

LETTER OF REFERENCE

It is a privilege to provide this letter of reference for Dr. Christina Kishimoto. Dr. Kishimoto arrived on the scene of a community rebounding from the impacts of a recession and stepped into a school district that had lost its way.

As a community leader for more than 25-years, I can truly say that we took our eyes off the ball when it came to our Gilbert Public Schools District. We had weathered the unprecedented growth through the 1990's into the 2000's while maintaining excellence in education. We were a boom town and experienced great demographics of a young, affluent community. When the recession hit, I truly believe our residents and businesses hunkered down and went into survivor mode with the feeling that the schools would remain unscathed and a haven that did not require attention.

The reason I bring this up is that political forces were at work and through just one election cycle, our schools' governing board overturned and a new majority was in power with agendas to find fault and discrepancies at every turn. We quickly went from a district that had very little turnaround of teachers (even though we offered lower salaries) to a mass exodus of teachers, students, and at times were featured as the punchline on national TV shows' monologues. This is the situation Dr. Kishimoto walked into.

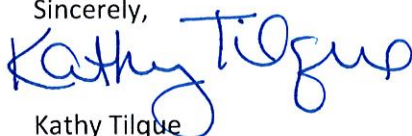
Through her expertise and focus on building consensus she has righted the course to include strategic plans, integrating technology and education models to engage students, monthly business leaders' meetings to provide transparency and good solid practices that are above reproach. As you can imagine, only a dedicated, determined person could accomplish this during a chaotic, very public blood-letting from a dysfunctional board. While these images may appear a bit dramatic, I can assure you they were real and as the Chamber of Commerce CEO I felt the public pain of this transition.

Dr. Kishimoto has been the utmost professional to work with as a community partner. We met right away when she arrived and she immediately jumped on board with the Chamber's effort to bring business and education together to address workforce readiness issues. She serves as a liaison on our Board of Directors and we meet regularly to talk about goals and ways to work together for the betterment of the students and employers. She is very transparent and forthright in her presentations and gathers diverse stakeholders to tackle difficult topics.

In addition to our professional relationship, I have come to know Christina on a personal level and I so admire her commitment as a mother, mentor, and collaborator. She is so intelligent and knowledgeable about the inner workings of the education system, I admire that about her, especially as it all foreign to me as a business organization leader. She is a leader who is forging a trail for great things locally, regionally, and nationally. While we would like to be selfish and keep her all to ourselves, we know that she has much to accomplish wherever she goes.

Please feel free to call me at 480-892-1103 if I can assist in anyway. My email is kathy@gilbertchamber.com.

Sincerely,



Kathy Tilque
President/CEO