Tell a story from your life, describing an experience that either demonstrates your character or helped to shape it. (Max 650 words)

Annoyance, distaste, and ununited were the feelings I felt every Friday at 2:30 pm. At least until last year. It was our school’s weekly games event. The school’s intentions were good: the directors wanted the students to have fun earlier before the weekend and strengthen the students’ sense of togetherness. Unfortunately, it turned out to be the opposite. Only half of the students consistently showed up, while the rest left to enjoy their weekend off-campus 45 minutes early. This frustrates me. I really wished for all of us, regardless of academic year, to have a stronger bond with each other. Not as seniors and juniors, but as friends. Who would have thought that Science’s problem solving approach helped me accomplish this goal.

The teachers used to set up the games. Their intention was to enable students to interact more with each other. They have us form into groups to compete by class. It was a good idea, but they overlooked the fact that these games, which they perceive as fun and enable community building, were slightly irrelevant to us because of the generation gap. As a result, the events became too cheesy for us and half of us started to skip these events altogether. Seeing this going on and on each week broke my heart. So, I decided to tie up my shoelace and start tackling it.

As the student council’s VP, I wanted to make a change; something that would really strengthen the students’ relationship instead of distancing them. I voiced my concerns to fellow councils and later to the teachers and school directors that, with the current condition, the events would end up being counterproductive. Using the attendance data and a school-wide survey of the event to convince them, the school finally approved my concerns and put the student council in charge of reforming the event.

Empathy is the first step: the students’ input on games day is very important. So, student surveys and interviews were done, especially to gain insights on the kinds of activities that the student find attractive. My first thought prior to the surveys and interviews was to make the events comprised of purely competitive sports. However, the data begged to differ. The list of desired activities were much more diverse than expected: sports, arts, culinary, and even trivial games (Jenga, Twister, etc.).

The funny thing is: one problem solved (the activities), but another showed (fitting all these activities within 45 minutes). So, defining the problem and brainstorming for the solution come next. Different ideas were generated to fit both the activities and time allocations, but nothing seems to work. As hours turned to days, discouragement started building until this one idea: scrap the whole thing and make it a full day event.

Prototype and testing are the final step. My team and I generated and simulated different scenarios from activities combination/permutations, scheduling, and buffer time using the good old spreadsheet and its amazing features. To achieve our goal of stronger student bonding, students from different years and classes were randomly divided into teams. We incorporated a “Harry Potter” style house system – Red, Blue, Green, and Yellow Houses – to keep them engaged, increase competitiveness, and gain camaraderie. Points were accumulated after each activities depending on the team’s performance. On the D-day, Google form was used to track the students’ attendance and feedbacks to validate our reformed event.

As I nervously compiled the students’ response, the reformed games day event received positive reviews. The school directors were happy and agreed to make this permanent. A strong togetherness started to form from the students’ competitive spirit throughout the day. Not only that each member of the student council’s also gain something valuable besides togetherness: problem solving application, better teamwork, and delegation. Who would’ve thought that something that I learned in Science classes could be applied to making my school a more fun and unified environment.