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# La Prensa

## DPS Honors over 300 Students with 3.5 GPAs, 'Two All-A' Students from Western High School



More than 300 students with grade point averages (GPA) of 3.5 or higher graduated from Detroit Public Schools this year, including 10 students with perfect 4.0 GPAs.

Two of those students attended *Western International High School*. **Gabrielle Vaughn**, 18, has a 4.07 GPA and will attend *Wayne State University* in the fall to study nursing.

**Jacqueline Vásquez**, 18, will attend the *University of Detroit Mercy* to major in pre-medicine and will enjoy a full academic scholarship thanks to her 4.6 GPA.

Both young women said they were motivated by their families to maintain good grades all throughout high school—especially Vásquez, whose parents are still living in Mexico.

Vásquez was born in the United States. She went back to Mexico with her parents when she was three months old and returned to the U.S. in 2009 at

the age of 16 to finish high school. She now lives with an aunt and uncle.

“I came back here by myself because I really want to be somebody,” she said. “I think about my parents and I want to make them proud. I want to be able to take care of my parents once they are older, and I want to give back to my community. So I want to become a cardiologist to help my community and my family.”

Although Vásquez was not able to speak any English when she returned to the U.S., she didn't let that stand in her way.

“I've always been focused and I set goals,” she said. “I set goals for every year, every five years, and every 10 years. You have to have a plan on what you want to do and how you want to do it. Although it's been difficult, I want to succeed, so I can't let my language be a barrier. I don't look at things as obstacles; I look at them as challenges to succeed.”

Vaughn has also faced personal challenges, but said the best advice she can give to other students is to always believe in yourself, don't be afraid to ask teachers for help, and don't fall victim to peer pressure.

“My grandma always told me ‘don't give up, try hard, and always give your best.’ I took that and ran with it,” Vaughn said. “And my best turned out to be very good.”

“You don't know if something is too hard until you try, so think the best before you think the worst,” she added. “And don't be a follower; otherwise you'll end up going nowhere. I learned that in middle school.”

Vaughn and Vásquez were honored during the *28th Annual Excellence Awards Banquet*, held May 15, 2012 in the Cobo Center Riverview Ballroom. The event showcased the top 3 percent of the district's graduating seniors.

More than 300 DPS students who have held a 3.5 GPA or higher during their high school careers were honored. The event also honored 10 all “A” students who received the Excellence Awards Scholarship.

Emergency Manager Roy Roberts delivered the keynote address. Karen Ridgeway, Superintendent of Academics, also addressed students.

### **About the Annual Excellence Awards Banquet**

The end of the school year signifies a great number of ceremonies, but none

is more prestigious than the annual Excellence Awards Banquet for Detroit Public Schools' seniors with cumulative grade point averages of 3.5 or higher.

The Excellence Awards Banquet is designed to showcase the top three percent of the district's graduating seniors. Virtually all of these students will enter college or another post-secondary education institution after high school.

Their college choices range from local universities including Wayne State University and the University of Michigan, to historical black colleges and universities including Morehouse and Spelman, to Ivy League schools such as Harvard, Yale, West Coast Stanford, University of Southern California and more.

The Excellence Awards program began in 1985. To date, 8,915 students have been honored since the program originated. The event is sponsored by the Detroit Public Schools Foundation, Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Publishers, Pearson Publishers, SVS Vision, Target Corp, and Spike Lawrence.

<http://www.laprensatoledo.com/Stories/2012/070612/dps.htm>