Hello my name is Ricardo Sanchez and my team is group 2300B from Robinson School, Puerto Rico. My teammates and I first found out about robotics by over hearing a teacher talk about it back on September 2011. She mentioned that the next day a group called PRIOR (Puerto Rico Institute of Robotics) was going to start offering robotics classes. Robotics! It sounded interesting, so we went not really knowing what we were getting into. We attended PRIOR classes every Saturday and as we were understanding better our goals we started investing more and more time. We learned that we were going to have to build a robot using the VEX Robotics System to compete in regional competitions with the objective of qualifying to a bigger national competition to eventually qualify to a world championship. Our mentors told us that we had what it takes to reach that goal, so we believed them and went for it.

It took a lot of effort. We dedicated months constantly staying up until 9-10 PM working on the robot and sometimes starting at 4 AM. I also worked on the robot at my house because my father is one of the mentors. He taught us a design process based on continuous improvement, and we followed it. As we tried new ideas, we learned from the results, came up with new ideas for improvement, tried the ideas, and repeated the cycle. Building the robot was challenging because we had to find the best way to use the Vex parts and equipment to build the robot. There were constrains so we had to think about the tradeoffs or using different parts or ideas. The whole experience has helped me understand more math and science and how to apply math and science to build a robot and solve a real problem. It helped me introduce myself into a new era of technology and advancements. We did it all minimal help from the school but with a lot of support from our parents and mentors.

All the hard work paid off. We won various awards and regional and state championships that allowed us to qualify to the Vex World Championships 2012. Our initial goal and dream was accomplished! We went to Anaheim, CA to compete. Our mentors again convinced us that we could win but that the important thing was to do our best and learn from the experience. We were focused and determined and at the end we WON the World Championship tournament! Of course, it was a team effort, it was an alliance. It was a great feeling that all your hard work finally paid off.

I guess that the initial interest a year ago in "Robotics" was only **the** **hook** to bring a small group of middle school students to work together towards a common goal, to motivate them to work, and teach them how to apply math and science along the way. That was true, but it also was more than that. It has helped me bond with my father and new found friends. It has helped me to learn how to work and solve problems under pressure. I also believe that it has helped me express myself in ways I never could before. It has helped me realize that people have different personalities some good and some bad, and has helped me to learn how to deal with them. Vex Robotics has filled a gap in my life and I hope to be a part of it every year.