

# SOUTHWEST ELEMENTARY

1320 Cook Road • Durham, NC 27713 • Phone: 919-560-3972 • Fax: 919-544-1111

“Follow Your Dreams”

Nick Rotosky, Principal  
Torrey Flores, Assistant Principal

---

January 27, 2015

To Whom it May Concern:

I am writing to share my great enthusiasm for Alex Weiss and his ensemble, Different Drum, who led a weeklong music residency for our school earlier this month! With the support of a grant from Target, Alex facilitated daily classes for groups of 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> grade students, and then Different Drum performed for our entire school in two culminating concerts.

Alex’s engaging lessons not only taught students about musical styles of Africa and Latin America, but helped students to make connections between cultures – an incredibly valuable 21<sup>st</sup> century skill. He drew upon his rich travel experiences, the cultural backgrounds of our students (many of whom are African-American and Latino/a), and his deep musical knowledge to facilitate this cross-cultural learning. His residency was also participatory – students listened to music and stories, but also experimented with playing many rhythms themselves. The concerts were extremely fun – many students and teachers ended up dancing! However, they were also a valuable educational opportunity, providing all students with a more global perspective and promoting cross-cultural understanding.

It was also a pleasure to work with Alex behind the scenes, as he is extremely friendly and flexible. Due to a snow day and a delayed opening, we had to adapt the residency schedule; he was very accommodating, and ensured that students were still able to benefit from the complete learning experience. He also worked with me, as coordinator of our two-way immersion program, to create opportunities for our bilingual students to develop their linguistic and cultural knowledge in Spanish, helping us to meet our unique program goals.

I highly recommend Alex Weiss and Different Drum for residencies and concerts at other schools! Please contact me at [laurel.stolte@dpsnc.net](mailto:laurel.stolte@dpsnc.net) or 919-636-3728 if you have any additional questions about our experience.

Thank you,

Laurel Stolte  
Two-Way Immersion Program Coordinator  
Southwest Elementary School

# El Refugio/The Refuge

Family Resource Center at Jonesboro United Methodist Church  
407 West Main Street, Sanford, NC 27332

September 15, 2014

To whom it may concern:

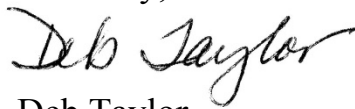
It is our pleasure to recommend Alex Weiss of Different Drum for entertaining, educational, high-quality performance. Alex and Li-Lan (as “Señor Blanco” and “La Chinita”) provided “Tales & Tunes – Cuentos y Canciones” for El Refugio at the Lee County Regional Fair on September 13, 2014. Their hour-long show wove together folk tales and rhythms from Latin American cultures.

Our organization’s goal is to transform community through cross-cultural connections. Alex’s choice of material and engagement with the audience were “spot on” for our message. The Latin rhythms and tunes drew people in, and the stories—told in English and Spanish—brought smiles for both children and adults, while also providing positive cross-cultural messages. Alex and Li-Lan both involved many audience members to help tell the tales and create the music. In fact, Alex immediately connected with two young men who have a local dance program that aims to build cross-cultural ties and worked them into the performance seamlessly.

Throughout the booking and performance process, Alex was responsive, followed through on all requests and conversations, and showed up on time. He (and Li-Lan) are highly professional and great to get to know. They “know their stuff,” get the job done and are delightful to speak with by phone and in person.

We look forward to future collaborations and highly recommend Alex/Different Drum for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Deb Taylor

Administrative Consultant



## DURHAM COUNTY LIBRARY

Anna Cromwell  
300 N. Roxboro Street  
Durham, North Carolina 27701

3/18/2011

To: Whom it may concern,

It is my sincere pleasure to submit this letter of reference on behalf of Alex Weiss and Different Drums. Mr. Weiss and the members of Different Drums have served as storytellers and musicians at the Durham County Library for the past two years, providing a wonderful bilingual mix of stories and music. They are a favorite among both the patrons and the staff.

The skill with which Mr. Weiss delivers his craft as well as the patience he displays when working with the children and parents, speaks not only to his commitment but also to his love for what he does. Mr. Weiss can often be found having a one on one information sessions with a parent or child, as he shares the origins of a story or the techniques of playing an instrument. The instruments and music that he introduces to the children are oftentimes a new experience for the child. They delight in the fact that he allows them to handle and play the instruments during his program. The children feel as though they are a part of the presentation and not just an observer.

