**Q4: Describe how you have taken advantage of a significant educational opportunity or worked to overcome an educational barrier you have faced. (250-350 words)** edit 3

My dad has always told me that the single most important skill I need to have was public speaking. I didn’t understand why, until high school. I realized how public speaking played an important role in a goal I wanted to achieve: influencing and educating other people.

Public speaking has never come to me naturally. I was always scared of what other people think of me and was unable to think about what to say. I would often stutter and mumble my words. But, as grade 11 came, I was given the chance to participate in Harvard Model Congress Asia (HMCA) and Model United Nations (MUN). I decided to take this chance and overcome my fear.

I started big with HMCA. It was held in Japan and had students from 10 different countries participating. To be chosen as school representative, I had to go through a rigorous selection process. We went through 2 interviews — both being with teacher representatives for HMCA. They asked us to prepare a one minute long speech on gun control and each assigned us a country to represent. With the amount I researched, I passed.

In Japan, I was forced to debate in a class of 20 experienced strangers. I was terrified of embarrassing myself in front of these people. I felt 20 pairs of eyes on me, listening to what I’m about to say. It was nerve-racking. My first speech was awful. I stuttered in every sentence and I couldn’t rebut any point of information. But as I spent more hours in that classroom, as I ended each speech, I realized how public speaking was all about confidence. It was all about presenting yourself in a way that was convincing. No matter how amazing your content was, if you weren’t confident, you wouldn’t leave an impact on others.

Having learnt a lesson in HMCA, I wanted to use it in MUN. So, I aimed higher. I wanted to get the Best Delegate award. Having a goal kept me focused and motivated. It assured me that my efforts weren’t for nothing.

With that goal in mind, I tried speaking every chance I got and forced myself to try and answer every question asked. The audience that I used to be terrified of no longer bothered me. I delivered each speech with more confidence than the last. I even convinced the majority of the delegates into signing my draft resolution. At the end of MUN, I didn’t win Best Delegate. But what I won was confidence to finally speak in front of a crowd, the ability to form my thoughts into proper words and most importantly, the potential of making an impact on the people around me.

Hi Shana,

I personally think this is great!

You’ve explained the educational barrier, and what you did to overcome it.

I think what we need to do now is to cut a few words as it has gone pass the word limit.

Although I do wish you could keep all the words you have written here – I suggest cutting off the sentences I highlighted yellow to keep the word count. I tried to not cut any words from the last paragraph because I think that last paragraph is important as it shows your effort in practicing your confidence.

All the best, Shana! ☺