

# My Big Gift

Gabriela Reyes

**BEFORE YOU READ:** Describe a time you advocated for your child. What did you do?

## Something Was Not Right

This story is about my young son and me. He is my third child. When he was born, he needed to stay in the hospital for a couple of days because he would not eat. That was not a good sign. During his first two years, he learned to eat and crawl the same as his sisters. But I noticed he did not speak. That was the first *red flag*. I knew something was not right with him.

When he started to walk, he fell a lot and that was the second *red flag*. His *development* wasn't right, and it was time to look for help from a specialist. In Ciudad Juarez, where we lived, there were only two *pediatric neurologists*, and the waiting list was very long.

## A Diagnosis

Finally, we got an appointment with a doctor, and the *diagnosis* was *developmental delay*. My son needed speech therapy and more tests. We didn't have insurance for my son, and we needed to pay for all the tests, appointments, and medicine. That was a very hard time for my family. We also needed to find a school for him. Private school was very expensive, so he started going to a regular kindergarten. I didn't see any progress in my son. I knew that I needed to find help from a different school and teachers.

I prayed to find a better life for him. I asked God, the universe, or anyone for an answer. I needed help to figure out how to move forward. After some time, I found the answer. It was a school called CAM in Mexico City. It is a special school for students with learning *disabilities*. I met a wonderful teacher. Her name is Maritza.



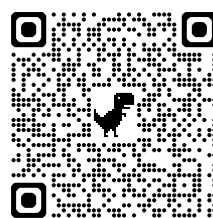
She taught me *strategies* and exercises to *stimulate* all the senses in my son's body and brain. It was hard work for me because I took him to therapy Monday through Friday, and I continued going to my job every day.

## Joy in the Journey

This was the beginning of learning about Special Education. It is wonderful to learn about my son's condition. When I understand what he needs, then I can do more for him. It has been a beautiful journey for me and my family. I walk with other people that are going through the same thing, and we support each other. It is complicated, but there has been a lot of joy in this journey.

### AFTER YOU READ:

1. According to the article, how did Gabriela advocate for her son?
2. Note the vocabulary words in *bold italics*. If you're not sure what they mean, use context clues to figure it out. Try using them in your own sentences.
3. Writing practice: Use this graphic organizer — <https://tinyurl.com/parentsadvocate> — also linked via the QR code below) to collect details from the stories on pp. 30-37. Write an essay about how parents advocate for their children.



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