



## Alternative Schools Choosing At-Risk Students

January 16, 2018



## Arizona's Alternative Schools

- 150 alternative schools in FY 17
- **72%**, almost three-quarters, are charter schools. (109)
- Must be chartered (mission) to serve specific student population
- Schools recertify every year.
- **20%** of ASBCS's portfolio is alternative schools.



## ***How Students Re-engage or Choose Alternative Schools***

- School District Referrals
- Word of Mouth/Other Students
- Detention Centers
- Group Homes
- Organizations Helping Homeless Youth
- Option in Lieu of Expulsion from Another School
- Over-aged and Under-credited



## Reasons *Why* Young People Re-engage

- Enrollment Meetings
  - Flexibility
  - Encouragement
  - Setting a Clear Course for Achieving a High School Diploma
- Less Barriers with Option to Get Back on Track
- Enroll Throughout Year & Set a Course from that Point



## State Board of Education's Approved Categories of Student Eligibility for Alternative Schooling

- Adjudicated
- Dropped out of school & now returning
- History of behavioral problems
- Poor academic standing (often overaged & under-credited)
- Primary caregivers
- Wards of the state



## *Student Quotes*

- *“This school saved my life.”*
- *“For the first time in my entire life, I can say I’m proud of myself. I’ve never had that before, and that’s where [alternative charter school] differentiates from every other high school.”*
- *“Unfortunately, I had a falling out earlier on with school and wound up leaving entirely. ... I’m hoping to take my life & turn it into something I will be proud of. My ultimate goal is to solidify my future in law enforcement. This is my dream.”*



# AZ Alternative Education Consortium

## *Student Quotes, continued*

- *“I started my journey down [charter school’s] ‘alternative path’ and was given the greatest gift...the opportunity to turn my life around. From the first day..., I was treated with respect, given personal attention, encouragement to make positive choices and academic support.”*
- *“Every single person here [alternative charter school] has gone through one or several tragic situations in life where we have to grow up sooner than wanted.”*
- *“I went through an educational obstacle course to get here today, so it’s almost unreal to me that I am standing before you all today. We climbed mountains to get to this stage.”*

***Saving Lives through  
Hope for the Future!***

# AZ Alternative Education Consortium

## The Faces of Alternative Education



2015-2016 PASS Success Stories

*Melissa Arvizu*

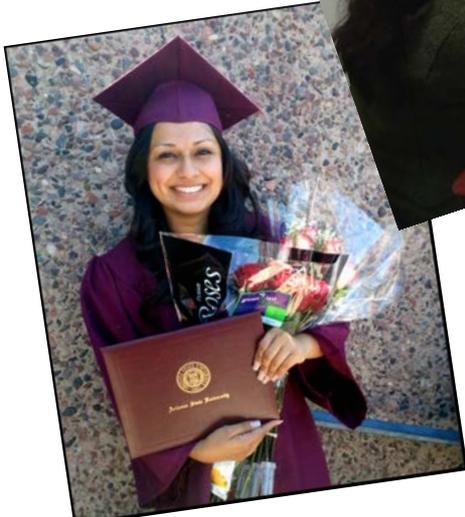
San Luis, Arizona/Mexico



I'm 19-years-old, and a student at a migrant family in San Luis, Arizona. I came to the U.S. Every year around I lack of work here in Arizona. My family used to be very poor. My mom, my dad, basically grew up without our dad and was needed. I remember we used to eat those little packed sausages or broccoli who worked so hard to get our permission give us a better life.

When I was fourteen, I wanted to die. I had sisters. But then I got pregnant at age 14. I worked in fields to help me during my pregnancy. I did anything. When I gave birth, I dropped out of school for my daughter. I was still fifteen when

*Melissa is deserving of recognition because regardless of all the obstacles she has overcome, she is still here.*



## “Each Student Has a Story”

- From Bomb Threat to Thriving Student
- Migrant Farm Worker 14 Year Old Mother to Federal Migrant Student Program, PASS, Success Story
- Group Home to Scholarship Recipient



## 2018 Consortium Meetings

January 19, 2018	Peoria Flex Academy
June 8, 2018	Yavapai Accommodation School District, Prescott
September 21, 2018	TBD in Tucson area
December 7, 2018	Flexible/TBD

<http://www.azaec.org/>





“I feel that each student has a story.” - Shelby Rutter, 2017 alternative charter school graduate during her commencement address

*From Bomb Threat to Thriving Student*

This girl made the news, as in all over the Tucson news. She was expelled from a traditional school for making a bomb threat in the girls’ restroom. The traditional school made a huge example of her.

