My name is Carolyn Nguyen and it is an honor to be able to share with you my experience during the Education ASB trip. Over this Spring Break, our group went to New York where we worked with Junior Achievement of New York to teach the city’s youth economics and financial literacy. I traded my sunny spring break for snow, and it was one of the best decisions I have ever made!

On the first three days of our trip, we taught sixth, seventh and eighth graders, (respectively) at PS 206 located in Brooklyn. I walked into the school anxious and tired from our hour and a half subway ride, but waking up at 6:00AM every morning was completely worth it! Teaching had its ups and downs, rough spots and dry patches but most of all, it was one of the most rewarding experiences I ever had the chance to participate in. Becoming a mentor to these kids made one truly appreciate all the little things in life. When a kid raised their hand in class, I knew that they were giving us their full attention. When the kids asked if we were still going to be there after lunch, I could not help myself from internally squealing with joy at the fact that they actually enjoyed the lesson plans we had worked so hard to develop the night before. When a little girl came up to me and gave me a green, owl-shaped hair-clip as a gift and told me “Thank you for coming today, I love JA so much,” I felt like I had truly made a difference in someone’s life.

On the last two days of our trip, we helped facilitate at the Junior Achievement Financial Park. Here, we aided tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grader in creating budgets for their virtual personas. Everyone in the park was given a real life scenario at random and their task was to step into the shoes of their persona, and “shop” for their personas’ living arrangements based on the conditions of their lives. It was an absolutely amazing experience since this activity had so much relevance to the real world. It was especially rewarding because these kids were all about to head off to college and teaching them gave me the chance to give them advice I wish I had been given before venturing off into our great big world. We were also able to give these students college application advice, budgeting tips, as well as our personal understanding on how dodge all the curve balls life tends to throw at you.

Overall, no amount of words can truly describe how amazing this trip was! Teaching beside fellow peers, creating interesting yet delicious concoctions in the kitchen, having hour long dinner chats, exploring the wonders of the Big Apple, laughing till we cried and recreating Pitch Perfect in the showers were only a few of the great adventures we shared with one another. I’d like to thank my team members, Vy, Preston and Kaiya for making this trip absolutely unforgettable. Also, I’d like to express my heartfelt gratitude to Lydia, our RUO, and Jirga, our Site Leader, for putting their time and effort into organizing this wonderful trip! I can honestly say, I boarded that plane with a group a strangers but came back home to Dallas with a family.