

Snapshot of stories of Las Puertas students

LI

LI is a Tohono O'odham boy whose grandmother enrolled him in late October. He was age appropriate for 6th grade. She told us that he had been suspended from kindergarten and, due to the pandemic, had not been in school since. LI nervously came to school on his first day of attendance, already behind for this school year. However, as teachers interacted with him and worked to assess his academic grade level, it became very clear that LI was years behind academically, socially and emotionally. He did not recognize letters or numbers. It was challenging for him to focus for even short periods of time. His behaviors were that of a 5 years old child. He could not tie his shoe laces. Through Las Puertas' systems of support provided by teachers, tutors, our social worker and his fellow classmates (who taught him how to tie his shoe laces and so much more!). He ended the school year academically performing close to a third grade level in many of his classes, finding it easier to focus. He behaviors have also matured, interacting with his peers and staff in an age appropriate manner.

LI's grandmother had been extremely nervous about enrolling LI & his three older brothers who were also academically behind. However, our social worker reached out to her numerous times, inviting her to visit the school and spending time with her during her visit. Ms. I enrolled all four of her grandsons, for whom she is the guardian. By spring semester, her daughter enrolled her two daughters at Las Puertas for the upcoming school year based upon her mother's recommendation and observing the impact Las Puertas was having on her four nephews.



JP

JP was a 7th grader when he began at Las Puertas. He and his older brother, who also attended Las Puertas, came from a local middle school where he was excelling in all subjects. His attendance was always remarkable, seldom missing a day of school. JP is of Mexican descent and lives with his family in extreme poverty. He has multiple siblings and he often felt lost in his own home. He presented with a depressed demeanor seldom speaking and somewhat reclusive. He and his brother were not happy at their former school and their mother was seeking a school that provided JP with more than just the academics. JP has been at Las Puertas for 4 years now. He is happy, popular, talkative and out-going. He has many friends and is respected by teachers and his fellow students. JP has goals and seeks to finish high school and move forward in his educational career.

KR

KR was an 8th grade Exceptional Education student at a nearby district middle school. Her grandmother/guardian called Las Puertas, seeking a new school for her. KR refused to attend school and had currently missed over three weeks of classes. Her grandmother explained that she had



become an angry teen-ager who did not talk to her and, when she did, it was very clear she was withdrawing from her family. Living with her was becoming unbearable. KR reluctantly came to Las Puertas to visit the school with her grandmother. They spent time talking with the school social worker and toured the school, meeting the teachers as they did. Both her grandmother and KR asked many questions regarding the operations of the school. They left stating that they had an appointment with the principal of her current school to discuss how the school could better meet KR's needs. The next day,

KR and her grandmother returned to Las Puertas to enroll KR. She began classes the next day. Although obviously nervous, KR's grandmother told the social worker that KR had made a list of Pros & Cons comparing her current school and Las Puertas. Las Puertas seemed the clear choice. On her first day at Las Puertas, KR texted her grandmother at lunch time telling her that all the teachers and students were very welcoming and she was happy. The following day was the annual Las Puertas' Thanksgiving Feast. KR and her family attended the feast. Her grandmother told the staff that they felt like they were part of the school already! Just prior to the Winter break, KR's grandmother shared with us that not only is KR happy but the shift in her attitude is having an impact on their entire family – they are appreciative that they are no longer living with an angry teenager but instead with one who interacts with her family, loves walking to and from school and even picks flowers along the way!

SH

SH came to Las Puertas as an unhappy 6th grader. His records from his elementary school described an angry, uncooperative student with failing grades. Academically, SH was well below grade level in all his subjects. He was non-communicative and defiant. He refused to attend classes and sat angrily in the principal's office, having to be coaxed to go to class. All the teachers, the principal and the social worker interacted with SH, holding him accountable for attending class in a kind and strengthbuilding manner. Very quickly, it seemed highly likely that SH was neuro-diverse on the autism spectrum. His mother agreed to have SH evaluated. Staff had been correct, SH was diagnosed with Autism. Fast forward to three years later: SH



proudly participated in the Eighth Grade Promotion Ceremony. His family beamed as he received his Promotion Certificate and his Certificate of Strengths which listed several of his many strengths. SH has told his mother that he wants to stay at Las Puertas through the tenth grade.

Testimonials (Testimonials will be on separate pages)

Clarissa: Parent

“I am a mother of four kids who came to Las Puertas. My son had an issue in the middle school he was attending. His 6th and 7th grade years were horrible, he hated to go to school. He was getting in trouble, getting into fights. Once I heard about Las Puertas...it was a game changer. We brought him here and he started doing amazing- getting A’s and B’s. He went to school every day and he did not hate to go to school. My girls needed to go to a smaller school as well, so we enrolled them here and they enjoyed it... They loved all the teachers... Las Puertas is amazing!”



Graciela: Parent

“I have two kids who come to Las Puertas: J & M. J had been having trouble in school but since he has been coming to school here, he has been doing super, so has M. She has trouble with reading and spelling. I recommend Las Puertas to any student...to anybody...it’s just a great school!”

Skylese: Former Student

“Las Puertas prepared me for a lot of stuff, honestly, just life itself...just being yourself. They are a community. They prepare you for anything you might run into in your life... to be yourself. They help you feel comfortable to ask questions... to ask for help. Overall, it is a very good community... I love all the teachers here.”



Ernesto: Former Student & High School Graduate (?)

“I loved my time here. I was here from 7th through 10th. I still communicate with my teachers from here. They still help me a lot... They made a big impact on me. I used to have a lot of anxiety- I came to this small school and it shaped me. I felt better communicating and asking questions. So when I went to 11th grade at Desert View, it helped me to communicate with my teachers: ‘Hey, can you help me, I’m falling behind?’ Rather than waiting for them to approach me, which might never happen! With the impact it had on me, I recommend Las Puertas!”

