



John Jay High School
Northside Independent School District
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Teresa Cuellar-Hernandez, Principal

Dr. John Craft, Superintendent

To whom it may concern,

Samantha Mitchell is one of the most exceptional humans I have encountered to date in my existence. I know this may be seen as an over the top way to start a letter of recommendation, but I believe this is a point worth making clear. As Sam's AP U.S. Government and AP Macroeconomics teacher, I have had the pleasure and honor of experiencing her exceptional intelligence, indomitable will, and deep empathy and compassion for her friends, family, teachers, and even complete strangers.

Out of the dozens of examples of Samantha's character, diligence, intelligence, and polymath-like abilities I would love to share, there are two tales I feel make best use of this limited space. During the first year I worked with Sam, she was very interested in making an impact on society through both STEM and social studies academic pursuits. As one of the co-sponsors of SEA's National History Day team, this meant my program became a natural avenue for her to exercise these goals. Sam took on the challenge of creating a video documentary acting as the team lead alongside two other students, acting as the primary writer and overall producer for the project. Her group's project explored the delicate and complex situation regarding the conflict between Israel and Palestine, and specifically the Oslo Accords, under the 2025 NHD theme, "Rights and Responsibilities." Despite Sam's strong feelings and personal connection to the conflict, she created what in my opinion represents one of the most nuanced and well contextualized analyses I've seen on the topic even when compared to professional or academic sources. Certainly, the Judges of the Local, Regional, and Texas State history day competitions agreed, as her team placed 1st in the Local and Regional contests, and 4th overall in the state of Texas. Currently, she is already well on her way to creating another documentary for this year's competition season tackling another complex and sensitive political and religious topic.

This second example shows the incredible resilience and deep wisdom beyond her years that Samantha carries in her life. Recently as of the time of this writing, Sam went through a deeply terrifying medical ordeal which required hospitalization. While it is not my place to share the exact details of the event, I will say that the condition she experienced rattled the very core aspects of her self-identity by threatening her ability to engage with and express herself academically; Thankfully, it appears things are trending along a positive prognosis now. When she first returned to school, Sam was immediately concerned about how she could maintain her grades and education, her powerful drive for growth and success propelling her forward, but she also recognized her situation. Rather than rail against the limitations of her condition or fall into depression over the challenge ahead of her, Sam has instead plotted a course towards a balance. Sam has shown an incredible degree of patience, wisdom, and self-control by accepting support from her teachers and peers as she works towards her full recovery, something I know is deeply challenging for someone so driven and motivated. I struggle to imagine myself or anyone else I know managing to adapt so quickly or with as much equanimity to such an incredible upheaval.

To conclude, I want to state once again that Samantha Mitchell is truly, absolutely, one of the most exceptional and extraordinary humans I have even met. She is a true polymath; scholar and artist, scientist and empath. I offer my complete and unrestricted recommendation to her for any and all institutions, employments, or pursuits she chooses to grace with her abilities. I believe with certainty that any investments into her future or education will be repaid to our society a hundred fold. My only hesitation is that I will selfishly miss experiencing the presence of someone who so inspires and challenges me to always be a smarter, kinder, and better person tomorrow than I was today.

Sincerely,

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