

To Whom It May Concern,

I had the pleasure of teaching Alexandra Miller during an institute for young writers through the Western Pennsylvania Writing Project. From the moment I met Allie, I was impressed by her in-depth analysis of complicated literary texts and concepts, her passion for creative expression, and her drive to make meaningful connections about the human condition through the written word. Allie is an intelligent, sensitive, self-aware young woman who has the talent and dedication to excel in higher education. As a student, a writer, and a competent, capable young woman, Allie has my highest recommendation.

During our week-long summer writing institute, Allie quickly stood out as a leader among other talented young writers from across our county. Her ability to notice the nuances of precise language in poetry and emulate these techniques allow her to create pieces that both inform and inspire. After exploring works from two different contemporary female authors about self perceptions, Allie created "Dictionary of a 16-year-old Girl," a work of poetry that tackles the often universal body image insecurities of young women, from dressing room woes, to skipping Dairy Queen blizzards, to self loathing. When she read her piece aloud for an end-of-institute celebration, her telling of this truth brought tears to many eyes. It won a Scholastic Art & Writing Silver Key award, an honor that she received during a reception that celebrated outstanding work around the region. Allie isn't just content to write, though; she consistently seeks constructive feedback from writing friends and teachers so that she can improve her skills, an attribute often not seen in a high school student. She uses feedback to revise and isn't afraid to take creative risks, a characteristic that often pays off with satisfying reward.

Beyond academics, Allie is a leader dedicated to her chosen pursuits. Allie is proud of achieving first degree black belt status in Tang Soo Do, a sport that requires superior focus and confidence. She is active in clubs and honor societies at Hempfield Area High School, and has taken on leadership roles that allow her to organize events, effectively communicate ideas, and work as an integral member of a team, all qualities that lend themselves to the necessary skills needed in academia and the business world. In working with Allie during the institute for two consecutive summers, I was always impressed by her eagerness to mentor, challenge, and inspire other writers. Younger students often asked her to read their work and give feedback, and she sought out those who felt vulnerable or nervous and worked with them until they blossomed under her mentorship. She was so effective that the director talked with Allie about returning next year, now that she has aged out of the program, to help teach instead. That ability to coax the best out of a person is a key characteristic of an effective leader, and I have no doubt Allie can easily transfer those skills in international business as she works with colleagues and clients across the globe.

I highly recommend Allie for your scholarship, and I am certain she will meet every academic challenge with a curious quest for knowledge and a positive attitude. Allie is intelligent, driven, focused, and kind--truly one of the most extraordinary young women I have had the pleasure to teach. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Jaime Gacek