

HARVARD UNIVERSITY
Graduate School of Education

August 26, 2019

Letter of Recommendation for Prakash Nair

Prakash Nair is, in my view, the leading international figure in the increasingly important field of the design of learning environments. We live in any age where the social and economic contours of learning are changing in radical ways with the growth of digital access to knowledge and the increasing challenge of bringing high quality content and instruction to a society in which knowledge and skill increasingly determine individuals' economic well-being. Central to the challenges of this period is the design of learning environments for adults and young people that are attractive, engaging, reflective of the sciences of learning, and responsive to the full range of individual differences. Prakash has been on the vanguard of creativity and design of learning environments in this challenging world.

There are several important attributes that distinguish Prakash as an architect and educator. He has consistently grounded his architectural practice in clear and actionable design principles drawn from high quality research on teaching and learning. Fundamental to this perspective is that humans learn through a variety of modalities— individual inquiry and reflection, pairwise and small group discussion, use of expert knowledge from the world at large, large group instruction, and active engagement in creating and making tangible expressions of learning, among other modalities. Learning environments should be designed to accommodate the full range of these learning modalities, he argues, and he has demonstrated how this is possible through his own work and through examination of the work of others. Fidelity to this principle also requires that he maintain a steady grounding in established and emerging research on learning and teaching, which is exemplified in his writing as well as his work.

Another attribute I admire in Prakash's work is his willingness to adapt his ideas and creativity to projects in a wide variety of environments and contexts— large-scale capital replacement and renovation projects, modifications of existing structures around new principles and practices, modest projects adapted to modest budgets, and ambitious design-from-scratch projects based on divergent ideas. Learning is a massive, variegated, and highly individual human activity that requires us to think expansively about all the possible ways to use knowledge and physical environment to accommodate its full range. Prakash's view of his role is expansive enough to encompass the full range of possible connections between human learning and its physical environments.

Over that past decade or so Prakash has established himself as a major figure in the scholarship of learning and design. His books are widely read and used in academic courses. He is regularly asked to provide guidance both to schools and school systems as well as broader audiences on the fundamentals of design and learning. He presents himself as an unusual combination of critic of conventional school design and sympathetic and supportive ally to educators in the solution of immediate problems. His work is accessible to a broad audience that spans his colleagues in architecture, educational scholars, practicing educators, and active citizens who often play a role in local decisions that influence education facilities. He has an unusual gift for provoking and inspiring people to think ambitiously about what they can aspire to for their children's schools.

Sincerely,
Richard F. Elmore
Research Professor



TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

We are honored to recommend Prakash Nair as a premier school architect.

Mr. Nair was the lead architect for three of our schools in San Antonio, Texas USA: an elementary campus (grades K-5), a middle school (grades 6-8), and a high school (grades 9-12). In each school, he brought innovation, creativity, beauty, and an enhanced learning environment.

First and foremost, students absolutely love these schools! The designs are amazing with purposeful freedom of movement to allow full engagement in the variety of learning studios throughout the buildings. Students are energized throughout the day by the thoughtful spaces, appropriate sound abatement, and the wide variety of places to engage each other and inquire about the world.

Prakash and his team also considered our landscape and positioned the buildings to best use natural resources like site lines, wind flow, and the rising and setting of the sun throughout the year. In almost every case the windows and positioning of the rooms maximizes the natural surroundings. There is abundant, natural lighting and everyone comments on the way our schools feel connected to the earth and to the world around us.

Another key feature of a Prakash Nair school design is his intense desire to augment learning. Through imaginative and creative spaces our facilitators have found new ways to reach students. In addition to a wonderful plaza at each campus (that acts as the meeting place and hub for ideas and connections), we have places for a variety of learning environments including seminar studios, a Makerspace, presentation rooms, outdoor covered patios, a “Da Vinci” studio (combining art and science), as well as science and media labs. As a result, students and facilitators have access to a full array of learning spaces that are tailor made for our inquiry-based model.

After searching for several years for not just an architect but a *school futurist with a passion for learning*, we found Prakash Nair. He was a true partner with us to conceptualize, design, and build a collection of schools that are exceptional and amazing. We would give him our highest recommendation for anyone looking for creativity, innovation, and brilliance in school design and student learning.

Sincerely,

Bruce Rockstroh, CEO

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Constructing Modern Knowledge

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August 25, 2019

Dear Colleague:

Over four decades of work in education, I have rarely encountered a thought leader with more wisdom and expertise as Prakash Nair. I have cherished the opportunity to interact with Prakash. He is the rare combination of visionary and practitioner.

Few of my educator colleagues know or care about the complexities of learning than Mr. Nair. What makes him particularly special is that while others chat about educational change, Prakash has designed models of productive contexts for learning in communities across the globe. His books are the gold standard on school design.

