**Prompt 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?**

One of the darkest times I faced was in fourth grade. My mom was diagnosed with cancer and had to be treated overseas. I felt as if the pillar supporting me went away. Since she left, I had to fill in the role of my parents in taking care of the family. It was overwhelming to say the least. Studying, tutoring my siblings, keeping the house tidy, and making sure we eat healthy meals, all of these began chipping away at my body and soul.

Lethargy became an everyday occurrence, which was apparent in school. One of the teachers reached out to me; that became my wake up call.

“I need to balance my studies and my responsibilities at home!”

The first step was the hardest: the change of mindset from an immature, unorganized child to a person with day-to-day goals.

The second step was setting up a strict schedule for myself. It was a packed schedule from going back home from school to 10 pm, not willing to waste a single minute. I would constantly check the clock and ensure that my schedule is on track, thus, preventing me from procrastinating my school and home responsibilities.

Part of becoming more mature is self control. Of course there were times I was tempted to just forget everything, that’s why I created my own reward system: I’d give myself a reward of doing anything I want for an hour for finishing every five tasks. At the end of each day, I’d reflect on myself. If I felt that I slacked off that day, I’d remove my reward for the day. This allowed me to be critical of myself and pushed me out of my immaturity.

The greatest lesson I learnt was about the power of the mind. With just a change in mindset, I became more eager to change and became stricter to myself. This allowed me to learn and manage my time properly and efficiently. A gradual increase in marks was also encouraging to continue this process.