



The Right Place

Shantay Whitten, New America School, Class of 2012

When I started High School, I was exposed to a lot of high risk situations that I didn't know how to avoid. I made some bad decisions and my path could have been very different. And with these situations, the hardest difficulty of all through these past four years was to not give up.

One of the challenges that I faced was getting pregnant in my sophomore year. I had to really face some important decisions about my future and while I wasn't quite ready for it, I am grateful to share that I am the proud mother of a beautiful baby girl that was born on January 14th, 2011. Her name is Nahamani Elioni. She is 16 months old.



Becoming pregnant and becoming Nahamani's mother was a pretty big turning point for me. This was when I moved over to New America. And the challenges weren't over. I had so much on my mind. I had to get all of my school work done, find child care, and often take my baby with me on the bus to and from school. I was up at many hours of the night to feed or change Nahamani and I learned that sleep is much more valuable than you can imagine!

In the halls at New America, our school felt good. It was not like walking in the halls of a bigger public high school, where all you feel like is a number, where no one knows you by your name or they might not even notice you. At our school, we were a lot closer and we supported each other, no matter what our challenges. Whether it was caring for a baby or learning another language or learning how to avoid at risk situations. Through my experience at New America, I have made some strong friendships and I have felt comfortable about what I was learning, the people that were around me, and the building I was learning it in. The students did not judge you on how well you spoke English or Spanish, all they cared about was loyal friendship and respect.

My future is bright and clear. I plan on going to college for nursing. I love working with others and New America and my years in High School have taught me that I can do anything.