It is without hesitation that I recommend Prakash Nair as an innovative education architect, keynote speaker, workshop leader, or masterclass mentor.

Best Wishes,
Gary S. Stager
Founder and CEO
Constructing Modern Knowledge



Rye City School District
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Eric Byrne, Ed.D.
Superintendent of Schools

byrne.eric@ryeschools.org

September 4, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

I had the good fortune of being introduced to Prakash Nair in 2012 when I was Assistant Superintendent of the Chappaqua Central School District and we were beginning to explore renovating our high school library. We had just hired a new high school Principal who suggested that we contact Fielding Nair International (FNI) to discuss the project. I never imagined what that introductory telephone call with Prakash would lead to; we ultimately scrapped the library project and began on a journey of complete physical transformation for the entire school district.

Through a powerful collaboration driven by instructional goals and high-quality professional development, we developed the Innovation Lab (iLab) at Horace Greeley High School (opened 2013). Six years later, Chappaqua has created an array of innovative spaces that were inspired by the iLab and funded by a \$42.5 million bond referendum, passed in great part due to the community's positive reaction to the iLab. While I am no longer with the Chappaqua Schools, I continue to collaborate with Prakash and the FNI team in my current role as Superintendent of the Rye City School District. The Rye community recently approved a \$79.9 million bond for the development of innovative learning environments across our five schools based on FNI's designs.

Working with FNI has been an incredible experience and offered me the chance to grow in my thinking about the impacts of space and learning environments on education. FNI isn't just an architectural firm, it is a learning organization that helps a school or district transform their buildings into 21st century learning environments. High-quality, research-based professional development coupled with a collaborative design process and significant community engagement are just a few of the supports the FNI team provides. Our students, teachers, administrators, and community at large are fully engaged in the transformational design process that includes redesigning curriculum and instruction while reconfiguring spaces.

As the leader of a school district that is presently collaborating with FNI, I am excited to see the growth and improvement in our practices and even more excited for what the future holds for our students. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Eric Byrne



Amy Wasser
Prizmah Center for Jewish Day Schools
254 W 54th St
11th Floor
NY, NY 20019

August 25, 2019

To Whom It May Concern,

One of my greatest professional pleasures of recent years was engaging in a school redesign project. Although not on as grand a scale as other communities have done, this work was impactful and created mechanisms for instituting change in the school. It also required me to step back and trust in the vision and expertise of the architect, Prakash Nair. At the time I was the head of school at Hillel Academy in Tampa, a position that I held for 14 years prior to joining the team at Prizmah. The school was situated on a lovely campus, but the buildings were dated and very traditional in their classroom models. I had known Prakash for many years and one day he approached me with his desire to see the school move to become a campus that exemplified our student centered approach; he discussed that the environment for learning had to match our pedagogy. I was ready for a new challenge, and to show the community that our small Jewish Day School was innovative not only in program, but in design as well.

Collaborating with Prakash and his team was an intense and rewarding experience. My team and I learned so much with each step of the process; understanding what walking through a hall could teach one about the culture of a school; how natural light and color impacts a child's ability to learn; how parents have to be shown that their children will adapt to change. All of a sudden Prakash opened our eyes to new uses of space. Our buildings were transformed into open, welcoming and purposeful educational communities. There were areas for group work, solo work, teacher collaboration and gathering. No longer were hallways just passage ways; they were laboratories for learning. No longer did students, or teachers, have to stay in one room, or at one desk all day. There was movement, sharing and honestly, joy.

Being in Florida, we embraced our twelve months of good weather by opening each room to the outdoors; decks were attached to classrooms to extend the learning; a tree bench became a favorite reading spot and sunshades provided cover so students could opt to be outside. There was a palatable feeling of calm, ownership of one's learning and teaching and a pride in the campus. Teachers spoke to each other more, asked more of one another in lesson planning and student care and took the time to engage. You couldn't help but smile when you approached each unique space. Simply put, being in the school made us all happy.

For me as an educator, working with Prakash was personal professional development! Each time he kindly shared insights with me, a new door opened with so much new potential behind it. I now look at the physical structures of educational institutions in a way I never could have

without learning so much from Prakash and the journey he took us on. I am happy to discuss further and can be reached at amyw@prizmah.org.

With much respect,
Amy Wasser
Director of Field Advancement
Prizmah Center for Jewish Day Schools

Reference for Prakash Nair

From Felim Bolster, Head of High School, International School of Brussels

Date: 19.08.2019



To whom it may concern,

It is my pleasure to write this reference on behalf of Prakash Nair.

I have worked with Fielding Nair International and Prakash since 2009, when my school embarked on the process of building an innovative and forward-thinking high school facility. Fielding Nair International was chosen as the lead architectural firm for this project. I have continued to collaborate with Prakash on several projects around the world, adding my educational expertise in support of facility design in schools that are looking to innovative their practice of teaching and learning.

