

MAAP STARS Officer: Victoria Rivera

Hello, I am Victoria Rivera “I can accept failure, everyone fails at something. But I can't accept not trying.” This Michael Jordan quote is something that I go by everyday; not only because I love his shoes, but because everyday I make mistakes. However, I always try to find a way to fix them and push forward. Michael Jordan went through a lot of rough times to get where he is today, but he's not the only one that's ever struggled with fitting in. A lot of students who choose to attend alternative schools have had the same problems of trying to fit in just so everyone would like them. Attending the Minnesota Valley Area Learning Center in Montevideo has helped me realized that I don't have to cover up my talents and be someone I'm not. I can embrace my true personality.

During my eighth grade year all of my problems began. The only time someone would come up and talk to me is if they bullied me for how skinny I was. During this time I started hanging out with the wrong people. I started smoking everyday, making not so good decisions and I had F's in every class. Then my ninth grade year came and I was still getting bullied, but I pushed through all of the pain I had.

My tenth grade year is when everything changed. My mom decided to enroll me in the Minnesota Valley Area Learning Center in Montevideo. When I first came, I instantly felt welcome. Everyone would come up and talk to me, and I didn't feel left out. I met a great group of friends that I'm still friends with now. They've helped me out so much and have been there for me pushing me to do better.

My eleventh grade year started out great. I was getting all my credits, I wasn't smoking or making bad decisions anymore. The middle of first semester came and I decided to join MAAP STARS. I went to the STARS Fall Conference last year and it was so much fun. I got to meet a lot of new people. The STARS Spring Conference was one of the most memorable experiences. I got to compete in Job Manual, Decision Making, the Community Service Project, and Employment Interview. I saw a lot of people that I had met previously at the Fall Conference. I was nervous at first but when I did it, I became more confident. I realized that I can stand up and talk in front of a group of people and not be scared to show them the real me.

I am now a MAAP STARS State Officer. I am going to help other students boost their confidence and embrace their true personality. I want to let them know that they're not alone. Just like Michael Jordan didn't give up, I'm not gonna give up and I'm gonna keep trying and pushing forward.