There’s a stereotype about Latin girls. We’d rather pay attention to boys than to class. But I wanted to focus on school and break the stereotype.

I barely said anything the whole time. I couldn’t believe what was happening.

After that day, she would spend four periods a day doing APEX, a virtual class, to learn English.

Senior Luisa Piña, born in Dallas, moved to Mexico with her family at age 2. 16 years later, she returned to pursue an education, overcoming personal challenges and working hard to achieve her goals.

“AP U.S. History is hard because I had no background,” she said. “I didn’t even know the first US president, but I found it. That first class, I wanted to cry so badly, because I didn’t take very good notes and I didn’t know how to study. That first quarter, it was awful.”

AP US History teacher Kedron Pereira helped her through, and Luisa did break the stereotype. She did not go back, and instead worked even harder, joining the National Honor Society and taking AP U.S. History. “I think that she is a very responsible kid, and every time she proposes something, she searches for the best,” Mrs. Pereira said. “I think she started trying to figure it out, and she said, ‘I figured out how to work.’ I wasn’t surprised when she passed the exam. She’s a hard worker, a giver, and she does what she’s asked to do.”

Luisa was not alone in her practice. Lucía’s mother, also named Lucía Pilán, joined her daughter in America. She takes care of her parents in Mexico along with managing the tool shop. However, she talks to her daughter every day.

“I think that she’s a very responsible kid, and every time she proposes something, she does it no matter what,” Mr. Pilán said. “She always puts a lot of interest and dedication in school. I’m not about the fact that I can’t force her to celebrate with me, and that I’ll be able to help her to pay for college if she goes to an American college. But I’ll use her to support her and love her, whatever she decides to do with her life.”

So far, Lucía has received $700,000 in scholarship money from Austin Community College. She hopes to become an international trade lawyer and just received a job as an assistant at a law firm. Either way, Lucía does not regret boarding the bus that brought her here.

“I feel a strong attachment to this school,” Luisa said. “I think that she is a very responsible kid, and every time she proposes something, she does it no matter what.” Mr. Pilán said. “She always puts a lot of interest and dedication in school. I’m not about the fact that I can’t force her to celebrate with me, and that I’ll be able to help her to pay for college if she goes to an American college. But I’ll use her to support her and love her, whatever she decides to do with her life.”

So far, Luisa has received $85,000 in scholarship money from Austin Community College. She hopes to become an international trade lawyer and just received a job as an assistant at a law firm. Either way, Luisa does not regret boarding the bus that brought her here.

“I feel a strong attachment to this school,” Luisa said. “This school is what kept me here, because I had so many struggles in my personal life, and everyone said, ‘just move out of Mexico, go back to Mexico,’ but I just love this school. I’ve never regretted not taking the opportunity, but really, this school is what kept me here.”

By Neelam Bohra

FROM ONE HOME
TO ANOTHER

STUDENT MOVES FROM MEXICO TO MCKINNEY TO FIND A BETTER EDUCATION

By Matt Sunthimer