In 2009, our school was developing a curriculum and a teaching and learning paradigm that was forward thinking and aligned with what research was outlining as appropriate learning for students now and in the future. While doing so, we also had the opportunity to build a new teaching and learning facility. Prakash and his team were chosen as the lead architects based on the compelling story they shared with us in regards to school architecture acting as a change agent that would move us towards a new teaching and learning paradigm. This partnership was an excellent learning experience for our school, as well as a highly successful process of collaboration bringing about an excellent school facility that has acted very explicitly as a change agent for teaching and learning in our school.

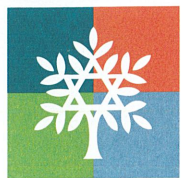
Over the past six years, I have been lucky enough to work closely with Prakash on projects in other parts of the world. The schools we have worked on are from very diverse backgrounds and cultures. However, what has always been constant is the Prakash's ability to provide each school community with architectural solutions that allow them to become more effective schools for their students. Prakash has a very collaborative approach to working with schools. Always looking at their core needs while at the same time passionately encouraging and supporting school communities to reflect on what good teaching and learning looks like and how the design of their learning environments can be an integral factor in ensuring that such teaching and learning can take place.

I consistently learn when working with Prakash, and I highly recommend him to schools looking to design learning spaces that can drive innovative teaching and learning practices.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Felim Bolster', is located below the 'Sincerely,' text. The signature is stylized with loops and a long horizontal stroke.

Felim Bolster



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275 McKinley Avenue, New Milford, New Jersey 07646
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August 20, 2019

To Whom it May Concern:

It is my privilege to write this recommendation on behalf of Prakash Nair. I met Prakash in the fall of 2013 after interviewing a few architectural firms to work with Hillel Day School to transform our learning spaces. What first impressed me about Prakash was his deep commitment to and passion for transforming schools to better meet the needs of this century's learners. This includes his expertise in education and understanding student needs. It did not matter to him the size of the school or scope of the project. I got the sense that he was willing to make these changes one school at a time.

Prakash and his team began working with Hillel Day School, where I served as Head of School for sixteen years, in November 2013 when they came to our campus to begin the work of creating a master plan for our campus.

After hearing and learning about our vision and our approach to learning they guided us through an amazing design process, involving members of each stakeholder of the school - teachers, Board members, faculty, staff, and students.

After facilitating a workshop on best practices, under Prakash's leadership, focus groups were formed from the different stakeholders to explore ideas and concepts using design patterns as a common language to insure understanding. The ideas generated in these focus groups guided and influenced the planning for the new spaces. Part of the planning also included integrating sustainability at all levels of the design.

When the master plan was approved and the actual spaces were designed and built, the teachers and staff who used each space remained involved in the planning. The result was that the newly created spaces reflected the vision of all of the stakeholders and that engendered not only pride, but also ownership in the new learning spaces.

Our master plan was fully realized over a three year period and Hillel Day School continues to partner with FNI today. The school has been totally re-imagined, and most importantly has greatly impacted the learning environment for the better.

Our students are excited to come to school and can articulate, unprompted, the benefits of learning in flexible spaces, with moveable, comfortable furniture, enhanced by natural light and soothing colors. The spaces created supported learning in new and exciting ways, emphasizing the fact that space, furniture, and light are all essential tools for learning as well.

There is no question that Prakash Nair is a futurist, a visionary planner, architect and one of the world's leading change agents in school design. His love for students, learning and people in general is evident in all that he does.

I highly recommend Prakash Nair and I look forward to working with him at my new school in NJ in the near future as well.

Should you require additional information or have further questions, please feel free to reach out to me.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Steve Freedman". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Steve" and last name "Freedman" clearly distinguishable.

Steve Freedman
Head of School

September 6, 2019

To Whom It May Concern:

It is my pleasure to highly recommend Fielding Nair International (FNI) for your school design needs. FNI is one of the most thoughtful, responsive, and innovative firms I have ever encountered specializing exclusively in school design. FNI does more than design great schools. The FNI team takes into consideration pedagogy, school culture, learning approaches, and how to best future proof a school. This work is typically done within difficult constraints and amongst broad viewpoints of what should be done. The team is talented, deeply experienced, highly collaborative, and loves working with schools. Our experience with Fielding Nair International has been phenomenal.

Singapore American School is one of the largest single campus international schools in the world with a physical campus of approximately 1 million square feet on a 36 acres. In 2015 the SAS board charged my team with conducting a campus master planning process that would inform and shape our facility decisions as we replace our aging campus. After a competitive RFP, FNI was selected to conduct our master planning process.

Over the course of two years FNI helped facilitate hundreds of meetings and worked through dozens of designs resulting in a future oriented and instructionally sound master plan. This was done while dealing with regulatory and physical constraints, and with a highly involved and sometimes critical community.

