Erika Roxanna Aguirre

Courage and tenacity lie just below Erika Roxanna Aguirre's gentle, soft-spoken manner and sweet smile. Erika was born in Guatemala and immigrated to the U.S. when she was 21 years old. In her home country, her education had been limited. And as a newcomer she was overwhelmed by new people, a new culture, and most intimidatingly, a new language- English. Despite her fears, she knew that improving her English skills was the only way to open the doors to the future and her new life.

"Since childhood I always dreamed of going to school, but my dad did not agree because I am a woman. But when I arrived in this country in 2008 I realized that there are many opportunities to fulfill that long-awaited dream that I had since I was a child and to go to school.

So Erika set her feet on the path of improving her English language skills at the Neighborhood of Affordable Housing ESOL program in East Boston. NOAH is one of the 20 ESOL programs ENB supports in Boston.

Being a student-as well as being a dedicated mother to three daughters was demanding. But she persisted and took advantage of many English learning opportunities at NOAH. What's more, she has always been willing to help her immigrant classmates pursing their dreams by helping them study and encouraging them to speak more.

Now that she has truly found her footing, Erika looks for ways to give back to her community. She is an active member of the Parents' Council at East Boston Ecumenical Community Center, **where she models civic engagement for other immigrant parents and helps guide her daughters' education.** She also has her eye on broader issues in East Boston, like the environment, and recently participated in a workshop on climate change.

Erika now has her sights on a higher educational goal and a career as a medical assistant. *"Thanks to the help of the ESOL program at NOAH, I was able to study at Bunker Hill Community College to get my high school diploma. When I'm finished, I hope to continue studying to finally have a career."*