

A Family Reunited

As a Level 3 ELL teacher of more than 16 years at Literacy Green Bay, I have had the pleasure of getting to know many students. I can't always remember each of them by name after they leave my class, but I remember well the impactful stories they tell me. One year I had friendly and funny Jose in my class, a Mexican native in his mid-50's. He attended class regularly and sometimes came early or stayed late to talk to me, asking for help understanding a piece of mail he had received or just to chat and practice speaking English. One day he stayed after class and told me about how he has been working to get everything in order for his son and daughter to be able to come to the United States. Heartbroken, he said that his daughter had been approved, but his 18 year old son had not. As he told me his story, the struggles of such immigrant families really came to life for me. How hard it must be for this caring father to do all he could to obtain legal entrance for his children into the United States. After so many forms filled out, expenses paid, and years waiting for approval, he finally received the news he had been waiting for, but only to find out that just one of his children was approved! I still remember the sadness and confusion in his eyes that day. What was he to do? Allow his one child to join him but leave the other? He had a tough decision to make.



Fast forward several years later, 23-year old Alejandro joined my class. He was quite and shy but occasionally would stay after and talk with me as I put the books away and cleaned the chalkboard. He was much more willing to talk one-on-one than when a whole classroom of students were listening. He had been in the US only a few years and had progressed into Level 3 after advancing out of the Level 2 class. One day he told me that his father had been a student of mine. Surprised, I asked what his dad's name was. Can you guess? Yes, it was Jose! My mind immediately went back to the day Jose had told me about the dilemma with his 18-year old son. I smiled upon realizing that this young man was his son! Despite the heartache at the time, Jose, Alejandro and their family eventually experienced the joy and happiness of a family reunited! And what a small world it was, that I would have the pleasure of having both father and son in class, several years apart!