



The Right Place

Michael Buenfil Villamil, New America School. Class of 2011

This year will be my first completed year of high school, after five years and five different high schools. The New America School took me in and gave me a chance when no one else would or could. Because of my learning experience at NAS, I am graduating from high school and starting college in the summer.



I was born in Cancun, Mexico. I grew up with no father and a mother who worked three jobs and was hardly around. My three brothers and I moved thirteen times in one year and lived in a car for two months. By the time I was fourteen, I was considered a drug addict, went to rehab twice, and hated my life so much I didn't care what happened to me. At school, there were too many kids like me for the teachers to care and I drifted from class to class with little interest. As the drama increased at home and my grades took a free fall at school, I became less and less connected with school life. I would just give up and stop going until we moved again and I started at another high school. This was a pattern that I repeated over and over. Everything changed when I found out I was going to be a father and enrolled at a charter school...

I love The New America School because it has less students and the teachers can focus on each individual student. I hated all the drama of a public school, where the teachers did not really know me. At New America, I feel valued. The teachers here see in me what no one else did before—a better person trying to do his best.

"Michael's story is no different than a lot of students we see," explains NAS-Lakewood Principal Jon Berninzoni. "Traditional schools might serve and meet the needs of many students, however, not all of them. Michael has proven that no matter where you are in life, a high school education can unlock the doors to a better future."