

Common Application Prompt 5. Discuss an accomplishment, event, or realization that sparked a period of personal growth and a new understanding of yourself or others.

It's often said that a smile is worth a thousand words. While most people remember the soul lifting happiness of their family vacations, my most vivid memories from our vacation to Staniel Cay in the Bahamas were the faces of the local school children. What started as a typical family fishing vacation became so much more when we decided to bring school supplies to help out the local children.

Growing up, I always had a knack for business. Nothing brought a grin to my face like a potential business opportunity: selling balls from the golf course pond behind my house to the neighborhood kids, taking over my brother's chores to bolster my allowance, and even selling lemonade with better returns than my dad's stock portfolio.

Despite the significant impact we had on Staniel Cay, there was a greater need on the neighboring island of Black Point. A larger area without the same benefit of tourist revenue, their school was in desperate need of supplies. After visiting the school, I knew I couldn't stand idly by.

I finally had a chance to use my developing business skills to really make a difference. Hoping to have the greatest impact on the students, I collaborated with the principal to determine the most critical needs. Delivering a stack of notebooks would have been easy, but I wanted to make a long-term impact on the school, so I created a non-profit, Black Point Provisions, through the state of Florida.

Coming up with the idea was easy; finding the money to finance it was the challenge, as it is with any business. I pulled my resources together. One gofundme page, hundreds of emails, door-to-door inquiries at local businesses, and five thousand dollars later we were ready to go.

Armed with boxes of newly purchased supplies, I checked in at the airport. I was excited to return to Black Point after a year of hard work. At that moment a new problem surfaced: the electronics I had purchased were still in their original packaging, and I would be forced to pay a thirty-five percent tax at Bahamian customs. A simple smile wouldn't get me past this challenge.

I was faced with tough decision to give up my project or spend more money than anticipated to accomplish my goal. That just meant that I had to rely more on my own resourcefulness and industriousness. I was willing to put in the extra work that was necessary to open a school that was brimming with resources.

My team and I labored tirelessly, and in the end, brought technology, resources and a fighting spirit to a school that had been largely overlooked. It took almost a week to get the school ready for its first day. However, the friendships I made with the teachers and children will be with me forever.

Many people view business as a selfish endeavor, but what excites me about it is the prospect of coming up with creative solutions to problems and helping others along the way. Working with the Black Point School taught me that business isn't just about supply and demand, resources and rewards. It's about grabbing hold of opportunities to help those in the greatest need and bring about positive change that extends into the future.

It is that same spirit of philanthropy that makes me want to study business in college. Just as the [Change name for each school] have to prepare when the Hurricanes come to town, my final project at Black Point School involved helping them board up as Irma approached a few weeks ago. As I move into the future at [Change name for each school] and beyond I know that each venture I undertake will present unique challenges, but I have the skills to ride out any storm out and never stop cultivating a spirit of growth within myself and the greater community.