

Good afternoon everyone, my name is David Amerson and I am a senior at San Miguel High School. It is my honor today to be able to speak to you about my journey in Catholic education from middle through high school.

Education has always been incredibly important to my parents, both Magna Cum Laude graduates. So, you can imagine the bar was set pretty high for me.

For my elementary education, I went to a public school and I can remember my dad sitting down at the kitchen table with me and making multiplication table flashcards. He would practice with me until I knew them by heart. So, when it was time to decide where to send me for middle and high school, my parents decided on a Catholic school education after my public school experience.

I went to St. John the Evangelist for middle school. During this time, my parents and I really got a taste of what it was like to be at a Catholic school. By the time I had graduated from 8th grade, I had grown to appreciate the dress code and the way the teachers seemed to really care about each of the students they taught.

Then, I continued my journey to San Miguel High School and, to this moment, I remember my very first day. I was terrified. I never really wanted to go there because I knew it was going to be a challenge for me. My sister graduated from San Miguel in 2012 and I remember her stories of how challenging but rewarding it was to have the opportunity to be a student there.

San Miguel taught us about the 5 Lasallian core principles from the very first day of school. Faith in the Presence of God, Respect for All persons, Inclusive Community, Quality Education, and Concern for the Poor and Social Justice – teaching us the ways of our founder, St. John Baptist de la Salle. The school gives us the tools for us to live out these core principles every day.

What sets our school apart is the Corporate Work Study Program, a program where every single student has a job in the Tucson area and works one day out of the week and the money they earn from that job goes towards our tuition, making a Catholic, Lasallian, and college preparatory education available for anybody who wants to prosper.

It's amazing for me to think about all those anxious feelings I had back then and compare them to the ones I have now. I was so scared to be going into this brand new school and lived for the dismissal bell to ring so I could run into my parent's car and go home. Now, I stay every day after school because I'm involved in so many clubs that help my community.

My sophomore year really was my turning point, I decided to join the National Honor Society, the brand-new Robotics Club, and also the Student Ambassador Program representing my school to our Tucson community. I now can walk up and down the halls of my school and say hello to all the faculty and staff and to most of my fellow students.

I've done so much at San Miguel that I will remember forever. I had the opportunity to give Governor Ducey a tour of our school and do a news interview about my experience. I can now add that I gave a speech at the state capitol in front of a huge crowd (and I must admit that I did great). I have made many memories and friends that I will cherish forever throughout my Catholic experience at San Miguel, ready to take my education to the next level.

None of these experiences could have been possible had it not been for the Arizona tax credits. Because people here in Arizona who recommended their tax dollars, students like me can have outstanding Catholic education that will change their life and make sure they are college and career ready.

After I graduate this May, I will have a wide range of colleges to choose from. San Miguel has helped me with the college application process and I have applied to 25 colleges and universities and have been accepted to 9. I also have received, I am happy to report, merit scholarships from each one. I want to thank my parents and San Miguel's Catholic education for shaping me into the young man I am now.

I appreciate you listening to my story and I hope you have a blessed day, thank you.