



**2022 Recipient ~ Eduardo Ramirez**  
**Archbishop Stepinac High School, Class of 2022**

**Closing the Education Gap**

I grew up in Peekskill, NY, where the percentage of the population with a bachelor's degree or higher is 27%. Due to this limited number of people, I grew up with little desire to go above and beyond academically or community-wise, as many of the people around me simply downplayed the importance of such. As I entered secondary school, I began to be surrounded by more teachers with higher education degrees, who portrayed education with great importance.

During this time, I also began to become more invested in what I was learning in school; the concepts of mathematics and science truly grabbed my attention and led me to further invest myself in them. But, I still did not have a role model with whom I could ask questions about my interests.

As middle school went on, I became heavily invested in my 7th-grade chemistry class. My teacher saw this and recommended I compete in a chemistry competition. I was then trained for weeks after school by the teacher to do such. I quickly started to look up to him, as he would quickly answer any questions I had about the subject.

Fast forward the following years later, I still did not understand why my community was impacted in a different way than the neighboring communities; I did not understand why it took myself and many other years to be invested in school or why there were so few people in my community acquiring jobs which required heavy technical skills. This changed in my junior year when taking the course, "AP Seminar", opened my eyes to many of the prevalent issues in the world today. We explored topics such as the opportunity gap, where we could directly note a correlation between education level and job acquisition. In the course we also noted the factors of education level, falling down to a number of categories, such as historically underrepresented races and socioeconomic status. I then could finally begin to comprehend the discrepancies in my community, one of them being, a lack of youth outreach programs.

Therefore, in October of 2020, my friend and I started a fiscally sponsored 501(c)(3) non-profit organization, Roots to STEMs, with the mission to provide free STEM education, test prep, and mentorship services to students. The inclusion of STEM education was directly associated with my personal experiences of not knowing how to expand my knowledge on STEM topics I

was interested in. Test prep was another service that, supported by research, showed discrepancies in students of lower socioeconomic status. Finally, mentorship was derived from my childhood experiences as well, which was greatly expanded upon by my current experiences, where I have noticed much greater success in my life when I am able to look up to someone.

We first began by offering a "Pre High School" program to middle school students at the Peekskill Youth Bureau, in which they were introduced to topics in high school mathematics and physics. Later, we started an SAT prep program for students in the greater-NYC area, in which we reviewed SAT topics and reviewed previous tests. We then hosted a jumpstart AP program, which focused on introducing students to the first units of a corresponding AP course over the summer. This year, we ran our SAT prep program again and are now starting AP prep classes.

St. Vincent's Hospital Westchester "has maintained its mission of Charity and Excellence in health care". This is similar to my mission of undertaking a mission of charity and excellence in education. I strive to work as hard as I can to provide quality education to the students my organization serves. I hope to pursue a career in mathematics, continuing my mission to further expand the availability of the services my organization offers, at an even higher quality. My childhood experiences shaped me into the person I am today, and I hope to continue my commitment to the community.