**6.  Think about an academic subject that inspires you. Describe how you have furthered this interest inside and/or outside of the classroom. (350 words)**

I’ve always loved the sciences, especially physics. The way it encapsulates the immensity of the universe into laws intelligible to the human mind makes it, in my opinion, the coolest field of study.

Most people exclusively learn physics in school, but my curiosity led me to do research in my free time that was beyond our syllabus. It’s actually been a laughing matter recently: my friends told me that I wasted my childhood, because whereas most seven-or-eight year olds would spend their afternoons enjoying Nickelodeon and Cartoon Network, I would be binging documentaries like Journey to the Edge of the Universe and Stephen Hawking’s Grand Design. As I grew older, I began to watch those educational youtube channels way before they got popular, I would spend hours a day surfing science-spaces on Quora, and I would occasionally read excerpts from scholarly books and research papers.

My interests also led me to tinker with engineering, which I see as an application of physics. Even in elementary-school, I often drew “blueprints” of electrical-contraptions using what little knowledge I had (the most outrageous ones included space-bikes, mech-suits, and electromagnetic railguns). Of course, these “inventions” would never work, but from the amount of effort I put into the details, you could tell it was a hobby of mine. In secondary-school, I’ve created more realistic gadgets like miniature wind-turbines, adjustable christmas-lights, and solar-powered power-banks. Although these projects were much simpler, they work, and they’re baby steps to what I hope to do in the future.

I was an absolute “nerd”, but my explorations of even the most trivial topics eventually benefitted my academics because I was usually far ahead of my peers: when they were first studying Newton’s laws of motion or Coulomb’s force, I was exploring the factors affecting the colors of stars or the quantum fluctuations permeating empty space. I would often stay after class to invite my classmates and teachers to share and discuss the cool things I learned. Some people enjoyed these discussions, others hated them. Nevertheless, my love and knack for physics crowned me many nicknames like “Science-boy” and “Physics-notebook”.

**7. What have you done to make your school or your community a better place? (350 words)**

Learning the sciences is fun and all, but for most of my life, that knowledge never leaves my head save for the occasional exam. As a teenager looking for a sense of purpose, I decided that I wanted to put that knowledge to good use. Luckily, the school’s Student-Resources-Club was opening applications for aspiring tutors. So I registered as an IGCSE physics and chemistry tutor.

At first, my job seemed simple. I had to determine what they were learning in class and create lesson plans. Then, I had four hours a week—more than enough time—to provide a complete and coherent understanding of the topic of choice.

However, I should’ve known that most of the students were not there on their own volition—their parents had registered them—they lacked any real drive to improve: some would stay silent, while others saw me as another boring teacher that wouldn’t be of help. Moreover, they all learned at vastly different paces.

I eventually found a solution to these problems after spending countless hours discussing with my fellow tutors. My approach to increasing student retention was by substantially personalizing the lesson plans and attaching fun bits of interdisciplinary trivia based on their hobbies and interests. Sometimes, I would design graphics and animations that showcased the transfer of energy or the restructuring of molecules. I even offered extra classes beyond my schedule. By the end of the year, those who were disinterested would ask me to elaborate on topics beyond their syllabi, and those who were dismissive would privately request my assistance.

Since then, I have dramatically improved their grades—some of them saw improvements of up to 35%—and I have received a certificate of recognition as a tutor from the academic principal. Additionally, I am proud to say that I have somewhat ignited my student’s passions for learning, which I believe is an accomplishment on its own. Furthermore, my experiences at the Student-Resources-Club has enlightened me about the complexity of an educator’s job. But seeing my efforts gradually cultivate the growth of my students—in mind and in spirit—made me realize that it’s absolutely worth it.