

To Whom It May Concern,

I am pleased to write this letter of recommendation for Darius Fields, whom I have had the pleasure of advising through Science Fair. When Darius first started Science Fair, it was the first year Lakeside High ever participated, and he was the only student to compete. That first year, we learned together: how to structure research questions, do research paperwork, design effective posters, and present findings clearly to judges. Even then, Darius stood out for his curiosity and willingness to take ownership of the process rather than just complete requirements. As the year progressed, his confidence grew, and by the following year he naturally stepped into a leadership role, helping new students understand research methods, refine experimental design, and navigate the expectations of science research.

What impressed me most was how Darius expanded his impact. He began developing a curriculum and leading Science Fair club meetings to ensure that students had guidance. Recognizing that access was a major barrier, he extended this support beyond our campus through Schoolhouse.world, helping students online around the world who lacked mentorship.

Darius's own research journey mirrored this same path. I watched his original project he did at home evolve into working on his project at UC Irvine. He continuously pushed himself to deepen the rigor of his work, expanding from Thin Layer Chromatography (TLC) to GC-MS analysis. When his self-purchased Thin Layer Chromatography setup failed, rather than viewing it as a dead end, Darius offered to donate his TLC supplies to our AP Chemistry class so students could gain hands-on experience with an AP Chem topic that most other schools had labs for, but Lakeside didn't.

Beyond technical skill, Darius demonstrated exceptional mentorship. I saw him work patiently with a student who was extremely anxious about presenting, arranging one-on-one mock judging sessions where he played the role of a judge, provided feedback, and built up the student's confidence. He understood that success in science fair requires strong communication, and he met students where they were. Additionally, Darius helped organize opportunities for science fair students to present their work in AP Biology, AP Chemistry, and Honors Chemistry classes. These sessions allowed students to practice answering questions in a low-stakes environment while also inspiring future participants.

In conversations with colleagues at other schools who mentor similar programs, many have told me that it often takes a decade or more to establish a strong research program. With Darius's help, we have built one in just three years. I give Darius my highest recommendation, with my full confidence that he will bring the same initiative and integrity to any campus he joins.

Sincerely,  
Mrs. Peterson, Science Fair Advisor  
Lakeside High School