Mr. Weiss and Different Drums have also served as performers at many of the library's festivals and summer programs. The diversity of their programming renders a multicultural blend of tales and sounds that everyone can enjoy, regardless of age, race, or gender. They are such a wonderful, eclectic group and their chemistry together comes through in their performances and interaction with each other. It is obvious that they perform for the love of their craft and not only enjoy what they do, but they enjoy doing it together. Alex Weiss and Different Drums are truly special. I look forward to many years of working together.

I am available for contact should further reference criteria be needed for Alex Weiss and Difference Drums. I serve as Children's Unit Manager at the Durham County Main Library and can be reached at (919)560-0130 or at [acromwell@co.durham.nc.us](mailto:acromwell@co.durham.nc.us).

To: North Carolina Arts Council  
From: Mr. William walters  
Date: June 7<sup>th</sup> 2010

It is without reservation that I write to recommend Alex Weiss to you as a resource for North Carolina's musical and artistic needs.

I first encountered Mr. Weiss when I sought lessons on recorder. He patiently taught me the scales and composed fun little melodies to help me progress. My next encounter with Alex was as a storyteller, when he held the rapt attention of a group of youngsters who listened to his stories which he enhanced with drumming and beautiful flute music.

At the Kwanzaa celebration in 2003, Alex and his band *Different Drum* shared a wonderful time with the audience when they performed at the Hayti Heritage Center in Durham. It was a joyous evening, not only the music, but to witness Alex's relationship with the band was to see another level of artistic sharing.

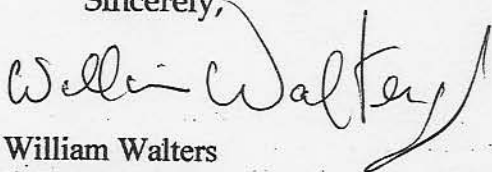
I have made several visits to a recording studio to see Alex work and to take part in his 2003 release "*Beautiful Melody*". Listening to Alex and working with him helps one to understand the range and diversity of his music. Since 2003, Alex and his band have added two more releases of their unique sound.

In the snow ridden month of February 2010 Alex brought his band into the studio for their most recent recording: "*Haitian Healing Song*", a song composed after Alex and Li-Lan's visit to Haiti in 2009. It is dedicated to the people of Haiti after the massive earthquake.

Alex's work encompasses many genres grounded in a multicultural context that bridges traditional and contemporary sounds. I hope to continue to see Alex and his band *Different Drum the Afro/Latin ensemble* sharing their music with North Carolinians.

Please feel free to contact me should you wish to discuss this or generally talk about Alex. I am a retired school principal and adjunct at Cornell University's labor Liberal Arts Division, New York City. I can be reached at (919) 477-5921, or e-mail: [ifwalt@aol.com](mailto:ifwalt@aol.com).

Sincerely,



William Walters  
237 Argonne Drive  
Durham, NC 27704

# J. W. Coon Elementary School

OFFICE OF THE PRINCIPAL  
905 HOPE MILLS ROAD  
FAYETTEVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA  
28304

March 1, 2009

The Arts Council of Fayetteville/Cumberland County  
PO Box 318  
Fayetteville, NC 28302

Dear Arts Council,

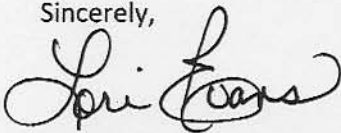
A huge round of applause is in order for *Alex Weiss and Different Drum!* We had the privilege of having them perform an interactive concert for our children two weeks ago and it was wonderful. Alex and his ensemble members are truly educational professionals in every sense of the word. They had my children singing, dancing and making music from the moment the ensemble took the stage.

Before their arrival, Alex was in contact with me numerous times to assure that my students would be ready for the performance and have the background information they needed to ensure a memorable learning opportunity.

Mr. Weiss is very knowledgeable in his art form and does an excellent job sharing with his audience. He was able to communicate at a child-appropriate level. He made the concert both fun and educational by bringing the music to life and helping the students make connections between their own experiences and those they had in the music.

I strongly recommend that The Arts Council continue their relationship with Mr. Weiss and *Different Drum*. They are a valuable and exciting resource for the children in Cumberland County.

Sincerely,



Lori Evans, NBCT  
Music Teacher