

1. Describe an example of your leadership experience in which you have positively influenced others, helped resolve disputes or contributed to group efforts over time.

Dragon boat racing is a team sport that requires twenty-two people: twenty paddlers, a drummer, and a steersperson. I paddle for Abraham Lincoln High School's team. Over the past four years we improved dramatically, developing a strong reputation, locally and globally. During seven seasons, we earned the privilege to travel, competing in Vancouver in 2016 and Hong Kong in 2017. These trips taught me lessons I will remember forever.

In Vancouver, we competed against high school teams. Although we didn't win or place, this was an eye opening experience. We witnessed how competitive this sport is at the high school level. Other teams were very strong and better prepared for the event. We struggled to perform against them, and learned the value of practice and discipline.

In Hong Kong, we were the only youth team competing against adults at this international event. Prior to the trip we dedicated 6 months to intensive conditioning, training, and practice. It was an honor to race against fifty world class teams including Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, Germany, and Canada. We placed 3rd in the 500 meter open crew race, a terrific achievement. This was the first time an American high school team placed at the event. We were interviewed by Hong Kong television. They were curious about American high school participation in the sport.

Over my paddling career I have risen from the lowest boat to the top crew. Being part of the top crew comes with great honor and responsibility. We are the role models for the team, a total of four boats, one hundred kids. My responsibilities include planning workouts. I focus on the conditioning and running portion of practice. My goal is to make sure everyone runs as a unit, keeping mindful of the abilities of our teammates, and cooperating to improve fitness. Team leadership has helped me develop many skills including team-building, motivation and communication. These will be useful for leading future teams through tasks and problems. Dragon boat has made me a strong leader who is able to contribute to achieving goals that initially seem daunting.

3. What would you say is your greatest talent or skill? How have you developed and demonstrated that talent over time?

I have developed many valuable skills that I use in my everyday life, but the skill that is most important is my ability to give and receive constructive feedback. I have been working on this for a long time because I believe good leaders are able to help their peers and take suggestions from them as well. As a student athlete, I am constantly receiving feedback on how to complete tasks more effectively. Coaches, teachers, and parents have helpful advice including how to perform better in your sport, how to excel academically, and how to better manage your time.

My work at the California Academy of Sciences has strengthened my ability to give and receive critical feedback. One of the programs I participate in there, is the Teen Think Tank, which is a group of high school students who give constructive criticism on the Academy's new exhibits and content. Every meeting, we are pitched two ideas, and we tell the developers what we like and what we think can be improved to pique the interest of people our age. The direction from the Academy is to develop one consensus opinion as feedback on the topic at hand. Often there are conflicting opinions amongst the teen participants. We have learned to debate and discuss respectfully and effectively, letting each team member present their perspective and supporting arguments before making a final decision.

I have learned the importance of outside perspectives and appreciate hearing opinions that are different from my own. It is essential for a team to consider as many solutions to a problem as possible, in order to achieve the best outcome. As a part of multiple teams and groups, I always try to help others by providing them with my opinions and suggestions. If all members of a team are able to give and receive constructive feedback, it will be most effective and everyone will feel respected and motivated to do their best.

6. Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom.

I am fascinated with life sciences. I built my school schedules around science classes, and I have had many amazing opportunities to learn. I worked at the San Francisco Zoo during the summers of 2014-2016, as part of the Talk On The Wild Side program. I was responsible for educating the public about wildlife using various artifacts, including snow leopard tails, rhinoceros skulls, and penguin wings. This allowed me to improve my knowledge of global wildlife and my communication and public speaking skills. I had the opportunity to speak with hundreds of individuals each day. I taught them facts about the animals, to raise public awareness about the importance of wildlife conservation.

I work in the Digital Learning Program at the California Academy of Sciences. I've been a part of this program for three years, during two of which, I led the team. We were responsible for writing articles for public broadcasting company, KQED. These articles encourage public discourse on controversial topics. We wrote seventeen articles, about subjects like the soda tax and genetically modified children. The program also involves developing other media, including videos, infographic displays, and audio recordings. These are distributed to thousands of high schools to encourage science education. This program opens my mind to the enormous world of the sciences, while helping develop my skills as a published writer and exposing me to the media and communications industry.

