

Hello, my name is Heather Nay, and my son Julian Reynoso attends kindergarten at Strong Start Academy Elementary School. I grew up in Las Vegas, and I attended Elementary, Middle, and High School here. Unfortunately, I did not have the best experience with the schools I attended and I ended up dropping out of high school when I was 16 years old. After making that decision, I knew that one day when I had a family of my own, I was going to do everything I could to give them the best chance at their education.

When I had Julian, I knew from the moment that I was pregnant with him, that our local zoned public school was not where I wanted him to go. When he was four years old, Julian attended Strong Start Go Mobile Prek, which is a free pre-k program provided by the city of Las Vegas, and this is where it all started for us. We had such a great experience in the Prek program and this is where he learned the foundation of what he knows today. While Julian was enrolled in the Mobile Prek program, I became more aware of the many resources and opportunities that the city has to offer. One of them being the new charter school that was going to be opening for the school year of 2023-2024. When I was told about this charter school I KNEW this was where I wanted Julian to go to school. I was so excited about him going to a school that made bilingual learning a priority for their students.

This charter school has changed my family's life in so many ways, starting with me having the opportunity to serve as the parent representative on the board, and being able to be that active parent in my son's education that I always have wanted to be. I have also had the opportunity to get back in the work field by joining the AmeriCorps program after being a stay at home mom for 3 years. Julian is only half way into his kindergarten year and is now reading at a 3rd grade level. Julian is beginning to do 3 and 4 digit addition and subtraction math problems. And one of the best benefits I have seen is that he also can read in Spanish and is speaking Spanish to anyone he has the opportunity to speak to, and when I read to him in Spanish, he now corrects me on how I am supposed to say certain words.

As his mother, it's so amazing to see his face light up when he talks about school and talks about everything that he is learning. This school has offered him such a safe place to learn, and to be himself. I can honestly say that I believe if he was attending the school that he is zoned for, that he would NOT be anywhere near where he is academically. I am so grateful for this school and for giving him the opportunity to have the best head start in his education that could have been given to him.