



Open World Learning Community
Independent School District 625

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To: The Colleges and Universities Considering Joseph Gorton
From: Thomas Totushek, NBCT AYA Mathematics, Open World Learning Community
Re: College Recommendation
Date: October 28, 2022

Like many 2022 graduates, Joseph Gorton's high school experience has not been typical. Nevertheless, Joe has been able to craft a high school experience that fit what he wanted to get out of it and to me that indicates that he will do well in college and in life beyond.

One of Joe's defining characteristics is his curiosity. Joe doesn't have the highest GPA not because he isn't capable of earning As across the board, but because he often finds himself digging deep on one tiny aspect of a concept in an attempt to satiate his curiosity. For example, in Physics for a formal lab the students were required to use linear regression to find the slope of a series of points. Instead of linear regression, Joe decided to solve the problem analytically so that a better model could be used. He didn't have to, but he was curious and needed to solve the problem.

I have also coached Joe on the Mock Trial team and the Robotics team. Just two of his many extra-curricular activities, I have seen Joe move from enjoying them to being a leader in them and wanting to create a legacy. I stepped down from coaching Mock Trial to help with Robotics and I left Joe and two of his peers in charge of finding an adult to help run the program – which they did. Joe's leadership style is not an ego-driven leadership style. If something needs to get done, he will jump in and lead. If someone else wants to lead, Joe will make space for them and support them. I have noticed this especially as he has deferred to amazing young women in STEM in our school, helping to create an inclusive and supportive environment for everyone.

I know that Joseph Gorton is going to find his way into a STEM field somewhere and be the kind of person that firms will fight over. A passionate and excited problem solver who will be a glue person when needed and a leader when called on, Joseph will do great things at your school and beyond.

Thomas Totushek

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