

# School Experiences

Tapia experienced some hard times as a boy in school. His classmates would tease and insult him because of his Mexican heritage. Many of his friends either dropped out of school or got involved with drugs. The counselors at his school often had low expectations for the students, so Tapia was not given advice on how to obtain the best education possible. Despite all of this, Tapia was always a good student. From the first grade on, him and his twin brother have always been good at math. Their teachers considered both of them to be math stars.

After high school, Tapia was often encouraged by his professors, who saw mathematical ability. At Harbor Junior College in Wilmington, California, Tapia was encouraged to attend UCLA, where he later earned his degree in mathematics. After earning his degree, Tapia was later told that he would make a good researcher and teacher. It was this support that would push Tapia to become one of the greatest Hispanic mathematicians of his time.