

## STUDENT SPEECH

05-23-19

*Sinatra! with Sonata @ Music Box Supper Club*

Hi, my name is Abby Figueroa and I'm a student at Seeds of Literacy. I attend class on the West Side in the afternoons. I run a business in commercial cleaning with my husband. We have two girls, ages 3 and 7. I'm attending Seeds so I can get my GED.

I had a kind of epiphany moment that brought me to Seeds. I realized I was turning 26. I was a good mom and a good wife. But I felt like I didn't have anything under my belt. I decided to start my journey at Seeds when I chose to conquer the giant that I never conquered: my education. It was like a battle I hadn't won yet, or a sentence I'd never completed, or a book that I needed to finish.

I left school my freshmen year because of many reasons. There were so many things that I lacked: lack of transportation, lack of pushing from my mother, and, most of all, lack of confidence in myself. My mother, who was a single mom, did the best that she could at the time. My mother didn't strive for anything more than just being a mom because she was taught there was no other way. So she didn't push us to want more. Education was not a conversation that we had at home, so I just stopped going to school. I believed I was predestined not to succeed because that was instilled in me.

The moment I realized illiteracy is a generational curse that I wanted to break was when my daughter, who was in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at the time, came home with a higher math grade than the other kids her age. I realized that if this was where she was now, how far ahead would she be in a few years? Would I be able to even comprehend her math homework?

The GED was something I wanted for myself, but also for my kids. When I had kids, this was my fear: that I would pass down to my daughter what I didn't get. I don't want my daughter to feel like it's OK to not push and strive for something greater. I wanted her to know that it's possible. Whatever it is she wants to be, she can. As parents, we want to give our children what we didn't have. We plant the seed, but they have to make it grow.

I started at Seeds in August of 2018. I came to class with a hundred million doubts and zero confidence. I didn't have a strong foundation in math. But my first week, the tutor I was working with unlocked something in me with fractions that I didn't even know was there. It was like she blew breath and there it was. That tutor made me realize I can do this. That week, I took a practice test for a GED section--passed it!--and I passed the Language Arts section right after. What can I say? I'm great with words.

My tutor helped me understand why Seeds works. We learn different and at our own pace. It's inviting and a great atmosphere. The students and staff are friendly People

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notice when you're not around. I can sit at the math table and there's a flow. You find ways that you understand. You find tutors who you understand and you just say, "Wow, this is life changing."

Since I started at Seeds last August, I've passed three of the four sections of the GED. Right now, I'm on my last section: Math. I'm studying geometry--close, and yet not close. I'm hoping to finish by the end of June so I can attend this year's graduation.

Right now, I don't know what I want to do when I get my GED. I have so many ideas: real estate, or maybe opening another business. It took me so long to get here that I don't just want to settle on one thing. Once I get it, I know that whatever I want to do is possible. And I know this much: When my daughter brings home her math homework, I'm going to be able to help her out.

My journey to conquer the giant of my education is coming to an end, but I couldn't have got this far without Seeds. I believe in this program. From the moment fractions first clicked to every day at the math table, Seeds is committed to helping students grow. All it takes one person, one seed. That makes all the difference. Thank you.