

## MAAP STARS Speech - Aaron

Happiness. It is what everyone strives for, but everyone has their own way of obtaining it. Through others or themselves everyone wants to find happiness in their day and smile with joy. I didn't know how to find my happiness before now.

My name is Aaron, a senior at Northwest Passage High school, and a MAAP STARS Officer. A long journey for me, yet It's still going, along with all its twists and turns of life, my life. MAAP STARS is one of the biggest turns of my life, to which I'm grateful for. Before I had found my current charter school and MAAP STARS, my life was dark, the everlasting pitch abyss of the night. I never would be the leader and person I am today without STARS. Never be able to have the friends I do now.

While I was growing up through traditional schooling, I was drifting along. Letting others insult and spread rumors

about me, expecting it all to get better one day. I was pulled down again and again with despair that I began to believe that nothing will get better. I even was led to bringing others down to feel better, but I wasn't proud, I hated myself. I was not the Aaron I wanted to be, I was scared to go to school, back to where I wouldn't find happiness.

The only place I felt happiness was at home, not having to worry about being judged, being bullied. I stopped caring about my education, I stopped caring about myself. Sophomore year however, things got worse, my father went to hospitalization with my mother having to aid him, my sister was off to college, and my brother I felt like I didn't even know at the time. I was alone and just wanted to shut myself in at home. I thought online schooling would work for me, only to find out it was just going to be worse as I was forced to start from the beginning all over again. After lots of hard work I managed to finally get through the curriculum of the year, but I was beat, I was

depressed. I was literally ready to give up on school, and on myself.

That's when Northwest passage and MAAP STARS stepped in. With my father having recovered from many surgeries on a horrible infection on his back, I didn't have the fear of losing him anymore, and could focus on school once more. Northwest Passage was just the start of my growth, but I needed more of a niche, something to let my potential flow. MAAP STARS turned out to be the perfect fit. I was inspired by the many students and staff who all were participating in the program, Who had just as much trouble in their lives as I did. MAAP STARS gave me the courage to keep going, to find myself and lead on.

I never knew how related those feelings I had, are to what I am doing right now. I'm in my senior year, and I'm an officer for MAAP STARS. Something which I never expected to happen, completely out of reach. To have in my grasp that dream, is all I could ask for. I'm leading by example for my

school and the entire STARS Community. Looking back on everything I've done now, I feel pride, I feel happiness, I'm finally me.

I can finally plan for my future, which was never even thought about a day in my life before. I know the power MAAP STARS has, and I want everyone to know there is a leader within themselves. I used to think that the only place I can ever feel happiness was at home, but MAAP STARS proved me wrong. I will always feel MAAP STARS as another home to me, I've been proven that happiness can be obtained everywhere you go, through the people you meet, the people you help, the people who help YOU. I will keep heading towards my future so I can spread my happiness and inspire others to head towards their futures. MAAP STARS can make a difference, for I am the difference!