

Dear Admissions Committee,

I am writing this letter to provide the strongest recommendation possible in support of the application of [redacted] to your institution. I have known [redacted] since he joined our school as a sixth grader and worked with him over several years in middle school as both his teacher and advisor. Most recently, I had the pleasure of his presence in my Marine Biology classroom as an 11<sup>th</sup> grader.

Put simply, [redacted] is a delight. He is the type of student who pursues excellence not for his own accolades, but because he is genuinely curious about the world around him. As long as I have known him, he has been a motivated and engaged student. His joy of learning was evident once again in Marine Biology, where he approached every lab with enthusiasm, talking about how cool various dissections or observations were. His contributions to classroom discussions were thoughtful and always for the sake of furthering the conversation or pursuing a line of inquiry.

When he was a middle school student, [redacted] was sometimes reluctant to ask for help from teachers, as he thought that he shouldn't "need" help, and it's been rewarding to see his perspective on this change over the years. Now he's the type of student who is very comfortable seeking clarification and support. For example, in Marine Biology he was tasked with writing a grant proposal for an experiment and he created a study to investigate the wasting disease impacting the sunflower sea star. Students submitted first drafts of their introductions, and [redacted] spent more time following up and responding to my feedback than any of his classmates. Again, not in the pursuit of a particular grade, but out of a desire to create the best paper possible. Even though he would not technically be conducting this study, he wanted to write a detailed proposal with sound methodology and extensive background research in published scientific literature. His hard work paid off in a remarkably strong paper that was one of the only ones fully funded by his peer reviewers.

[Redacted] is one of the most driven students I have ever taught, but this drive is supported by one of the kindest and most even-keeled temperaments I have known. [Redacted] is the type of student whose enthusiasm and positivity buoy those around him, and his peers often look to him for leadership. His leadership style is a subtle one, though, in that he creates space for others to step up and never seeks the spotlight for its own sake.

I am confident that [redacted] has all the tools and skills to allow him to thrive at whatever he sets his mind to, whether that be a career in the sciences or in a different realm. He would be an incredible asset to any academic community lucky enough to have him.

Sincerely,