

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.

The San Francisco Shared SchoolYard Project's (SSY) mission is to create safe spaces for all kids to play and socialize, regardless of which neighborhood they live in. In June of this year, the SSY held a "Superhero" event to promote girl power and participation, and I was chosen to lead the advertising department. As an intern, my responsibilities ranged from marketing to speaking directly to the public. I was terrified of having to speak to strangers. Even the thought of it would make my mouth dry, and my palms sweaty. My goal was to attract the public to this great new service, and to educate local neighborhood girls to connect with one another. I had to set my fear aside and be a role model promoting girl power.

From deciding how many flyers to print, to the locations and times of day in which to target, and the neighborhoods with the greatest population size, I had more questions than I did answers at first. I began to search online to locate businesses and neighborhoods that would be a good match for our outreach. For instance, I discovered that the Whole Foods Market in the Noe Valley area had the most family presence between the hours of 3-5pm on weekdays. Armed with that knowledge, I set out with my mentor to pass out flyers and speak directly with the shoppers. It took me nearly an hour before I could stop someone and ask for a moment of their time, but once I did, there was no stopping me. We handed out more than three hundred flyers that afternoon, and had some great conversations with eager parents and kids.

It meant a lot to me that I was able to overcome some of my anxiety about talking to strangers. By the end, I had my own pitch, and took pride when locals put down their phones and took time to talk to me. There were well over 100 RSVPs to the Superhero event, and I am proud to know that my contribution to this group effort had a real impact after all.

2) Every person has a creative side, and it can be expressed in many ways: problem solving, original and innovative thinking, and artistically, to name a few. Describe how you express your creative side.

When I was a Sophomore in high school, I joined the Business Academy to learn the principles of finance, and the ethics of business. Today, I am not sure if that is the career path I will take, but I will always be grateful for the techniques and tools I learned.

The Business Academy at Lincoln High School in San Francisco encourages students ranging from Sophomore to Senior year to think creatively, and problem-solve challenges facing our world today. In my Senior year, there was a particular emphasis on inventing environmentally conscious solutions to some of these complex issues. In participation with the Network For Teaching Entrepreneurship Program, we were assigned a challenge to design a beverage brand to promote healthy living. This resonated with me because I have noticed students rely on drinks such as coffee or soda to make them more alert and awake, but they don't promote health.

Inspired by infusible drinks, I set out to design a bottle with a top compartment that would dispense fresh fruit and seeds into purified water. My goal was to create a fun and innovative design which would attract people to this drink, and encourage them to chose water over other soft drinks. By focusing on fruits high in antioxidants and other ingredients such as flax or chia seeds, my idea was to market a beverage that promotes both health and hydration.

Even though I never saw this vision to be developed, the process of inventing the drink really inspired me to think creatively and artistically beyond my scope. It was also a great way to apply the business and marketing skills I learned in the academy to the imagined release of my product. The hope and goal was to lead consumers to pick my healthy alternative beverage over the popular sugary name brands.

It was exciting for me to showcase some of my creative and innovative ideas in a practical way by imagining a sustainable product for healthy living. Even though I practice my own creative interests at home, this project was a rewarding way to experiment with innovation.

4) Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced.

Sophomore year, my counselor informed me that I could take college level classes for free as a high school student. My goal was clear: get a jump start on courses so I could impress the college of my dreams. That summer, I took Precalculus Algebra at the City College of San Francisco.

When I first enrolled, I didn't plan for family responsibilities to result in a scheduling conflict, which could've prohibited me from finishing the course. Determined to keep my college class, I sat in on a later class and time which worked better. Even though I was intimidated to ask for the teacher's help, I was also resolved to take the course. I showed up to class every day and was able to successfully add the class. This was new; while in high school I had leverage for changing classes, in college I needed a specific add/drop code and hard deadlines.

By the end of the six weeks, I had learned not only about Precalculus, but perhaps more importantly, about the strategies of college life. What struck me most was that college students seem to have much greater independence. Unlike in high school, where students use pen and paper, in college, many people used a tablet, laptop or a small notepad to take notes. There were people of different ages and ethnicities in the classroom. And unlike in high school, there was no pressure to be friendly and chatty in class. Everyone there was focused on the lecture. If I wanted to do well, I would have to complete all the homework, take proper notes, and show up on time. I had to be independent and driven. This was both intimidating and exhilarating all at once.

I did receive an "A" in the class, but that was not the most important thing to happen in those six weeks. My biggest accomplishment that summer was learning that I could take care of myself and my work ethic can stand on its own. I am now driven more than ever to follow my dreams of being the first college graduate in my family.

5) Describe the most significant challenge you have faced and the steps you have taken to overcome this challenge. How has this challenge affected your academic achievement?

During the first two years of high school, I was on task and earned good grades. That changed quickly after I took on a tougher workload in my junior year. My grades suffered, especially in AP Physics, and the quality of my work was insufficient. In Physics, I didn't understand the concepts and more importantly I wasn't trying. I was aware my time was wasted on distractions: spending too much time on the phone, playing with my dog, watching TV.

I realized the need to change my habits: better my time management, organize my priorities, and control my study environment. I sought new ways to approach my challenges. I started off by changing my study habits and limiting my distractions. I went to the library multiple days after school to create a peaceful, and work-orientated environment. I began listening to instrumental piano songs by such artists as Franz Liszt, and Chopin, to soothe my nerves and help me focus. I also began to use a method called "Pomodoro Timer" which allowed me to work in 25 minute intervals. The idea was to be completely focused for 25 minutes, followed by a 5 minute break for stretching or taking a walk.

Another approach I took was taking a semester of *Step to College: Critical Thinking and Decision-Making*, an after school college level class taught by an instructor from SFSU. The concepts of being a critical thinker were new to me. This meant asking more questions, accepting the answers, and logically analyzing and connecting the answers. The skills I learned in this class will continue to benefit me in college.

From the results of my actions, I was able to improve my AP Physics grade from a C to a B. This accomplishment inspired me to want to learn more about how the brain functions, and how memory affects learning. Improving my grade helped me realize just how much I was able to control my environment, using these techniques, to improve my study habits. Moving forward, I feel more confident in my abilities to face big challenges be them academic or otherwise.