

NO MORE FEAR

Poway Adult School student is on the path to a high school diploma after overcoming fear

By Kathleen Vivaldi

Returning to school as an adult can be challenging, intimidating, and downright scary. This can be doubly true for students originating from other countries, who may have no experience inside an American classroom and may also be navigating language and cultural issues. For them, overcoming fear to take the first step towards continuing education can be a huge obstacle.

Radhika Devi recognized such feelings were holding her back, and committed to face her fear head on: "Having come from India and just jumping into everything here, I needed to overcome my fear," she says. "I needed to build my confidence."

For Devi, the answer was to enroll at Poway Adult School. She already spoke English fairly well, but wanted to improve her communication skills. Her biggest goal, she says, was to earn a High School Equivalency (HSE) certificate.

To date, Devi has taken ESL and Integrated English Literacy and Civics Education (IELCE) courses. Poway Adult School offers several options to acquire a high school diploma: preparing students to take HiSet or GED tests; earning a Poway Adult School High School Diploma; or through the National External Diploma Program (NEDP).

The NEDP, which Devi opted for and is currently enrolled in, allows students to earn their equivalency certificate by completing an online portfolio of life skill and academic tasks to evaluate their high school-level skills. At the end, they are awarded a traditional diploma. Most students complete the NEDP in 6 to 12 months, but—as skill levels and life circumstances differ for each student—they can take more time if needed.

Poway Adult School Assistant Director Pam Garramone explains, "The NEDP



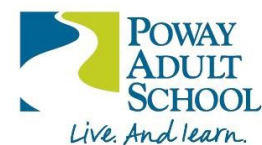
Radhika Devi says overcoming fear to start school was an obstacle, and that doing so has given her more confidence. Photo by Charlie Neuman

is a fully integrated high school subjects' curriculum that requires 100% mastery in a customized portfolio designed diploma. It is a flexible online performance-based option for adults to earn a high school diploma. Students enjoy integrated courses with real-life applications and may complete work at home, at school, the library, or wherever there is a computer. The flexible scheduling means students can earn a high school diploma while employed, enrolled in job training, or managing other commitments."

"The NEDP is designed for working people who want to continue their education," Devi says, explaining that she works full-time (at a job she got through Poway Adult School career services) and is married with two children. She expects to finish the program in about nine months, and takes comfort in knowing she can take more time if needed.

"I get great help from my instructors and counselors when I am in need," she says, adding it has been a great start for her and she has seen many positive changes within herself.

Devi says despite her initial fear of returning to school, she enjoys being a student and taking classes at Poway Adult School. "I am overcoming my fear, which is the biggest obstacle," she says. "I am becoming stronger."



Poway Adult School is one of almost 300 adult schools in California that are operated by K-12 school districts. California Adult Schools provide education, training, and support services to ensure that adult learners reach their education and workforce goals. For more information, visit powayadultschool.powayusd.com or call (858) 668-4012.