

My name is Meisha Nash and I am a student at New Market Skills Center. I am here today to tell you a little about myself and the different experiences I've had in and out of school systems.

I am originally from North Carolina. In elementary school I received straight A's. I loved school and the teachers; basically it was all I had. When I went to high school there were so many people that I became a face in a crowd so large, that the teachers barely had time to notice me. With this drastic setting and curriculum change, I was overwhelmed. I developed severe depression and eventually turned to drugs. I never had the support of a stable family life, so without the school setting that I loved, I was ready to give up.

I continued to struggle in school while maintaining a job that supported my increasing drug addiction. I eventually came to the conclusion that I did not want to be going in the direction I was headed, and I did not want drug use to be my future occupation. So I entered myself into a rehab program and got my drug addiction under control. After that, I continued to struggle in school and was far behind my fellow classmates. I figured it would be much easier to get my G.E.D. and I was under the impression that it would be an equivalent to getting a high school diploma. When I was 16, I

dropped out of school and within two weeks received my G.E.D. For the next two years, I worked as hard as I could. While staying with family members, I ended up supporting them, as well as myself. I knew I wanted to get back into school, but I did not have the resources or the means to do so.

In January 2006, I was given the opportunity to come to Washington, and stay with my aunt and uncle for a three month break from the chaos I was living in. A few weeks after I arrived I read an article in the newspaper about a young mother who had earned her G.E.D. and returned to school to get her diploma. This sounded interesting, so I decided to look into the program. I found out that not only could I get my diploma, I could also earn college credits at the same time, and at no cost. This was exactly what I needed and within the next week I decided to make my stay here permanent, and began attending school. I had no idea if I could actually support myself here, but I knew I would give it my best effort.

It would have been impossible if I had not had the help and support of so many caring people that I met in my school and community. They have done so much to help me with my financial situation, such as transportation and food vouchers. It makes it easier

to concentrate on my education. But what I am most appreciative of is the moral support they have given me. Telling me that I am worth it, and that I deserve the opportunity to do the best I can in life. For that, I may never thank them enough.

With newfound confidence, and skills and abilities I have learned, I will go much further in life. I am well on my way to getting my high school diploma and beginning to further my education at a community college. Recently I was hired by Sodexo as a cashier for the Culinary Arts program at New Market Skills Center. While attending this program I found what I love to do. I plan to get a degree in Culinary Arts and business. One day I plan to own my own restaurant. I know I am a long way from achieving my dreams, but now I know, that it is possible.

Thank you for your time.

Meisha Nash