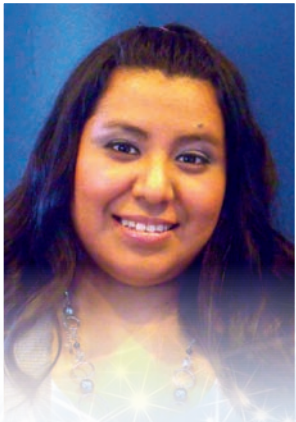


Isabel Mendoza

CATEGORY FIVE WINNER



From 1983-1985, my parents enrolled me in the Head Start program. When I had my own children, I knew that I wanted them to attend our local Head Start center. With my kids in Head Start, it gave me the opportunity to go back to school and complete my GED.

I became very involved with my children's Head Start experience. I joined the Policy Council, attended all parent meetings, and became a bi-lingual teacher. Working at Head Start inspired me to continue my studies in the field of Early Childhood education. I graduated from Rasmussen College with an Associate Degree in Child Development and went on to Minnesota State University – Mankato. I am currently taking courses at Crown College and will graduate with a Bachelor's degree in Early Childhood education this fall.

Head Start gave me the tools I needed to become a leader and role model in our community. One of the ways I became more involved was coordinating a youth group called Chica Latina. We take junior girls in the program on college tours and teach them about the various ways they can advance their education.

I truly believe that Head Start changes lives and shows so many children and families across the country how they can achieve their dreams. I am proud to be part of the Head Start family and it is my honor to give back to a community that has given me so much.