



# Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School

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Monday, November 23, 2020

To Whom it May Concern,

I am very pleased to write this letter of recommendation on behalf of SJAM grade 12 student Eric Xiao. I have worked with Eric as his guidance counsellor/academic advisor since he started here in grade 9, providing him with support and pathways planning as he pursues his passions in STEM, especially computer science and software engineering.

During the past 4 years, Eric has been extremely goal-focused and driven, striking an outstanding balance between academic success and extra-curricular involvement as he broadens his knowledge-base and skill set in several STEM fields. Never one to shy away from academic challenges, Eric enrolled in our most demanding courses throughout high school, including every available pre-Advanced Placement or AP level course in our math and science departments. He consistently achieved marks in the mid to high 90s in all these courses, including a few rare perfect 100% scores. These superb marks were carried through other subject areas as well, including music, French, and, most importantly, computer science.

Beyond the classroom, Eric consistently demonstrates initiative and dedication in a broad range of activities, including 2 years with our Music Council and several of SJAM's music ensembles, along with a 4-year commitment to our school's math, science, and computer science clubs. As part of this involvement, Eric has enjoyed a very successful run of competitions since grade 9, most notably earning a number of awards in highly competitive math and computing contests. Some of his most prestigious awards include the Distinction and School Champion Awards for the 2018 CEMC Grade 9 Fryer Math Contest, 2 consecutive Southwestern Ontario Honour Roll Placements in the 2018 and 2019 Canadian Open Mathematics Challenge, and Third Place at the 2019 ECOO-CS Regionals Programming Contest—this covers only a portion of his impressive performance during the past 4 years.

Seeking further opportunities to explore and share his love of computer science and mathematics, Eric devoted his time as an Olympiad-level math teacher for grade 7 and 8 students at our local Chinese language school for 3 years, helping the school not only with teaching, but also organizing a math contest and taking initiative to shift to online lessons during the pandemic. He also recently stepped into the challenging role of Chief Technology Officer with two student-run tech startups, leading their website and app development teams. Additionally, Eric contributed to a number of highly successful hackathon projects, including an award-winning web application that helps users obtain financial aid during the COVID-19 crisis and an innovative mock-interview platform to help users practice and improve communication abilities.

Eric's undeniable talents in software development and mathematics make him an ideal candidate for higher-level studies. His keen problem-solving skills, willingness to collaborate and mentor and desire to pursue lifelong learning would be invaluable assets to any faculty or program. I heartily recommend him for any university pathway!

Sincerely,

Greg Todd

Guidance Department Head, Sir John A. Macdonald Secondary School



Waterloo Region  
District School Board