I dedicate my free time towards traveling to see animals in the wild. I've traveled to the jungles in Costa Rica, Indonesia, Thailand, and Bali and the oceans of Mexico, Borneo, and Tonga. I particularly enjoyed Tonga and Borneo. Tonga is one of two places on Earth to swim with Humpback whales. I spent a week there; everyday I swam and interacted with whales in their natural habitat. In Borneo we looked for orangutan, pygmy elephants, proboscis monkeys, and great hornbills in the jungle, and scuba dove with squid, turtles, and other marine animals near remote islands. Science is a very important part of my life. I would love to continue to develop my passion for life sciences.

7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place?

I have been contributing member of the Redwood Empire Chinese Association (RECA), since I was very young. The RECA is a non-profit organization, based in Santa Rosa, focused on enriching and educating the public about traditional Chinese culture. The RECA runs a Saturday school during the school year that teaches children and adults Mandarin

Chinese. During the summer, The RECA runs a Chinese culture camp, in which participants learn the Chinese language, and many traditional customs such as, dragon dancing, lion dancing, how to cook Chinese dishes, calligraphy, painting, and more.

I have been a camp counselor for the RECA for two years. I enjoy teaching others and sharing the rich Chinese culture with them. In addition to working as a camp counselor I am also an active member of the dragon and lion dance teams. I have been part of these teams since I was eight years old. Dragon dancing is a cultural dance in which many dancers perform, carrying poles, waving them around, bringing the 250 foot long dragon to life. In Chinese culture dragons represent power, strength and good luck. It takes a lot of synchronization and coordination to perform the dance correctly, and I love sharing it with others because people really enjoy being a part of it. Lion Dancing is usually performed by multiple lions containing two dancers each, one as a head, the other as a tail. My brother and I make the perfect duo for these performances due to our strong relationship, hours of coordinated practice, and resulting trust. I have performed dragon and lion dances all around Sonoma, Santa Clara, Marin, and San Francisco counties, at various events such as Chinese New Year celebrations, parades, weddings, fairs, and school culture days. Of all the performances, I most enjoy the school shows because I love being able to interact with young kids in an educational yet entertaining way. I find it inspiring to give back to the community by educating them about Chinese culture through the RECA, and its traditional performances and classes.

FINAL ESSAY 550 words!

I am interested in continuously improving myself, academically, culturally, and physically. As a student of Abraham Lincoln High School, I have many opportunities to customize my classes to focus on certain interests and professions. I took advantage of the diverse classes and enrolled in three separate pathways during my four years of high school: architecture, biotech, and business. My goal was develop a well rounded knowledge base and a diverse set of experiences. In architecture I learned the importance of organization, aesthetics, and structural integrity. During two years in the biotech pathway, I learned the value of precise measurement, accurate data recording, and genetic manipulation. The business academy taught me how to interpret financial documents, how to be smart with my spending and saving, and how to plan for the future.

Through my travels around the world I have experienced many different customs. I enjoy immersing myself in foreign cultures through learning about their recreational activities, historical monuments, and religious practices. In Thailand I went to tiger and elephant sanctuaries in which I had the opportunity to care for and interact with these amazing species that have great significance to the Thai culture. I have visited many religious sites including the Hindu temples of Indonesia, the Buddhist temples of Cambodia, the Shinto temples of Japan, and the Mayan temples at Tulum in Mexico. I was also fortunate to visit the Xian soldiers and the Forbidden City in China. In 2018 I am visiting Hungary for an International Dragon boat race, and while there, hope to learn about the historic Magyar culture. I also hope to visit and learn about the pre-Incan culture at Chavin in Peru.

Physical fitness and athletic success are important to me. I currently enjoy dragon boat racing, cycling, swimming, and running. Cycling began as a form of transportation but quickly developed into a recreational sport that I enjoy with friends. I spend my weekends biking through San Francisco's hilly terrain which helps me maintain a healthy lifestyle while enjoying the natural beauty of my home town. After two years I have developed my skills and have started track cycling competitively. I practice weekly with teammates including professional cyclists and other amateurs who have a passion for the sport. I swim every morning before school and hope to join Abraham Lincoln's swim team in the spring. In middle school I was not a very good runner, but once I entered high school I began training for endurance and speed, and I rapidly began improving my mile times. Although I have dialed back my running training, I still find myself improving, but at a more gradual pace. In 2018 I plan on participating in a triathlon to test my running, cycling, and swimming skills in a single event.

I am passionate about strengthening my knowledge, mind, and body through academics, travel, and sports. These aspects of my life have become very important to me and I look forward to continuing to devote significant time to them.