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The Roanoke Valley Governor's School For Science and Technology



Admissions Department Staff:

I hope your work during this year's review of applications has been going well. I am writing to provide information that will assist in the evaluation of this applicant in the context of their attendance at the Roanoke Valley Governor's School for Science and Technology (RVGS), a rigorous half-day regional STEM program. While our students' school of record is their base high school, the instructional model and learning expectations in our program have significant importance in understanding this applicant's high school education. Our School Profile document summarizes our program, but as you review this student's application it is essential for you to also understand the continuity of instruction at the Roanoke Valley Governor's School during the COVID-19 pandemic. We all know that the impact of learning interruptions in recent years will affect the educational trajectories of students across the country. *Fair evaluation of this applicant and their academic performance relies heavily on the below information.*

You should be aware that RVGS has maintained student learning and rigorous expectations without interruption. Immediately following the order to close Virginia's schools in March 2020, RVGS enacted a plan to hold online classes to maintain our students' growth and learning. Rather than relying on asynchronous assignments or commercial software to provide instruction, our classes were delivered by our highly qualified teachers using a distance-learning format featuring real-time instruction, interactive formative assessment, small group discussion, and our school's high expectations. We continued to grade learning outcomes and hold students to the high academic standards of our school. This continuity of instruction proceeded through the end of the 2019-20 school year to ensure our students made a full year of academic progress.

During the 2020-21 school year, we implemented a plan to ensure rigorous learning experiences for our students. Our hybrid format called for students to alternate between attending class on campus and remotely participating with the on campus lessons in real-time, directly engaging with their teacher during class. Students took assessments on campus under traditional testing conditions and grading expectations were proportional to our normal standards. Including this actively engaged virtual attendance, RVGS had daily attendance rates comparable to a normal school year, demonstrating the continued commitment and dedication of our student body. Our students rose to the challenge and took responsibility for their learning.

During the 2021-22 school year, we returned to a normal format in-person five days a week, following our traditional schedule and calendar. Our school returned to pre-COVID expectations regarding accountability, due dates, and performance on assessments. Our student performed quite well and demonstrated continued growth and learning during this time. This level of academic expectations continues during the 2022-23 school year.

All school systems handled instruction during the pandemic as best as they could, but few environments were able to consistently maintain high academic expectations. RVGS was uniquely poised to handle this situation given our small size, flexible teachers, and motivated students. As I am sure your admissions department is aware, the Roanoke Valley Governor's School, like other schools in Virginia's Governor's School system, has a strong track record of rigorous learning and maintains a respected national reputation. Students work hard for success at RVGS and the knowledge and ability represented by a 'B' at RVGS often exceeds expectations for an 'A' in a standard school setting. That differentiation should be considered even more pronounced during the pandemic, when grades at many schools were based on completion as much as, or more so, than mastery of the material.

As a regional program, performance indicators report through the students' locality rather than under the label of the Roanoke Valley Governor's School, but the US News and World Report methodology would calculate a STEM Index over 95 in most school years. This would translate to RVGS consistently being in the top 10 STEM high schools in their national rankings if we reported student performance independently of the participating districts. Of course, those achievement indicators only capture a fraction of what makes RVGS an intellectually rewarding environment for our students, with our student research program providing laboratory experiences that uniquely prepare our students for success in their college and career aspirations. A more complete discussion of our program, academic rigor, and similar information can be found in the School Profile. If that wasn't provided with the application, please contact our counselor, Kathy Sebolt (ksebolt@rvgs.k12.va.us), for a copy.

I hope this information provides added context as you review this application and will help assure you of the applicant's preparedness to be successful at your university. I strongly advocate for the acceptance of this student to your program. The passion and dedication displayed during this time is remarkable, and it provides an indication of the efforts they will devote to their collegiate studies.

If you have any questions about our current instruction, our program, or our students, I would be pleased to speak with you. My contact information is provided below.

Thank you for your time,



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