When she came to enroll at the alternative charter school, she was remorseful. The Assistant Principal knew she was worth the investment if she had guidance through a behavior plan. The alternative charter school provided a small school environment with caring faculty. The student is now thriving. She is obtaining credit, participating in Student Council, and active in a life-career planning program.

Paraphrased from an assistant principal at an alternative charter high school

*Migrant Farm Worker to Federal Migrant Student Success Story*

I’m 19-years-old, and a student at [name of alternative charter high school]. I come from a migrant family in San Luis, Arizona. My family has been migrant since we came to the U.S. Every year around May, we go back to Mexico because of the lack of work here in Arizona. My family has had very rough times because we used to be very poor. My mom, my sisters, and I have struggled a lot since we basically grew up without our dad. He did not help my mother with what was needed. I remember we used to eat Maruchan soup almost every day with those little packed sausages or broccoli. Thankfully we have our grandfather who worked so hard to get our permanent residency in the United States to give us a better life.

When I was fourteen, I wanted to drop out of school to help my mother and sisters. But then I got pregnant at age fifteen. My mom worked very hard in the fields to help me during my pregnancy since my baby’s dad did not help me with anything. When I gave birth, I dropped out of school to start working to provide for my daughter. I was still fifteen when I started killing myself in the fields. It was very hard work for me to be a mother and work so hard so young. A few months later, I got back to school, but then I stopped to work again. I actually dropped out like four times to work. We struggled a lot



to pay bills, buy food, and all the things we needed because we didn't have, and still don't have, the money to afford fancy things like other kids. The last time I dropped out of school I realized that I needed to have a career to give my daughter a better life and to make my mother proud because she has worked so hard for us. Working in the fields is just something I don't like. I have worked in freezing temperatures where because of the breeze, and/or sweat, my clothes freeze. I could actually feel and hear how the iced crashed when I squeezed my clothes.

... I had the opportunity to catch up with my credits. This year I have done General Science 1, General Science 2 and Drivers Education. I feel so happy that we can get help from this incredible program, and I am very, very thankful to Melody and Dulce who have always been pushing me to graduate.

Now, after five years, I'm about to graduate! My goals are to become a CMA (Certified Medical Assistant) and to give my daughter the life I didn't have; the life she deserves. I am going to apply for scholarships and for part-time employment to be able to pay for my education. One thing is for sure; I will become an excellent CMA and set an example for my daughter. Thanks to the PASS program, I am now closer to graduating from high school, AND beginning my career education. I now know that, even though I sometimes struggle, there is someone or something that is always going to be helpful to me.

Melissa Arvizu, San Luis, Arizona/Mexico, excerpted from 2016 PASS Success Stories

### *Group Home to Scholarship Recipient*

Today is Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>, but don't let that scare you! Today is definitely more than just any other day on the calendar. This is an extraordinary moment in all our lives. Today we look to the future, but I can't help but reflect back to the first day I attended [charter alternative high school]. Many of you might be thinking of your own similar stories. Back then, I was just trying to keep myself afloat and could, quite frankly, care less about my education, and it most definitely showed.

Life at home had become untenable: I was 15 years old, a full time student, and caring for my younger siblings when my family fell apart, again. I tried to project a 'perfect' and 'normal' image, but that became impossible when on top of everything I started making terrible choices which had the domino effect of derailing my dreams, my education, and any goals I had set.

The next thing I knew I was in a group home with girls like me that society had already stereotyped, labeled, kicked out, and disposed of. As horrid as being in a group home



may sound, I wouldn't trade that time for anything. The understanding and compassion I received and learned to give during that time gave me the foundation to build my life. I learned it was up to me to take control and make a success of my life.

That group home recommended [charter alternative high school] as a great place to get back on track with my education. Slowly but surely, the stability at [charter alternative high school] became the rock I clung to no matter how out-of-control my life was. I found peace and security with the staff who believe in me when I didn't believe in myself. My amazing math teachers, academic coach, and English teachers nurtured me and prepared me to deal with every opportunity that life throws my way.

So from this moment forward when the 13<sup>th</sup> happens to fall on a Friday, we will all be reminded of the successes we have accomplished and the struggles we have overcome along the way. This is a very unique group of young people: we can accomplish anything we dream. We did it Class of 2016!!

Alyssa Hueber, commencement speech and scholarship recipient