



Cesar Estien
CENTRAL BAPTIST CHRISTIAN SCHOOL
Brandon, Florida

Cesar Estien has achieved high honors throughout his young school career. So it remains confusing to his mother that a public school district wanted to label him as a kindergartner with having a “language delay.”

Cesar didn’t speak Spanish, but his school still wanted to place him in a class for English for Speakers of Other Languages. Administrators there knew his mother spoke both English and Spanish and they believed that his inability to pronounce certain letters was due to the Spanish they thought his mother spoke at home.

Problem is, his mother, Dahlia Estien, never spoke Spanish at home. And she wasn’t going to let the school falsely label him.

Instead, she considered a scholarship offered by Step Up For Students after she learned about it through her sister. She took Cesar to the New Jerusalem Christian Academy in Seffner, near Tampa, which found that the kindergartner was advanced for his age. So she enrolled him at New Jerusalem in the first grade.

It was the beginning, Dahlia said, of Cesar’s academic awakening.

Her son has frequently appeared on honor rolls ever since. Now a sixth-grader at Central Baptist Christian, a school recommended by a former teacher who thought the curriculum would challenge him further, Cesar has excelled in English, math and reading. And Central Baptist has launched him on a successful run for the last three years in the Math Olympics; last year, he scored a spot in second place.

Success doesn’t come easy. “The teachers kind of pushed me to do better, especially when I came to this school,” Cesar says.

And when he isn’t studying or playing soccer, basketball and football, he dreams of becoming an architect.

“If it wasn’t for Step Up For Students,” Ms. Estien says, “he wouldn’t have been able to do that.”

About Central Baptist Christian School

Central Baptist has a motto that drives its purpose: “Distinctly Christian, Academically Excellent.” This growing school is located just outside Tampa and is a candidate for accreditation by a number of organizations, including the Association of Christian Schools International and the Southern Baptist Association of Christian Schools. In addition to a wide range of extracurricular activities that include karate and gymnastics and an array of fine arts electives, Central Baptist has a middle school honors program that allows students to complete high school courses in math and science. Tuition at the school, which administers the Stanford Achievement Test, ranges from \$4,380 annually for elementary school students and \$4,590 for secondary school students.