

WORTH IT

Persistence pays off for parent who returned to school to earn GED certificate, further educational goals

By Whip Villareal

Breanna Varela-Perez, 37, dropped out of high school at the age of 14 and did not make it past the ninth grade. During this tumultuous period, motherhood came earlier than she expected, and she gave birth to her first child at 17. She has a total of four children and focused on providing for them, limiting her educational pursuits. Despite the challenges she faced, she recently earned her GED certificate at Vista Adult School and plans to enroll in the 2024 fall semester at Palomar College to accomplish her further educational goals.

In 2017, Varela-Perez attempted to obtain her GED before enrolling at Vista Adult School. She passed all of the exams except the math portion, which she failed multiple times. On her last attempt, she was one point away from passing. This resulted in a two-month waiting period before she could retake the test. Subsequently, her momentum stalled as she focused on work and her GED was put on hold.

Varela-Perez would find a new career working as a teacher's aide at her children's daycare. Immersing herself in early childhood education, she completed child development courses and aspired to become a social worker or teacher. However, in order to achieve this goal, she needed to enroll in college, leading her to revisit pursuing a GED in 2023.

"I saw the Vista Adult School flyers come in the mail and I decided to enroll and finish taking math," Varela-Perez says. "It came to a point where if I wanted to further my education, I would have to do college classes and a GED is required to enroll. That was one of my motivating factors to further my education."



Since passing her GED exam, Breanna Varela-Perez has worked on further educational goals to pursue a career in early childhood education. Photo Charlie Neuman

Initially attempting to complete the GED courses online, she once again found herself struggling with math. She was referred to in-person classes, where she met instructor Kathy Boyd. Varela-Perez said that Boyd helped her understand the course material and the lessons were finally starting to click. Through hard work and dedication, she conquered the math test and received her GED in 2024. She credits Boyd for providing her with the help she needed to understand the material while praising her teaching abilities and dedication to helping students.

Her advice to others in similar situations is to not give up and go for it.

"It will be worth it in the end, especially if you have children," Varela-Perez says.

"Your children will always look up to you, so you have to keep going for them. I now know it's never too late to reach for your dreams, and getting an education will help make it happen."

 Vista Adult School

To learn more about Vista Adult School, visit www.vistaadultschool.org