I am a single mother of two wonderful children: Jasmin, 18 and Daniel, 16. When my son Daniel was born, he did not pass his newborn hearing screening, so we began seeing a specialist. Daniel was diagnosed with cognitive delays and moderate to severe Autism at 3 years old. As a mother, I was devastated and sought refuge in my faith. I went to visit many different types of preschool settings including an Autistic class, special day class, and full inclusion. I chose to place Daniel in a full day Head Start program. Daniel began preschool with very few language skills and many obstacles due to his diagnoses. At Head Start, Daniel learned to speak and follow a routine which prepared him to learn. Daniel entered kindergarten in a general classroom and continued his education in a general education setting. When Daniel was in third grade, we decided to conduct a full assessment, knowing that he had overcome many obstacles. To our surprise, Daniel scored ‘gifted’ and ‘above average’ in most areas of his assessment and he no longer qualified for special education services. I owe Daniel’s success to Head Start and his amazing teachers who never gave up on him throughout many challenges.

Daniel is now a junior in high school, earning straight A’s, taking AP psychology and preparing for college. Head Start changes lives! I truly understand the importance of early intervention for our students, and that is why today, I am the ECE director for the Palm Springs Unified School District Early Childhood Education Program.

Head Start gives children from at-risk backgrounds the skills they need to be successful in school and life — supporting more kids, families, and communities on their path to success.

- Myra Acosta, Head Start parent & ECE Director