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To whom it may concern,

I am writing to wholeheartedly recommend Victor Zheng for your institution. I take requests for letters of this sort seriously and it is not uncommon for me to reject them. As the sole visual arts instructor and creator of the arts program here at OCHS, I am a California Clear Credentialed teacher in my 9th year teaching visual art. My subjects range from drawing and painting traditionally to digital painting, photo-editing and 3D modeling/printing as well as many other specific art media. I have taught hundreds of students ranging from those with very low extant art skills to nearly pro-level artists, and consider myself a knowledgeable scholar of the mentality and abilities of teenagers, both as artists and as thinkers. I feel my recommendation for Victor has several strong bases.

I realize that reviewers like yourself are accustomed to platitudes, so I'll be specific here. Victor is an exceptional young person in a way I can sum up easily: tenacity to a fault applied efficiently to problem solving. As a student in my art class I frequently saw this materialize as him laying out options for a project, calculating the risks, and deliberating efficiently on his options. A great example of that was his block printing project. I require students to carve a small work from an easy to cut substance for their block print then I offer them the more difficult to cut materials to make additional prints for extra credit. Knowing his wish for high grades across the board, but at the same time coming from a place of not particularly high art skills, it was no surprise that he took the challenge and nailed it. He chose the largest format linoleum block I had available then spent hours drawing his design, carving it out, learning to ink it properly then running it through the press repeatedly until a good print emerged. The size alone was daring (18" x 24"), and the execution skillful; I purchased the print for my classroom collection.

I also had the good fortune to witness his risk management as a mountain biker on the team I coach for (Oakland Composite). In a sport where it is easy for teenage boys to risk too much by riding above/faster than their skill level would dictate, Victor learned the hard way to be judicious and thoughtful about his riding. He managed to complete his novice year safely and with a high skill level at the end. I know that if he is in my ride group for that day's practice, he is not an athlete I need to worry about.

During our school's recent charter renewal process he has been one of the few students to attend most of the evening meetings with various governing bodies. Student attendance like his, typically on school nights, has helped us with the process immensely. When Victor attends this type of civic meeting it's not a surprise; he's a thoughtful young person who realizes the importance of active civic participation.

Victor is a unique young person with unusual executive function, and natural leadership skills. I recommend him completely. He is forging his own way and pulling others along with him in a direction that will benefit us all. I sincerely hope this recommendation will be of use and will be a component of Victor entering this next exciting phase of life. On a personal note I can describe Victor as funny, resilient, extremely hard working both mentally and physically, and a positive all-around influence on the classroom. I am completely at your service should you wish to know any more about Victor, and I strongly urge you to feel at ease reaching out to me directly.

Sincerely yours,

Benjamin Hopkins
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