

## Doralis Morales: Growing Self-Confidence through Study & Leadership



*Doralis Morales at the FAST Graduation ceremony 2019*

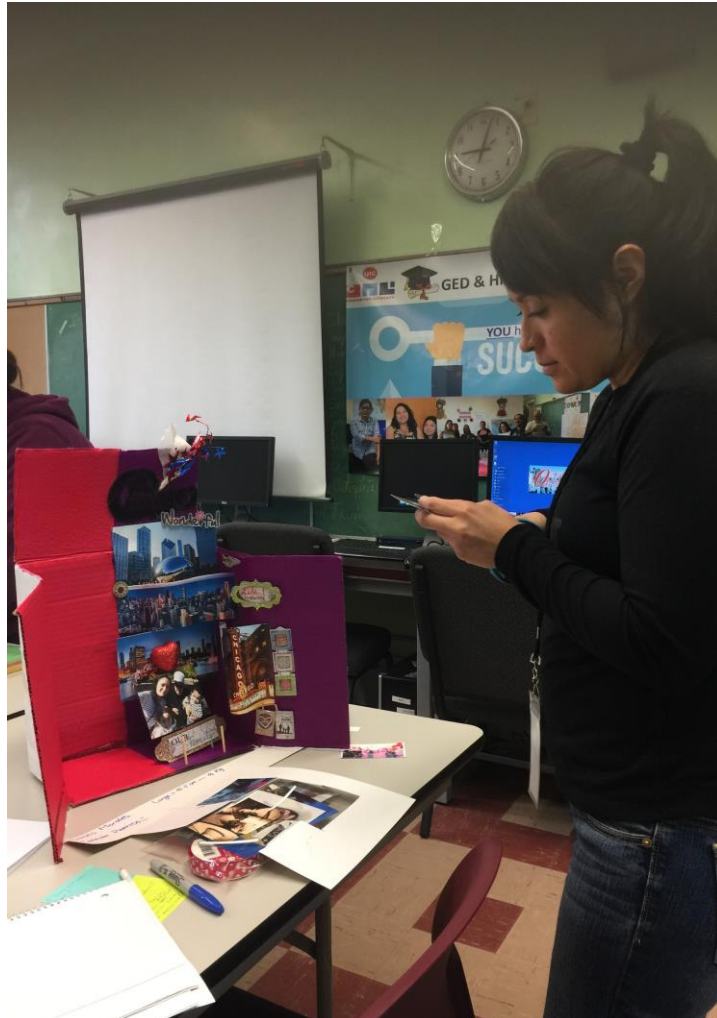
Doralis Morales is the mother of two children ages 5 and 6. Both are attending Chicago Early Learning programs through Head Start and Chicago Public Schools. When Doralis enrolled her oldest daughter into the St. Joseph's Early Childhood Center Head Start in the Back of the Yards neighborhood, she learned about the Family Start (FAST) program.

She immediately enrolled in the FAST English as a Second Language program located upstairs from her child's classroom. Having arrived to the U.S. from Mexico only a few years prior, Doralis wanted to better understand the education system her daughter was entering and carve a better life for her and her family. In ESL Classes, she learned about the FAST GED/ High School Equivalency (HSE) program and set her sights on a new goal.

Despite support at home, Doralis suffered from immense self-doubt. She credits supportive and accessible teachers as well as wrap around services such as FAST Social Services' Learning Circles in helping her transform her perspective. Through the program's project-based learning approach, Doralis also discovered her own creativity. In 2018 she earned the Community Curator digital badge by participating in the [Our City Our Museum](#) project. With perseverance, Doralis earned her GED Certificate and graduated with her class in 2019.

Before entering the program, Doralis only saw a future of doing hard labor. Now she is motivated to push herself and others towards a brighter future. She shares, "One should know that you are worth more than cleaning houses. You have rights, there's assistance, you're not

alone. There's this incredible program!" Doralis pushed past her fears again when she applied to be an AmeriCorps member with Project MORE. Now she is tutoring and supporting students in the very same program at FAST Southwest. Doralis hopes her story inspires other parents especially those who are scared to take the first step. To find out more or enroll call FAST Southwest at 773-565-4233 (Spanish HSE/GED, ESL) or FAST West 312-746-5419 (English HSE) or FAST South 312-747-2354 (English HSE).



*Doralis working on her project for the Our City Our Museum exhibit, "Broken Heart / Corazon Partido," expressing the heartbreak of loving people on two sides of the border.*



*A closer look at Doralis' project: Broken Heart/ Corazon Partido (2018)*

*Plaque reads: "In 2009 I arrived in Chicago fleeing my past problems. From that day without a doubt I change my life. I love this country for so much teaching and life of my children but my heart also belongs to my country Mexico D.F."*