



In Advanced Placement, you are never alone

Alicia Lima conquered her fears of AP with the help of her teachers

Alicia Lima, like fellow students in Boston Public Schools, came to the city with English as a second language. Although her teachers recognized her academic talent early on, her hesitation held her back from truly excelling. It was not until she was encouraged to enroll in Advanced Placement classes, knowing that Mass Insight Education was providing student support, that Alicia conquered her fears.

“My classmates were pushing me intellectually, and I was pushing them too.”

Alicia Lima

Jeremiah E. Burke High School
Class of 2014
AP Student

Now successful in several AP courses, she's learned that it's the challenges we face that make the learning experience more meaningful. The Jeremiah E. Burke High School has partnered with Mass Insight to challenge students like Alicia by enhancing the school's AP program.

With a focus on science, math, and English courses, the Burke is committed to supporting students as they prepare themselves for college-level work.

With Mass Insight's help the school increased AP STEM enrollments by nearly **70 percent**. Also, before joining the program, the school saw a declining number of students earning qualifying scores on the AP exam. In just its first year, students have reversed the trend and are showing strong signs of improvement. In 2014, there were almost as many qualifying scores than in the combined previous five years before the program.

What were your hesitations?

I was dominated by the fear of showing people how much thirst in knowledge I have. I could not imagine myself sitting in a class where most students are native English speakers or students who have studied English for more than three years. I was speaking English for 10 months only; I went from ESL 2 to taking three AP Classes simultaneously. My teachers saw skills in myself that I could not see. They convinced me that I was ready to move and take more challenging classes. I knew that they were right, but I was afraid of the struggles I might face. But, I also knew that I wanted challenging classes and I was bursting with curiosity. With my teachers' support, I decided to leave my fear behind, and stay true to myself.

How did you gain confidence?

The first day that I stepped into AP classes, I did not speak or raise my hand from the beginning to the end; I was just observing. I felt behind my classmates; they had strong vocabularies and my mouth was half open staring at them. It was like they are traveling on jet, and I was on boat. I never felt so behind like that; I came home and start to read textbooks until I reached a point that I was tired. I knew that I had to work as hard as possible to catch up my classmates. It did not take long, I was thriving in AP classes. My teachers gave me support, and more important than that, they allowed me to share my imaginations in classes.

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In Ms. Eckhardt's AP Statistics class, my favorite AP teacher, she encouraged her students to think outside of the box, and work in groups to learn from each other with richness of thoughts. My classmates were pushing me intellectually, and I was pushing them too. AP classes allowed me to discover my inner self. I discovered that I did not want to be just an obedient student in class, but rather a student that wants to test new ideas, challenge the assumptions, and uncover the unknown. The most important of all, AP classes were a friendly environment; teachers always there for us, students explaining concepts to each other. We were all allowed to swim in the pool of knowledge.

What is the most valuable thing that you learned in AP?

The most valuable thing that I learned from my AP classes is this quote that I created, "The harder it becomes, the more you will learn. The more you know, more confused you get, and wiser you become." Also, the fact that in AP classes, you have to love to ask "why and how", and use them as your cane to climb the mountain of success.

What are your career interests and/or college goals?

I want to become an astrophysicist, and also a mathematician. It is my dream since I was nine years old, I love studying them so much. In my free time, I am reading Einstein books, astronomy books, and doing math. My goal is to one day make Einstein's dream come true, to discover the theory of everything, which will unify quantum mechanics and relativity. Science and math are awesome!