During the process we found the FNI team to be responsive and flexible, helping us to achieve the best possible outcome both in terms of community engagement, faculty inputs, and design product. Importantly, FNI championed a "pathfinder" approach where we prototyped the designs, resulting in one of the most impactful strategies for understand design impact and bringing our community along without committing excessive funds.

SAS is in the process of executing the master plan over several years and we will continue to rely upon FNI for support and consultation. It is my pleasure to recommend them for an educational project in any context.

Sincerely,

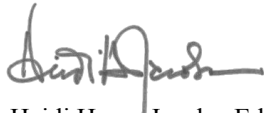
Dr. Chip Kimball, Superintendent

Recommendation of support for Prakash Nair

It is with the greatest enthusiasm that I write this recommendation for Prakash Nair. I have been an educator for thirty-five years and have had the opportunity to work with thousands of professionals nationally and internationally. Prakash stands out as one of the most exceptional leaders with whom I have ever worked. He is a genuine visionary firmly grounded in experience. Having demonstrated inspired leadership in the design of innovative learning spaces in 49 countries, he has not only created remarkable buildings, but he has moved thousands of educators to view learning with fresh eyes. Prakash brings rich experience from a range of fields. Certainly, he draws from design, aesthetics, and engineering, but he is exceptionally nuanced in his understanding of pedagogy, philosophy, and systems theory. His company Fielding Nair International, is considered the preeminent force in modern school architecture throughout the world. My first encounter with Prakash was in 2009 as I was researching design possibilities for a book I was writing for ASCD. I kept finding Prakash's name in articles and books and reached out to him. We began our correspondence. I have gone on to write extensively about new learning spaces and corresponding new forms of curriculum. As it turns out over the years, Prakash has done the same with his solid architectural work linked clearly to the need for new approaches to learning. It was my pleasure to write the forward to his most recent book: *Learning by Design*.

Certainly, the recognition for FNI architectural projects is widespread but it is important to note that the phrase, "We are Educators", is featured directly and clearly on their website, materials, and guidelines. It is this unusual combination of architectural practice with a commitment to understanding teachers, administrators, parents, and most notably learners that is the "north star" for Prakash's work. What is more, his earlier background supervising a massive building project for over ten years in the nation's largest school district, New York City, brings another layer of experience. It attests to his ability to bring the perspective of large-scale management, institutional politics, and organizational behavior to his clients. I have had the privilege of making presentations side by side with Prakash in front of a range of audiences and have seen him speak with passion, intelligence, and power. He is a gifted communicator.

As a person, Prakash consistently displays intellectual curiosity, heartfelt conviction, and a dry sense of humor. The people who work with him daily display genuine loyalty and appreciation for his positive can-do attitude. They prize his collegiality, insight, and agility in challenging situations. I believe that Prakash Nair would make an exceptional contribution to any school contemplating a capital project. I give the highest recommendation for his consideration. Please feel free to contact me if you have further questions.



Heidi Hayes Jacobs, Ed.D.

President, Curriculum Designers, Inc. and the Curriculum 21 Project

www.curriculum21.com



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August 15, 2019

Mr. Prakash Nair
Recommendation Letter

Dear Sir or Madam,

I can attest to Prakash Nair's humility, integrity and wisdom and these traits have helped him rise to the very top of his profession as a designer who leverages architecture to bring forth meaningful and lasting educational transformation. His efforts in the field of educational architecture have improved learning conditions for tens of thousands of children in both public and private schools in 49 countries across six continents.

Prakash's reputation as an internationally renowned school architect was already well established when we brought him on board in 2007 to design a new campus for Leysin American School (LAS), Switzerland. The project was to be built in Almaty, Kazakhstan. I was working as Headmaster at LAS and I also observed the high quality of the design work for some significant renovations at our own Swiss campus delivered by Prakash and his team at FNI.

Through the years, as I moved on to other ventures in India and later to Switzerland, and now to the US I kept up with Prakash and his work, read his books and recommended him to other school heads such as the one at NIST International School in Thailand. After they met with him, NIST appointed him to develop an extensive new campus plan for their well-regarded school. More recently, while I was the Head of School for the International School Basel, I led the search committee for a world-renowned architect and selected FNI with Prakash as Principal-in-charge for an ambitious Facilities Master Plan that was delivered to my complete satisfaction. Since then, I have continued to work with Prakash on other projects around the world – most notably on what may be several new projects in Abu Dhabi.

It is with great pleasure that I recommend Prakash Nair unreservedly and unconditionally to you. To discuss this letter further, please feel free to email me at vkuskovski@gmail.com or call me on my mobile at +1.612.229.0606.

Sincerely,

Dr. Vladimir D. Kuskovski
Head of School

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