



Open World Learning Community

Independent School District 625

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To Whom It May Concern,

I am proud to enthusiastically recommend Joseph Gorton for college admission without reservation. In science classes and on the FIRST Robotics Team at Open World Learning Community (OWL), Joe's intelligence, teamwork, and leadership have made the past four years productive and fun for Joe, his classmates, his teammates, and his mentees. I am confident that Joe will be a dynamic asset, both academically and socially, at the college or university that he chooses to attend.

When I was Joe's 7th grade science teacher, I immediately saw that he brought something special to STEM. Joe's bright curiosity and boundless enthusiasm for inquiry and the design process emanated through his person and his work on a daily basis. In high school, I had the pleasure of teaching Joe's Accelerated Biology, AP Biology, and AP Environmental Science classes. In these classes, Joe's love of STEM deepened and became more collaborative in nature. Joe consistently tutored other students in AP science classes, to the point where students with questions went to Joe before they came to me, the teacher! Joe grew to become someone who was always real, patient, kind, and correct, and earned the trust of his classmates as an authentic leader.

Joe became especially adept at explaining the application of mathematics in complex data analysis. Joe and his lab group members both rose to higher and higher levels of data representation in scientific writing throughout their years in my AP courses, in no small part because Joe understood how to analyze and represent data graphically well enough to teach his classmates how to do so. One fun example is this Hardy-Weinberg analysis Joe developed in Desmos, an application I had not previously used in my classes:

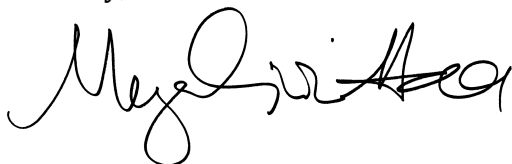
<https://www.desmos.com/calculator/lgirtopauc>. Joe wrote this outside of class time, for the satisfaction of applying technology to generate a mathematical solution. When it was ready, he took time to share it with me so I could make it available to future students.

If you are impressed with Joe already, just wait until I tell you about his leadership on the Open Circuits, OWL's FIRST Robotics team. As Joe was entering high school, the team's three existing players and coach decided not to return. I stepped up to coach Robotics in large part for Joe's sake. I could see Joe's potential and wanted OWL to provide opportunity for Joe's STEM gifts to grow. When Joe was a high school freshman, our team started with forty rookie players and one rookie coach. We made great progress until our school was closed for COVID and the team lost the chance to compete at spring Regionals. During our full year of COVID lockdown, Joe's cheerful countenance appeared on camera in every virtual Robotics meeting. Weekly, we worked through Google Meet to improve players' programming skills and keep the team alive.

Coming into his junior year, Joe still had a rookie Robotics coach and all all-rookie team. None of us had been to competition. Worse, regionals occurred during our spring break, and several members of our team had to miss it – including me, the coach. Joe was undeterred. He stayed cheerful and proactive. His verve and charisma kept the team going. Although the team would willingly follow him anywhere, Joe learned to hold space for quieter members and helped nurture their leadership. Whenever he needed to, Joe unfailingly worked late to get the robot working and delivered to competition. It's because of Joe that the Open Circuits had a great experience at 2022 Regionals, chose to enter a fall 2022 Invitational competition, and have signed on for two 2023 Regional competitions. I cannot emphasize enough how influential and inclusive Joe's leadership has been for Robotics at OWL. Joe has more authentic leadership potential in STEM than any other student I have had the privilege to teach in my 22 years of classroom service. I can only imagine what he might accomplish in an established engineering program with knowledgeable and experienced professors and mentors.

In addition to being a strong student and STEM leader, Joe is an athlete, volunteer, and engineering camp counselor. He performs in the varsity choir, competes in Mock Trial, and is OWL's go-to tech support student for theatre, streaming, and device repair. There is no one else like Joe. Do whatever you can to get him to your school. He is an agent of innovation who will lead with kindness and elevate your entire program. That's what he did at OWL. I recommend Joe Gorton emphatically and without reservation to any college or university.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Megan Olivia Hall', with a stylized, cursive script.

Dr. Megan Olivia Hall, NBCT, Ph.D.

2013 Minnesota Teacher of the Year

Science Teacher and Head Robotics Coach, Open World Learning Community

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