



Learner's Name: Tonauac "Tony" Gutierrez

Age: 17

Location: San Antonio, Texas

How would you summarize your background?

My dad moved us here in 2015, so that we could start going to school in the States, and because he was worried about the danger of kidnapping back in Mexico. I'm still officially a Mexican citizen and have a green card.

Tell me more about your experiences and your family's background.

We're upper middle-class, I would say. My dad's business in Mexico is very successful. He has several pharmaceutical factories and distribution deals all over the world. We're also very family oriented, and very aware of our heritage as part-Spanish Mexican, and part-indigenous, Nahuatl, Mexican.

My dad says that although the Mexican revolution re-established the importance of indigenous people and culture in Mexico, without people speaking the native languages a lot of the culture would be lost. He started out as a language teacher, and developed some pharmaceuticals with a chemist friend to help people learn a couple of native languages more quickly, and his business took off from there.

How do you like to learn?

I think my learning style is naturally visual. However, my sisters and I have been taking pharmaceutical supplements since early childhood to help us focus more easily and take in more information. I don't know whether that has disrupted my natural learning pattern or not.

How would you describe your current learning experiences?

I have had a good experience with learning generally. Of course there are sometimes bad content specialists, but then my parents organize learning journey mentors for us, so I can pretty much ignore the content specialists.

I find languages easy, and we also talk about politics a lot at home. Science and math I'm not as focused on, but like I say we deal with any issues by finding good learning journey mentors. I do use online resources sometimes, but my parents believe in face-to-face instruction. Some of my friends use online experiences all the time.

Please provide an overview of your learning experiences so far.

I started US school in first grade, and was behind for about three years, because we hadn't spoken any English really before coming here. Luckily a lot of people here speak Spanish, and I made friends easily.

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My parents also paid for learning journey mentors for me and my sisters, and some pharmaceutical augmentations to help us learn the language more quickly. Most of these were done in Mexico where it is still way cheaper.

My campus evolved from what used to be called the small schools model, and I'm part of the politics and civics learning community.

What do you find most motivating?

I find learning easy, and feel excited about what I can do with my education. I want to travel, and to make a difference, and I also want to be rich. My parents have always stressed the importance of education to building a good life and a good livelihood. All of my grandparents were pretty poor, and I can see how studying hard at school and working hard at the business has enabled my parents to become wealthy.

What you hope to do when you are older?

I like world affairs and want to work for the foreign service. I'm adding another language – Portuguese – to my repertoire, because I think there's a significant future in Latin America.

What worries you as you think about your future?

Sometimes I feel guilty about the pharmaceutical enhancements. Most of my friends do them too, but other kids on campus who don't have those opportunities say we're cheating. My dad says that parents have always done their best to give their kids an advantage. Is this right, or is this an unfair advantage?

I also wonder about the small learning community model. I like the focus on specific areas, and I'm pretty sure I want to go into the foreign service or something like that. But every now and then I wonder if I'm missing out on something that I'd get with a broader set of learning experiences?