also, she has secured three external grants and five internal grants, has had numerous conference presentations, has worked with students in preparing for the Undergraduate Research Conference; and has worked with graduate students on research projects that have resulted in articles and presentations.

Dr. Sandell demonstrates high achievement for this criterion. Her achievement here demonstrates a breadth and depth of knowledge and a strong desire to move the field of education and our programs here at MSU forward.

CRITERION C

EVIDENCE OF CONTINUING PREPARATION AND STUDY

Dr. Sandell's documentation demonstrates that she has not just met the criterion here; rather, it shows evidence of high achievement. She has maintain continued evolution in regards to (a) increasing and enhancing content knowledge and skills related to education and teacher preparation, (b) involvement in her field of early childhood and elementary education, and (c) to her own growth as an instructor/teacher. It is clear that Dr. Sandell is highly committed to her continued growth as a professor in all dimensions. She epitomizes what we would hope all professors aspire to achieve working at public university in teacher-preparation programs.

CRITERION D

CONTRIBUTIONS TO STUDENT GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT

This is an area of significant strength for Dr. Sandell. She has worked tirelessly to mentor and assist students. Her documentation demonstrates high achievement for this criterion as well. Some of her accomplishments include the following:

1. She has worked with and advised many graduate students in the completion of their programs and graduate theses projects.
2. She has spent significant time and energy to help graduate students meet graduation requirements when they were misled by errors in the graduate bulletin.
3. She has worked to maintain high standards related to both the process involved in completing

the MS degree in her department and the final product.

4. She worked to secure financial assistance and assistantships for graduate students.
5. She has involved graduate students in research projects that have led to articles and presentations.
6. She has worked with and mentor undergraduate students in research projects that have led to presentations at the undergraduate research conference.
7. She has been willing to work with students to design independent research courses when they were left in a bind related to the 120-credit conversation or when they needed an additional credit to get 12 credits for financial aid.
8. She has helped to foster international connections.
9. She has served as an advisor to the Early Childhood and Elementary Education Club and the Eurasian and East-European Students Organization.

It is clear that Dr. Sandell has a passion for our students and a strong commitment to making MSU a high quality University. Her achievements and contributions here cannot be overstated.

CRITERION E

SERVICE TO THE UNIVERSITY AND COMMUNITY

This is also an area of significant strength for Dr. Sandell. She has participated in numerous service activities to the Department of Educational Studies, Elementary and Early Childhood, College of Education, and University community. Some of her accomplishments include the following:

1. She has worked to form collaborative international partnerships with North-Eastern State University, Magadan, Russian Federation.
2. She has made presentations and has provided service to several professional organizations including (a) the Minnesota Kindergarten Association, (b) Association for Childhood Education International, (c) Australian Association for Research in Education, and (d) the Minnesota Valley Association for Early Childhood Education
3. She has worked with and helped develop both Undergraduate and Graduate Research scholarships and conferences.
4. She was willing to take on the role of chair for her department.

GENERAL COMMENTS AND OBSERVATIONS

The material submitted in support of Dr. Sandell's tenure and promotion shows her to be a valuable asset to the College of Education and Minnesota State University, Mankato. She has demonstrated high achievement in all five criterion areas. She is (a) fully engaged in department and college functions, (b) willing to volunteer and serve on various committees, (c) highly committed to

being an effective instructor, and (d) a highly skilled teacher.

Based on the review of Dr. Sandell's documentation for tenure and promotion, I am very pleased to strongly support here tenure and promotion.