

Elijah Perez

Through my 8th grade and 9th grade years, I had a feeling that I wasn't going to college and in turn, wasn't going to be successful. My behavior and grades in 8th were brutal in comparison to my peers. I was a C student academically, and I was referred out of class nearly every day. At the time, I felt like getting in trouble was funny, and it made my classmates laugh, so I did it every day. I was suspended at least 20 times in my 8th grade year. At the end of my 8th grade year, I thought that I was going to be held back because of my behavior. Luckily, I was not. In 9th grade, I entered high school with the idea that I was going to change because high school is much more important and more serious. But things didn't go as planned. I was a C student once again and I was still being referred out of class all the time. Instead of out-of-school suspension, I received in-school suspension at least once a week. I only received out-of-school suspension twice, which was a huge improvement from the previous year. Still, two times was too many. Then, after 9th grade, things started to hit me. My grandmother threatened to put me in boarding school, and she consistently argued with me because of my behavior. My family wasn't happy with my performance in school and things were not getting better for me academically. One thing that struck me around this time was noticing the people in my area of Coney Island living in the streets. The people who live on the street likely weren't lucky enough receive an education, and I didn't want to live that life. Combined with my family being upset with me, this issue made me want to finally put in the effort to change. I wanted to make my family proud, and I wanted to be better for myself. I made a commitment to get better grades, to behave appropriately, and to do whatever it is I needed to do to make my family proud of me. In 10th grade, everything changed for me. I did better with my grades, and became mostly an A and B student. In 10th grade, I was only referred out of class 5 times, which was an improvement, but still not great. My parents started becoming more proud of me

and I was proud of myself. In my change, I've also become more aware of what I want to do for the future, which is to either become a professional basketball player or become a financial manager.

For me, basketball has also been a motivator. In order to play basketball, our school's policy requires you to maintain a GPA of a 2.5 or above, and my interest for basketball was high, so I was going to do everything that I can to make sure that I play. Another reason why I was able to have academic success is because I started to plan out my future and what I would like to do. I started to have an interest in becoming a financial manager, so I knew that I needed to get good grades and get into a good college, and eventually a business program. The final thing that really pushed my commitment to success is my grandmother. My grandmother took my mother's role because my mother wasn't around, so my grandmother took me in as her own son. My grandmother is 80 years old, and she has raised me throughout my life. As she gets older, I know that she's going to struggle to do normal, everyday things around in the house. Seeing this, I had to make the commitment to help her around the house because I couldn't risk her getting hurt. Making a commitment to helping my grandmother is important to me because she helped me throughout my life and I feel like it is mandatory for me to repay her for all that she gave me. My commitment to help my grandmother will stick with me until she passes away because I'm not going to have someone who treated me the way that she did and someone who loves me as much as she does. She is the one person who I need to keep making proud, and everything I do and all the accomplishments I achieve are and will be because of her and for her.