



## The Right Place

### **Maricela Castaneda, New America School Class of 2017**



**Maricela Castaneda** moved to the US when she was five years old. School wasn't always so easy for Maricela. She dropped out when she was in 9<sup>th</sup> grade and had a child the next year. But, as she describes, "My pregnancy made me realize that I needed to turn my life around, not only for me, but for my baby, too.... When my son was six months old, I decided to go back to school so I could become the role model he deserved."

*Because she was so behind in credits, Maricela took both day and night classes as NAS-Thornton, and she enrolled in Friday school. The results, Maricela graduated in three years.*

*While at NAS, she was a school leader: As a member of the parenting club, she often acted as a peer mentor for other new mothers; she participated in Coffee Talk, a student group responsible for generating ideas for school improvement; and she helped plan school celebrations such as the Halloween festival—all while working weekends to support her family.*

*Maricela will pursue a career in the medical sciences, hoping one day to become a pediatrician. Her science and math teacher, Angela Mundt has no doubt Maricela will succeed, writing. "She has a genuine passion for biology and approaches labs and experiments with a genuine sense of enthusiasm and inquiry."*