

(Writing/Editing (Op Ed Piece))

Access to High-Performing Education

Kids reach high when they are given high expectations. When appropriately challenged in the classroom, they find solutions—and confidence in the process. And when kids have teachers who value their voices and believe in them, it completes the formula for helping them reach their full potential.

If your child's school doesn't offer high-performing education or ready them for college, public charter schools can be a great alternative; they exist to provide school choice for families and communities. In communities who have been underserved for decades [upon centuries]], having this choice is especially important.

Maria Silva's older son, Samuel, has been gifted since the first grade. He attended a charter middle school, but when he transferred to a traditional high school in downtown Los Angeles, teachers began to report that his behavior was problematic—he would “challenge” or question teachers during instruction.

“I kept blaming his behavior, for two and a half years,” Maria recalls. “He was really struggling. One day he finally broke down, said he was tired of the school. He even wished he wasn't alive. It was a real wakeup call for me. He told me, ‘They don't teach me, Mom. They just repeat what I learned in Middle School.’”

The high school's counselor also cited his behavior as a reason for his low GPA but said there was no need for concern because he was still going to graduate. But “still graduating” wasn't enough. Maria knew that out of the 900 students enrolled there, 300 were gifted—and all had low GPAs. Maria decided to find another school for him.

A friend recommended Alliance Tennenbaum Family Technology High School. “You are gifted, and you can do more,” the principal told Samuel when they met. “You will be in AP classes here.”

“Just to see his smile was amazing,” Maria says. “He started with a 1.9 GPA, he redid the classes he needed to do online, and he was so happy. He raised his GPA to a 2.5 in six months.”

Something happened on Samuel's first day at Tennenbaum that illustrates the difference a high-performing school can make: during his math class, he corrected the teacher on an equation that she was copying from the book onto the board. After initially telling Samuel it couldn't be wrong since she was copying it from the book, the teacher double-checked the equation and saw that he was correct—the equation in the book had an error, and he had spotted it.

"The Alliance teacher wasn't embarrassed," Maria says. "She was actually proud of him and used it as a teaching moment. She had him work the equation out on the board to show the other students."

Samuel graduated with a GPA close to 3.0 and is now attending Pasadena City College, with plans to transfer to California State University. [Need his major/ area of study]

Maria's younger son, Isahi, wants to become a doctor. He asked the counselors at Tennenbaum if they could help him. They took him seriously, creating a map for what he would need to do to get to medical school—as a student now and in the future.

Isahi is now a tenth grader at Tennenbaum and it's been a great experience. The school even hired a retired doctor to help in science classes once a week, which he was thrilled about. While he knows there are many great choices for college, he currently has his sights set on Harvard. Outside of school, Isahi is working on getting his old middle school band back together.

If you're interested in a charter school for your child but you're not quite sure about what you've heard, here are a few facts [should this be a link?]:

- Charter schools are public schools, not for-profit, and any child can enroll, tuition-free, regardless of zip code, income, or ability. [link]
- Public charters school differ from non-charter public schools because they have more flexibility—but in exchange, they have a *greater amount of accountability* than a traditional public school. [link]
- Funding for charter schools is primarily through federal, state, and local tax dollars. In California, public funding follows the student—so the funding goes

to the public school the parents choose whether it is a charter or traditional school. [\[link\]](#)

For Maria Silva and her two sons, having a choice in schools—and finding the teachers, counselors, and other adults who immediately believed in them—made all the difference.