

January 11<sup>th</sup>, 2016

Dear Sterling Scholar Committee:

It is my honor and great privilege to recommend Mitch Talmadge. I have known Mitch for almost three years as his marketing teacher at Bingham High. In my 10 years as an educator, I have never encountered a student as bright, responsible, and as service-oriented as Mitch.

In his three short years at Bingham High, Mitch has profoundly impacted his school and surrounding community for the better. Through his keen understanding of information technology and his innate ability to solve problems effectively and efficiently, Mitch has had a positive influence on most of the school's faculty. I have yet to encounter a teacher or other staff member who has not shared amazing stories of his service on their behalf. He has stayed after school to help fix computers and also spent his personal time in the evenings helping to solve IT issues. He even helped a teacher retrieve irreplaceable information from an external hard drive that he thought he had lost forever. Some people may think this type of volunteer work is not as important as feeding the homeless or reading to underprivileged children, but I disagree. When you have worked long hours creating a document or a presentation only to find that it is unable to open or lost forever, you realize how important Mitch's service to our school actually is. Furthermore, I have never once heard Mitch complain or turn down someone's request for help. He confronts each technology challenge head-on and gives 110% in everything he does. Every staff member at our school (as well as surrounding schools) has only positive things to say about Mitch, and I think that speaks volumes.

In my personal experience with Mitch, I have been overwhelmed by his willingness to serve. I am currently the teacher responsible for the school store. This program is one of the best in the state. We gross over \$60,000 in our store each school year. We use a point-of-sale system in the store as our cash register and to manage our inventory. Mitch has spent well over 100 hours customizing the point-of-sale software to ensure it functions as efficiently as possible. He has transformed the touchscreen menu from a confusing mess to an easily navigated control system for all of our student employees.

Mitch is also a creative problem solver. He approaches me almost daily with outstanding ideas for our school store. At the beginning of the school year, I was struggling with how to accept gift cards as a form of payment without taking on the expense of buying plastic cards throughout the entire year. After a small brainstorming session with Mitch and our other student managers, Mitch proposed the idea that we use the barcode on the students' school ID card as a gift card. That way students could load money onto their student ID cards, which they already use and keep in their wallets on a daily basis. Mitch's idea saved our store the cost of buying plastic gift cards. This is just one example of Mitch's many creative contributions. He has accomplished much more than most of his peers. Each and every day he finds a new way to serve or utilize his talents and it amazes me.

Mitch's academic performance in my class and his other courses at school is superb. I have watched him set up his own business and create brand new software that is innovative and creative. He completes each and every assignment on time and with great attention to detail. When I assigned the students in my entrepreneurship class to complete a full business plan, Mitch's plan was, by far, the most detailed in the class. He has passed each and every State Skills test with ease—even a couple that the majority of the class did not pass. His peers have also benefited from his knowledge. I have observed him numerous times helping his peers with their work but also treating them with respect and equality. Every student speaks highly of Mitch. This is a great example of his character because there are many students that have talent at Bingham High, but not many that use it so humbly to serve their peers.

Overall Mitch has demonstrated skills and abilities far beyond those of his peers. He is admired and respected by not only his peers but by every adult in our building as well. He is talented and dedicated to increasing his knowledge and skills. He spends countless hours using his talents to help those around him. He will, without a doubt, be successful in his future. He will be an asset to any program or school he chooses to attend. He is MOST deserving of the Sterling Scholar award, and I give him my most enthusiastic recommendation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Breckon Heywood". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Breckon" written in a larger, more prominent script than the last name "Heywood".

Breckon Heywood  
Marketing teacher / DECA advisor  
Bingham High School