

Talking Points—Amistad Students

Kevin

- My name is Kevin Torres, and I'm a senior at Achievement First Amistad High School. I stand here tonight on the shoulders of other Amistad alumni, 100% of whom have been accepted to four year colleges and universities. I'm proud to stand here with Nadia Johnson, Asia Mateen. I will be the first in my family to attend college when I graduate in June from Amistad.
- We're here tonight to ask that charter schools receive equitable and predictable funding.

Asia

- My name is Asia Mateen, and I am a junior at Amistad High School. I grew up in New Haven and attended a traditional New Haven public school for elementary school.
- I am thankful for Amistad because I experienced incredible struggle trying to learn before. I was the kid most likely to fall through the cracks, one who found myself grade levels behind in reading and math, and attending a school that passed me every year, despite it.
- When I arrived at Amistad in the 5th grade, I was so far behind that I had to repeat the 5th grade. As difficult as that was, it taught me that a great teacher and a great school teach you to *fight* for your own education. To be your own best advocate. If not for Amistad, I'm not sure I would have made it through high school.
- For kids like me, a great public charter school may be the difference between success and failure, college and not completing high school. I've lived in New Haven my entire life, I've been a public school student my entire life, and I do not understand why my public school does not receive the equitable funding it deserves. Am I worth less? Are students like me worth less?
- Please, support equitable funding for *all* public school students.

Nadia

- My name is Nadia Johnson, and I'm junior at Amistad High School. I first attended Elm City College Prep in the 5th grade.
- Like Kevin and Asia, I started at Achievement First way behind. When I started at Elm City in 5th grade, I was reading at a third grade level. After a year at Elm City Middle School, I was reading at a 7th grade reading level. I've now been on the Dean's list every year, and want to study anthropology at Spellman and then I hope to return to CT and be a leader in my community.
- I attribute my success to two things: hard work and my teachers. As I was preparing to speak tonight, I learned that many great charter schools, like mine, that are preparing me for college and to succeed in life are treated very differently than other public schools.
- I don't understand why this is the case and I respectfully ask you to make sure that all public school students, public school teachers, and public schools are treated the same and get the same resources

Kevin

- I have had such a remarkable education at Amistad – I am leaving for college this summer and feel incredibly prepared academically and socially. Amistad has taught me to be a good student, but also an independent person – my teachers say we are climbing the mountain to college every day – AF has helped me along the climb and I am ready to go off on my own and push myself to new limits as I approach the summit of that mountain and become a leader on one of the college campuses where I have been accepted. I've already been accepted to Uconn and Central Connecticut and I am waiting to hear back from the seven private schools I applied to including, Union, Clark, Holy Cross and University of Rochester.
- I am hopeful that you will support the governor's proposal to increase funding to charter schools so that my younger brother at Amistad and thousands of other charter school students can have access to a great public charter school education like I did.