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## Student Spotlight

February 2018

**Alex Vazquez**  
**St. John Vianney Catholic School**  
**Goodyear, AZ**



Trying to navigate through school at any age is one thing - trying to navigate through school learning in both English and Spanish at only nine years old is another. For Elizabeth Vazquez, it was crucial for her son Alex to go to a school that was both accepting and nurturing of her son working in dual languages. With a tax credit scholarship from the AAA Scholarship Foundation, Alex Vazquez now has the opportunity to change his life, starting with his education.

As a mother of three, Elizabeth Vazquez was hesitant to pack up her family's life in Iowa and move across the country to Arizona. It helped that she had family awaiting their arrival; however, she knew this would be a much harder adjustment on her children than she wanted. Prior to moving, Elizabeth attended graduate school in hopes of becoming a teacher. Unfortunately, moving meant she had to postpone graduating to ensure that her children were adjusting well to their new home. This left her jobless, which affected her family both academically and financially. When picking the right school for her child, Elizabeth was limited. For Alex, she needed him to be in an environment that would challenge him in dual languages.

Elizabeth turned to her family for guidance. When expressing her concerns, her family told her about St. John Vianney Catholic School. Elizabeth felt excited that not only were close relatives already attending this school, but it also had everything she was looking for: attentive teachers and smaller classroom sizes where the students had more one-on-one time with their teachers. Upon visiting, she was also informed that the school was based around a "supporting as a whole" motto. They didn't just want their students to succeed grade wise, but learn how to become good citizens during their time there as well. Elizabeth knew in her heart that this was the school where Alex, and hopefully her other children, would succeed, and she was going to do everything in her power to get him there. After weeks of research, she learned that she was eligible to apply for a scholarship for Alex.

The transition to a new school was difficult in the beginning, especially for Alex. Because dual language put him farther behind than his peers, both he and Elizabeth feared that he would not be able to catch up in time. This was a new school for him with different rules and regulations, and even though it was a priority for Alex to continue learning dual languages, there was a chance that the teachers would put their focus on teaching Alex in just English, when his primary language was Spanish.

Although not a dual language school, Elizabeth was surprised to find that the teachers at St. John Vianney were more than supportive of this request. Since starting, she has seen a tremendous improvement in her son both academically and socially. Now in the fourth grade, the teachers at St. John Vianney were able to get Alex above grade level with his studies, particularly in reading. Instead of feeling like an outsider, Alex has been taught to embrace his cultural background and to continue challenging himself. Once falling behind in his classes, Alex is now getting A's and B's on a regular basis, and Elizabeth can see an overall improvement just by the way he speaks. No longer timid, Alex is enthusiastic to learn. This wouldn't have been possible without the support from his mother and the AAA Scholarship Foundation.

"I am extremely grateful for this scholarship and that it's available to all different types of families," says Elizabeth Vazquez. "The AAA Scholarship Foundation has enabled us to grow as a family, and let me take on the ability to go back to graduate school and become a teacher."

#### **About AAA Scholarship Foundation**

The AAA Scholarship Foundation awards scholarships solely to qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students. The typical AAA Scholarship student is an ethnic minority living with a struggling single parent/caregiver in a high crime community. More than 85 percent of AAA scholarships are distributed to children at or below 185 percent of poverty. Many children are either below grade level, failing at their previous school or both when they receive a scholarship. Parents, who find their children in these circumstances and are concerned about their future, look for viable options. They seek an atmosphere that challenges their child and will reverse inadequate learning, social patterns and the potential lifelong negative impact. They wish to change their child's learning environment, acquaintances and the unfortunate predictable outcomes associated with school failure.

AAA Scholarships are funded in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia, Nevada and Pennsylvania by corporations that redirect a portion of their state tax liability to the AAA Scholarship Foundation in exchange for a tax credit (dollar-for-dollar in Alabama, Arizona, Florida, Georgia and Nevada, and up to 90 percent in Pennsylvania). The AAA Scholarship Foundation is one of the only approved Scholarship 501(c)(3) Nonprofit Organizations exclusively serving qualifying low-income, disabled and/or displaced students through these tax credit scholarship programs. AAA Scholarship Foundation provides your company with the convenience and efficiency of a single-solution for participating in multiple state tax credit scholarship programs. For more information, or to learn how your corporation can participate in the program, visit [www.AAAScholarships.org](http://www.AAAScholarships.org), or contact Kerri Vaughan at [kerri@aaascholarships.org](mailto:kerri@aaascholarships.org) or 888 707-2465 ext. 730.