**UC ESSAY 7**

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

In my school, academic excellence were ALWAYS a priority and a metric for success, while excellence in anything outside academics – e.g. sports and arts – are considered “meh.”

Students with good grades were favorites, while those who does well or shows talent in sports and arts were often labelled as “un-gifted” and advised to spent more time studying instead of pursuing their respective talents.

It was frustrating to see this subtle form of segregation in my school especially as someone who has experienced this unfair treatment first-hand because I’m one of these “lucky” students with deep passion in sports – swimming – and spent a lot of time on it (I was participating in several national and international swim competitions at the time).

With the desire for fair treatment, I was determined to make the school become supportive of students with passions in sports and arts. I was determined to make the school a safe hub for students to freely develop their passion and interests both in academics and non-academics, thus, creating a well-rounded student body.

Realizing that individual efforts weren’t enough, I gathered fellow sports and arts enthusiasts, banded together, and organized awareness events throughout school-year on the benefits of sports and arts on academics and vice versa. We timed our events before school assembly, after school during student pick-ups, report card day, etc. Basically whenever there were huge crowds that includes all stakeholders: students, parents, and teachers. We persevere every day to attain the school’s support.

Months later, changes started to happen. Fellow students became more open towards their interests outside of academics, parents began to request more sports and arts-related activities, and the teachers were more lenient and focused on bringing up a more well-rounded students.

Today, as I walk through my school entrance, I can see a swimming pool with lanes, I can see a proper sized basketball courts even though it’s an outdoors court, and I can even see rooms being prepared for paintings and various music instruments (apparently a lot of students have different music skills). Our school has finally started promoting both academic and non-academic extracurriculars!!

Even though I may not have a chance to fully reap the fruits of our labor, I am delighted that even someone like me can make a change for the better. I can finally understand that change does not have to be dramatic. Even a small change can create a domino effect that would lead to a significant change. It only takes a few people to start a change as long as our feelings and determination can reach someone’s heart.