

Hello Mr. Nyland,

I am reaching out to you today to write in support of Middle College at High Points Neighborhood House. Currently I have my daughter Alyssa enrolled there and I myself am a graduate of Middle College, class of 1998. Matter of fact, Alyssa herself was a little over a year old when I graduated Middle College. My daughter began telling me of a rumor that that school was to be shut down for reasons unknown to her. I couldn't fathom why such a great program such as Middle College would even be in jeopardy? I'm now getting word that this rumor is a bit more than just a rumor. So please, consider my testimonial in support of keeping Middle College at High Point open and supported.

In 1997, I was attending West Seattle High School. It was a laid back school and very easy to be distracted and lose focus of your responsibilities. As graduation closed in on me, I started realizing I was in jeopardy of not graduating on time because I was short one class requirement. Unfortunately, the class I needed to take was taught by only one teacher that I did not get along with do to a falling out we had on the baseball team. This teacher was also the baseball coach. I spoke with the school counselors about what my options were and it always fell back to the only option being I make amends with the coach/teacher and get the class done. In many ways, I agree with that as an adult now. But as a teenager from a broken family, little parental guidance, a one year old child, and a part-time job, I couldn't find it in me to step foot into this class with that teacher. I just had too much to take on. Now I am burdened with the anxiety of having to sit in this teacher's class or not graduate? With the feeling of no support from the school and virtually none at home, my stress level was probably up there with a crab boat fisherman staring at a 80 foot sea swell just off the bow of his ship.

At the time of all this, I was taking a Running Start class at South Seattle Community College. I knew there was this new alternative high school program on campus called Middle College. So one day I decided to swing by and check it out. Right away I meet this guy Alonzo at the school. I figured he was just a college student helping out the Middle College program because he looked like he was too cool to be a teacher. Quickly I found out he was one of the teachers. I spoke with him about my troubles at West Seattle HS and my personal obstacles. Not only was Alonzo very understanding, but he had a way of making my situation brighter than I was viewing it. He had a very Phil Jackson, Zen like view of things. He explained my options should I choose to transfer from West Seattle High to Middle College and he laid out his expectations of me. It was a fair trade in my opinion that got me out of high school on time. Little did I know, the trade favored me considerably. I have since graduated, became an F-16 Crew Chief in the USAF. Now I am a Manufacturing Engineer at the Boeing Company and have been for the past eight years. I have also used my experience to talk to troubled youth through Goodwill's Youth employment programs and at Boeing's job shadow days. Middle College is always part of my positive memories I share with the youth.

Fast forward 17 years. My daughter Alyssa was attending West Seattle High School. Her grades began to decline. Alyssa, my wife and me, constantly reached out to

Alyssa's counselors to address her grades. Between getting no response to getting the same canned response of having her attend M.A.S.H., the situation was becoming very frustrating. With my daughter's grades slipping, Alyssa's pride kept her telling my wife and me she was going to pull through and bring her grades back up. Knowing how bright our daughter Alyssa is, we let her stay fighting. Unfortunately, her sea swell was about 100 feet taller than mine 17 years prior. With her back against the wall of a hole she had no idea how to get out of, she finally swallowed her pride and reached out to me for help. Listening to her explain how she feels, I knew of only one place I was familiar with that might be able to help her...Middle College. I explained what Middle College was and Alyssa was willing to give it a shot.

To my amazement, my daughter's appointment at the Middle College was with a very familiar and still very cool face, Alonzo Ybarra. Alonzo sat down with my daughter and spoke with her just as he did with me years ago. This time however, Alonzo was much more than that Zen master I knew as a kid. He almost had this Dr. Phil like persona now. As Alonzo spoke with my daughter, he had her in tears. Not because she feared him, or was mad at him, it truly was because Alonzo was able to identify things going on with my daughter my wife and I couldn't. My daughter described it as having a ton of weight being lifted off her shoulders. Since attending the Middle College, every day at the dinner table, Alyssa brings up something she learned at school and eagerly talks about it. This is something we haven't seen with her in years. Alyssa is engaged in school again and her grades are back up to her advanced levels she was at when she attended Madison Middle School.

Mr. Nyland, please take my testimonial into consideration and do not shut the doors on this great program our community has going for it. I believe if more parents knew about this program, you'd have to consider expanding it. The teachers at Middle College are some of the best I have encountered as a student and as a parent. It makes absolutely no sense shutting this program down. These teachers and this program should be the gold...no, platinum standard for our school district. I'd go as far and say that all Seattle Public High School teachers should job shadow the teachers at Middle College. This program should not be reduced, it should be expanded, and publically promoted.

Thank you for taking the time to read this and please do not shut the door on our youth's opportunities at any of the Middle College locations.

Sincerely,

James Lofgren