



Science/Engineering Magnet High School



Blue Ribbon School 2005-2011



To whom it may concern:

Somewhere on your campus you have a professor who will be really glad you accepted Taylor. He's that kind of student—the sort to be liked and respected by his classmates, but really appreciated by the professors who will see what is so clear to any adult paying attention—Taylor has the soul of an academic. Right now, he thinks he's getting a degree in a STEM field and then a job, but that's just because he's the first in his family to go to college and he doesn't even know the world he's best suited to even exists. He'll get the STEM degree, but he won't stop there, and he'll find his place in the world where complex thought justifies itself.

Taylor is brilliant. I don't know what the absolute number of National Merit Semi-Finalists that are poor, first-generation children of immigrants coming from a non-English speaking home, but I'm sure it's appallingly low. He can read anything—not just decode, but understand nuance and tone and context. He writes organized, effective prose. Taylor has barely begun to tap his own potential—even here, I'm not sure he's ever really had to put his head down and work. Outside projects, like Robots and Academic Decathlon, have given him the opportunity to really extend himself, but even then he's been working off of someone else's blueprint, and that's not the same. This is one that is going to explode a few years into a true intellectual.

Taylor likes to talk, but not in a large class. He's best in a small group, or during office hours: he's the sort that thinks so fast that he needs to speak slowly—any question posed to him evokes not a response, but a mental avalanche of responses, objections, counter-responses, analogies, and implications that he needs to process before he talks, needs to almost physically keep himself in check to insure that he isn't leaving his listener far behind. His essays were fantastic—Taylor at his best when he has time and space to really develop an idea. While Taylor certainly has a breadth of knowledge to draw upon, in his heart he is a deep thinker—he wants to take ideas and see how far he can go with them. He's just the sort that thrives on really complex and intricate research.

It would be easy to mistake Taylor for being a little cold. He worries he is a little cold, because it is very clear to him that he has more control over his external emotional reactions than the average teenager. But he's not—he's cerebral, definitely, and he values rationality, but he also has a great sense of humor: Taylor was the only kid in class that caught my most sophisticated jokes, and his subtle half-grin of approval always made me feel like I'd accomplished something. He can be incredibly intense when he is intrigued by a new idea, and he knows how to listen, really listen, when he's hearing something new. He also can be moved to anger on rare occasions—he doesn't yell or wave his arms, but Taylor is sensitive to cruelty and thoughtless ignorance. He is well liked, and has a circle of friends, but he struggles to connect easily to his peers as a whole—he's not given to adolescent banter. But when he feels safe—when he doesn't worry he's talking over someone's head or boring the life out of them—he's fantastic: warm, engaged, thoughtful and willing to listen. He likes this school and he likes his classmates, but he hasn't quite found his people yet. I'm pretty sure that he will find them in the world of academia.

Taylor is really special. I am quite fond of him, and absolutely convinced he will make meaningful contributions to the stock of human knowledge. He carries me strongest recommendation.

If you have any questions or concerns, please don't hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,

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