



Rachel Zhao '19

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Aloha! I am Rachel Zhao, an 18 year old Chinese student at HPA. The experiences at HPA are the most wonderful memories of my life, and the story of HPA and I all started when I was 13. My family and I were visiting the Big Island of Hawaii for the first time, and, while on our way to Parker Ranch, my sister screamed, "Look! It's a double rainbow!" With excitement and curiosity, we drove closer to the rainbow, and it brought us to HPA.

A year later, I entered HPA as a freshman. I was surprised by this big, warm family of students from all over the world and faculty members who treated us like their own children. I soon fell in love with the unique Hawaiian culture. My first overnight camping trip showed me how kind the people at HPA can be. I was always nervous to sign up for the camping trips offered by the outdoors program. Thankfully, a friend invited me to come along, and it was an adventure I will remember forever. Some HPA teachers came as guides to ensure we were safe and having fun. My favorite part was walking along the shore at dusk with my friends. This anecdote was only a small part of many of my unforgettable moments in HPA, and I believe everyone would appreciate HPA and the warm-hearted people here.

HPA helped me reach my academic goal through its exceptional learning opportunities. When I first arrived, my English was not good enough to fully understand. Luckily, the ESL program assisted me in breaking the language barrier by providing English lessons specially designed for international students. The teachers at HPA were incredibly patient and helpful. AP Physics C is one

of the most challenging courses I took, but, fortunately, my physics teacher was always willing to answer my questions after class. Sometimes we discussed problems for so long that it took most of his lunch period, but he never omitted any of my questions or showed even a little bit of impatience. Moreover, other research opportunities, such as studying green sea turtle patterns and working at the local astronomy observatory headquarters, are available to HPA students. Because of the dedicated teachers and countless opportunities, students are able to pursue their academic dreams.

It is understandable that students and their families would be worried about studying so far away from home. However, I now find those worries unnecessary: the experience of becoming independent is an inevitable and critical part of everyone's life. I understand that the safety and health of students studying abroad is always a big concern, but HPA is a highly secure place for students. HPA has a closed campus that does not allow students to leave without permission, and the security officers are on duty 24/7. In addition, HPA is focused on physical and mental health with its nutritious dining hall meals and its counseling and medical center. HPA is a place where real safety can be found.

I am truly thankful for everything that happened in high school, and I hope more students will experience the treasure that is HPA, where the rainbow meets the earth.

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