



Karen Lara Pineda, Finding Her Way (and Tackling Stress) with Help From Foothills Submitted by Tad MacMillan, Foothills Alumni Transition Coordinator

A recent study by the CDC revealed that 37% of high school students in the US reported that they felt a high degree of stress or anxiety during the past year. Stress and anxiety are discussed by many Foothills students in their interviews. Recent graduate Karen Lara Pineda described the stress she felt at her traditional high school and how coming to Foothills Charter High School really helped manage her stress.



Karen, who graduated this past May, will attend Oglethorpe University in August 2022. Oglethorpe University, which bills itself as a “small school in the middle of everywhere” has close to 1500 students and is located in Atlanta. Oglethorpe, founded in 1835, has a unique promise to graduate its students in four years OR the fifth year is free. Karen is very excited about going to Oglethorpe, but she is also excited about her summer activities: she is working as a camp counselor at Eagle Lake Camp in Missouri.

Message from the Superintendent

At the recent Foothills Strategic Planning Retreat on Jekyll Island, I shared with great pride that we have served nearly 15,000 students since we opened our doors, with almost 1,900 graduates, including more than 300 this year alone. More important, behind these impressive numbers are the human stories of students who have overcome personal and academic obstacles to graduate from high school and move on to long-term successes. Karen Lara Pineda is one such story, a young woman who came to this country from El Salvador and found in Foothills—the Clarke and Virtual sites—a path to the life goals she seeks. Multiply Karen’s story thousands of times over, and we write the story of our collective successes, seen in our graduates and our test scores—check out the amazing progress we are making (page 3), a result of everyone’s dedicated efforts. As I never tire of saying, you are ALL so appreciated!

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Karen says of her summer work, "It was so much fun, working on a team that became a true family. It can be tiring, but a camper's smile can help keep you going...that's the reason it's worth it." After a summer of exciting outdoor activities, she will return in early August to start school at Oglethorpe.

Although Karen attended both the Clarke Foothills site as well as the Virtual site, she started her educational journey in America when she moved here from El Salvador. Karen, who currently lives with her foster care family, in Powder Springs, talks about how helpful everyone at both Foothills sites were. She remembers how much it meant to her getting emails telling her how great she was and encouraging her to keep up the good work.

At the Clarke site, she emphasized how much the support from **Mimi Middendorf**, one of Clarke's graduate coaches, and **Heather Julian**, a Clarke Math teacher, meant to her. At the virtual site, Karen highlighted the support of **Lisa Harris**, the ESOL teacher. About Karen, Ms. Harris said, "It was an honor to work with Karen. She was such an amazing student and I'm so excited for her future. As we worked together she was always clear about her goals, which made it that much easier for her to achieve them."

Karen's advice to current Foothills students is to "push yourself" and "be comfortable getting out of your comfort zone." She quickly adds that at Foothills, you need to ask for help when you need it because you will certainly get the help you need. All of us need to learn this valuable lesson from Karen. If we need help, we need to ask for it. In a recent EdWeek survey, over 60% percent of teachers reported that they were "stressed out." **Dawn Meyers, Foothills' Student Services Specialist** whose work focuses on life skills, stresses the importance of staff being in touch with their own emotional well being if they are going to be able to effectively help students. Dr. Meyers says, "The best way that we can teach our students about the importance of good self care and asking for help when needed is to model it for them - they are watching and listening to everything we do. Just as healthy eating, exercise and getting enough sleep are important topics for students to hear from adults, so is maintaining healthy emotional health." May all of us start out our new school year listening to this advice from Foothills graduate Karen Lara Pineda and Dr. Meyers, and manage our stress effectively.

Now, see more great Foothills news on page 3...



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The Foothills Vision

Foothills Education Charter High School strives to be an accessible, high-quality high school option that is flexible and responsive to the needs of the People of Georgia and its communities.

Check out Foothills' Great Test Scores!

Karen's story in this month's newsletter is a triumph of individual effort and success (of course, with lots of support from staff, family, and friends). We also have a lot to "crow about" with our most recent collective EOC test score results (see graphic to the right). **Assistant Superintendent Dale Simpson** says, "We are very pleased with our students' performance on the Georgia Milestones End of Course assessments this year. While there is still much data analysis work to be done, it is clear that our overall results improved from last year and were comparable with the state. Our weighted content mastery increased in Algebra, Biology, and US History. Additionally, Foothills students exceeded the state's mean scale score by five points in Biology and ten points in US History. These remarkable results can be attributed to the curriculum work taking place at Foothills as well as the commitment and hard work of our incredible students, teachers, and other support staff members across the region." **Foothills Regional Director for Curriculum and Instruction Scott Gordon** adds, "I firmly believe that the success our students are demonstrating on the EOC's is due to the structure we have created which allows for teacher input. Our courses are constantly reviewed by teachers who identify and report errors. Our curriculum teams—also teachers—make corrections while continuously looking for ways to better address the standards and engage the students. Our data team pinpoints areas for improvement based on scores, and they were also the ones to help create the cumulative assessments. The instructional coaches ensure best classroom practices, and, when all that is not enough, our teachers and tutors faithfully review with students using teacher-developed EOC review packets." **Curriculum Team Leader Mark Tavernier** just sent out "a quick email with some fantastic EOC data," while also reminding us that the work is not finished and the collective efforts continue: "We will dig deeper when we get back together in August. The work you are doing is making a difference. Thanks everyone."

Foothills Education Charter High School EOC Results										
Subject	FY21					FY22				
	n-size	% Level 2 & above (All)	Weighted Content Mastery (All)	FAY n-size	Weighted Content Mastery (Projected FAY*)	n-size	% Level 2 & above (All)	Weighted Content Mastery (All)	FAY n-size	Weighted Content Mastery (Projected FAY*)
Algebra	52	59.62%	41.35%	40	41.25%	74	58.11%	45.27%	48	44.79%
Am Lit	159	79.87%	63.21%	125	66.00%	161	79.50%	59.63%	131	59.92%
Biology	59	66.10%	51.69%	49	54.08%	70	70.00%	64.29%	56	63.39%
US Hist	85	78.82%	58.82%	68	59.56%	130	85.38%	73.46%	106	78.77%
	355			282		435			341	

Notes: Projected FAY excludes credit recovery and Foothills plus students and only includes those students projected to meet FAY term enrollments. These are only predictions; actual FAY scores calculated at year-end may differ.

Trending up or holding steady from last year
Decrease from last year



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