

## Premier High Student Achieves Early Graduation, College Scholarships at Age 16

Many high school seniors are preparing to attend college soon, but one such Texas senior will be leaving home at age 16. Hailey Hancock attends Premier High School of Brownsville, a public charter school and one of 22 such campuses across Texas operated by Responsive Education Solutions.

Hailey is one of 40 students set to graduate from Premier's Brownsville campus this May. (The campus graduated 38 students earlier this school year, in December.) **Not only has she already completed all her high school credits, she has also been notified that she will be the recipient of more than \$21,000 in scholarships** to Texas Lutheran University in Seguin. Hailey is a recipient of TLU's prestigious Pace setter's Award for Academic Excellence (PACE) scholarship, and according to her father, she is one of only 2 students in the Rio Grand Valley to receive this award.

TLU's Pace setter scholarships are awarded through a competition involving essay-writing and interviews. In order to qualify for the competition, students must meet certain academic performance guidelines including high SAT scores. Representatives from TLU confirmed that in addition to \$12,000/year for her PACE scholarship, Miss Hancock will receive another \$9,800/year in additional grants.

So is Hailey some sort of savant, a genius? Well, her Dad says that she is simply self-motivated and "a real self-starter".

"Premier has worked out really well for us. Hailey was given the encouragement and freedom to work at an accelerated rate", he said.

Hailey considers herself to be a regular kid who just recognized a great opportunity when she saw it.

"I recognized the opportunity that I had come across, and I began working hard as soon as I got there," she said.

"My work was actually challenging to me, especially the online AP English course I took."

Hailey was born in Corpus Christi but moved around quite a bit due to her Dad's career. Her parents divorced when she was 8 years old and she has been raised by her father. From Padre Island, Houston and Florida in the states, to St. Maarten and St. Eustatius in the Caribbean, Hailey enjoyed the variety of scenery, getting to know new people and exploring hobbies such as scuba diving. The two eventually moved back to the Rio Grand Valley and have been in Port Isabel for the past 2 years.

The high school in Port Isabel was not working out for Hailey. She was unhappy and a few days into her Junior Year, she decided to approach her Dad about changing schools. She actually made her case by writing a one page essay explaining how much she disliked her current school, the problems she witnessed around her and how much she wished he would let her go to school somewhere else – maybe even home school. So he agreed to look into their options.

"A family friend of ours had a daughter that recently attended Premier High School. She explained to my Dad how good of a school it was, and he withdrew me from my old school and enrolled me in PHS", said Hailey.

She was thrilled with the new opportunity and began to take advantage of the independent learning environment Premier offers. When asked what she enjoyed about Premier, she said, "The thing that I loved most about Premier was the people. Everyone was incredibly friendly, including the teachers, and I felt like I belonged immediately."

Was there anything she didn't like?

"Well, Port Isabel is about a 30 minute drive from Brownsville, which meant I had to get up especially early to be there by 7:45am", she said. But she did it and is now enjoying a break from classes and exams while working her part-time job at a local clothing store.

As for her future plans, Hailey will be majoring in Biology at TLU and plans to enroll in the Pre-Veterinary program. "I hope to have my DVM (Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine) by the time I'm 24, something most people don't accomplish until well into their late twenties or early thirties," she said. "I'm extremely excited to begin college this August and I know that I have been so blessed by God."