



**CALIFORNIA DEPARTMENT
OF EDUCATION**

TONY THURMOND
STATE SUPERINTENDENT OF
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION

1430 N STREET, SACRAMENTO, CA 95814-5901 • 916-319-0800 • WWW.CDE.CA.GOV

April 22, 2026

Dear Hiring Committee,

It is my pleasure to write this letter of recommendation for Mrs. Jennifer Downs. I have known Jennifer for the past seven years while serving as the San Joaquin Region Supervisor. From the moment I met her, it was clear that Jennifer is an exceptional individual. Her ability to think critically, motivate others, speak confidently in public, and maintain a strong work ethic makes her a pleasure to work with as an educator. Jennifer represents the type of teacher every educator hopes to work with.

Jennifer is driven to succeed in everything she undertakes. She regularly comes prepared for any situation and is quick to put in the hard work necessary to develop new skills. More importantly, she eagerly uses those skills to help students explore their passion for agriculture. While she understands that winning is not everything, Jennifer always gives her full effort in every activity she participates in, ensuring she contributes to each team she is part of. One of Jennifer's greatest strengths is her capacity to work collaboratively. Through her multiple leadership roles, she has developed a strong sense of teamwork and responsibility. I have personally observed her reach out to struggling students and support them with both patience and respect. Jennifer is always willing to lend a hand and finds genuine satisfaction in assisting others to prosper.

Jennifer is also deeply committed to her education and passionate about helping others learn. In conversations with her teaching partners, they have consistently described her as highly prepared and capable in the classroom. Her lessons were engaging, thoughtfully designed, and tailored to her audience's needs. She showed a strong ability to meet students at their current level of understanding while also challenging them to grow and excel. Her strengths fall in Agriscience, Ornamental Horticulture, and Floral Design, but she would be confident teaching in any agriculture pathway.

Beyond the classroom and FFA activities, Jennifer has also developed strong experience with Supervised Agricultural Experience (SAE) projects. She is one of the teachers I turn to for assistance on AET, proficiency awards, and star awards. This hands-on experience further strengthens her ability to connect agricultural concepts to real-world applications for students.

Jennifer Downs truly represents the qualities we hope to see in agricultural educators. She will be a tremendous asset to whichever school is fortunate enough to hire her. I recommend Mrs. Jennifer Downs without reservation and with my highest confidence. Should you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at (559) 740-3686 or by email at swilliamshopper@cde.ca.gov.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Shay Williams-Hopper".

Shay Williams-Hopper



HIGHLAND HIGH SCHOOL

April 23, 2026

Letter of Recommendation for Jennifer Downs

To Whom It May Concern,

I am writing to strongly recommend Jennifer Downs for the position of Programs Director with the Washington FFA Association. Jennifer is one of the most capable, organized, and driven professionals I have worked with, and she brings an exceptional level of program management and execution that directly aligns with the demands of this role. Jennifer has over a decade of experience in agricultural education, with extensive experience planning, coordinating, and executing large-scale programs and events. She has led and supported Career and Leadership Development Events (CDEs/LDEs) at multiple levels, demonstrating a deep understanding of event structure, rule implementation, and operational logistics. Her experience includes coordinating event schedules, securing facilities, managing materials and equipment, and overseeing registration, scoring, and results processes.

She is highly skilled in managing complex systems with multiple moving parts. Jennifer consistently balances competing priorities, meets firm deadlines, and ensures programs are executed with accuracy and professionalism. She is detail-oriented and process-driven, with a strong ability to implement updates, maintain guidelines, and ensure consistency across programs—skills that are essential when managing statewide events and standardized procedures. Jennifer also brings extensive experience with FFA award systems, including State Degrees, American Degrees, proficiency awards, and application review processes. She understands the importance of accuracy, fairness, and organization in managing applications, coordinating evaluators, and communicating results. She does this work with integrity and efficiency, making her exceptionally well-suited to oversee statewide award programs.

What truly elevates Jennifer is her ability to work with people at every level. She plays a critical role in supporting her team and advisors across the state, and she understands how to communicate effectively from the local classroom level to statewide leadership. She has an innate ability to build relationships with educators, students, and community partners, earning respect and trust quickly. Her in-depth knowledge of both California and National FFA systems and standards allows her to navigate expectations seamlessly while supporting others in doing the same.



661- 872-2777



2900 Royal Scots Way, Bakersfield, CA 93306



Tanya_Bidabe@kernhigh.org

4/22/26

Ralph Mendes
Kern High School District, Ag Ed. Coordinator (Retired)
13015 Sabine Forest Ave., Bakersfield, Ca, 93314
Ph: 661-808-3447, email: rmendes@kernhigh.org

RE: Jennifer Downs, Ag Education Teacher

To Whom it May Concern.

I have known Jennifer Downs as a Floral shop owner, as a teacher, advisor and FFA coach for the past 10+ years. She is a very good teacher in a number of very difficult subjects, including; Ag Biology, Floral Design, Ag Business, and Econ, Vet Science and Ag Chemistry. Jennifer is also a very active leader at her school and in her profession, having served as the Ag Ed Dept. chair at Frontier High School, and, as a Ca. Ag Teacher's Assoc (CATA) Officer. Her work as a community leader, and professional consultant have assisted numerous teachers over the years. Her teamwork with other Floral and Ag Science teachers in our district are exemplary.

In the classroom, Jennifer is well prepared and manages her classes and the FFA program with efficiency, enthusiasm, and grace. I have substituted in her classroom many times and enjoy both her well planned lessons and the students that engage in them.

On a personal level, I have enjoyed working and coaching with Jennifer in areas like Public Speaking, Ag Business, and Chapter, Sectional and State FFA Officer preparation, and school fundraisers. This week she and her chapter will be cooking 600 lbs. of tri-tip beef for Frontier's Drive Thru BBQ fundraiser.

Jennifer's competitive nature, combined with organized preparedness, accurate recordkeeping, and an engaging personality make her a delightful, fun, energetic and dependable teaching partner. She loves to have fun, but when asked to get a job done, she always rises to the task.

As the Ag Coordinator with over 40 ag teachers in a district that has 15 multi person departments, I can easily say that Jennifer Downs is one of the BEST and will be very hard to replace.

I strongly recommend her for any position for which you may be considering her!!

Sincerely,

RalphMendes

Please feel free to contact me if you have any further questions.
Kern High School District (Retired)
661-808-3447, rmendes@kernhigh.org