



**2023 Recipient ~ Sebastian Henao
Iona Preparatory School, Class of 2023**

Over the last two years I focused my volunteer work around a nonprofit organization called the Don Bosco Early Childhood Bilingual Program which is a program in the Don Bosco community organization based in Port Chester, New York. My experience with this organization has been firsthand. For the past two years I have been an active volunteer during the summer, fall, and winter season. The goal of this program is to help the underprivileged youth of Port Chester. Many of those underprivileged are of immigrant parents. These Latino communities in need don't necessarily have all the resources to strive and be a contributing part of society. Of the 17 UN sustainable goals, I'm working on the fourth goal which is "quality education". The children involved in this specific program are between the ages of two and four. It really is a focus on giving them a real head start on the education they'll receive. Apart from the work I'm doing as a teacher's assistant, I started an initiative for the Early Childhood Bilingual Program by collecting books or purchasing the books needed for the curriculum for the kids to grow in knowledge. Because the program operates through the summer, it's a crucial moment for the kids because it's a solid 3 months of little to no education and summer work isn't always required by schools.

The books would serve kids from ages two to four. To keep an even balance for all students in the classroom, I reached out to the director of the program to find out what type of books would be needed. After receiving a list of books my group and I calculated the expenses to fulfill the need and came to the conclusion that we could come up with the funds by organizing fundraisers like bake sales. With these bake sales we advocated for the organization itself apart from also informing people on what we are specifically trying to accomplish which is raising money to purchase the books for the curriculum. In relation to the mission of St. Vincent's, I was able to dedicate a majority of my time to the community of Port Chester, to bring value and dignity to those who attend this program.