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Valley 15-year-old graduates with 2 college degrees



Reported by: [Eric English](#)
Email: eenGLISH@abc15.com
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 [Valley 15-year-old graduates from community college](#)



AVONDALE, AZ-- Like many young graduates this year, Zachary Chia got a little help trying on his gown from mom and dad before the big ceremony.

The graduate is unlike any other that's come through the halls of the campus of Estrella Mountain Community College before.

"I'm 15 years old and I am graduating from Estrella Mountain Community College," Chia said.

Young Zachary was born in Arizona, but as an infant, moved to Singapore.

When he returned to the United States a few years ago, he found he had surpassed most of the state's education standards.

"It's totally a different standard, and it's kinda like, they push you harder," Chia said.

Administrators were apprehensive about admitting Zachary at first, but once he scored well on entrance exams, they knew it would be a good fit.

"He's very very bright, but he's also very dedicated to his studies," Student Service dean, Lauren Shellenbarger said.

His teachers say Zachary fits in well with the other students -- many more than twice his age.

"I think that our students all blend in with each other. We have young students, we have older students, we have a very diverse population, and I think most of the time, people don't have any idea how old our students are," Shellenbarger said.

Carrying at least 18 credits each semester, Zachary spent 8 to 10 hours each day studying, finishing the two year program early.

He says his hard work has gotten him a few pats on the back from other classmates.

"Maybe I have inspired them to work harder because if I can do it, I think maybe anyone can do it," Chia said.

He plans to attend ASU in the fall and major in Business Management of Tourism.

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