

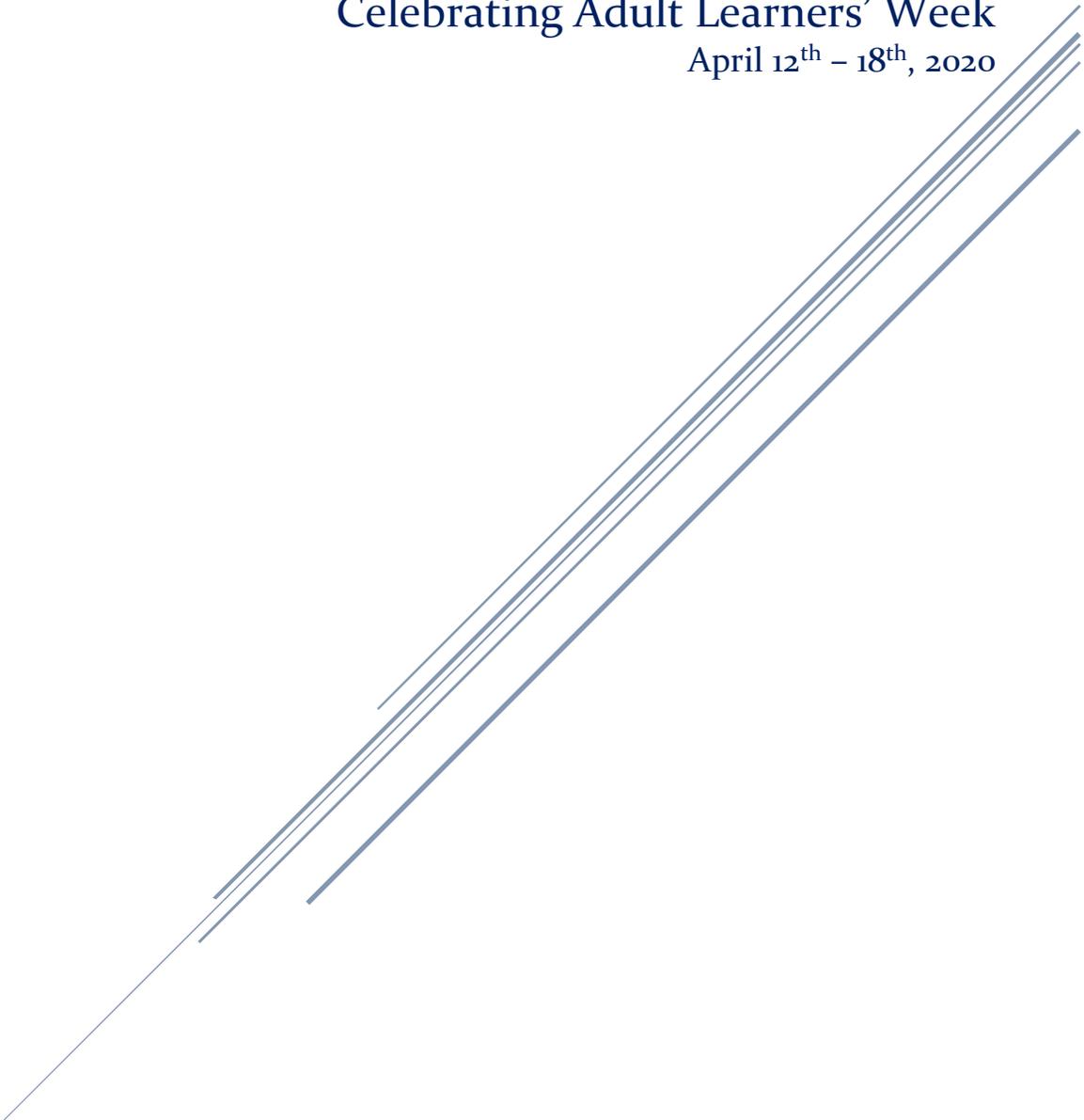


Literacy Coalition
of New Brunswick Ltd.

Learning Changes Lives

Celebrating Adult Learners' Week

April 12th – 18th, 2020



The Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick

303-212 QUEEN ST, FREDERICTON, NB, E3B 1A8

506-457-1227 Toll Free: 1-800-563-2211

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Kaltom Aborojha – Fredericton Day Adult Learning Program (CVALA) | 3 |
| Prince Acheaw – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)..... | 4 |
| Abdulahdi Alawad – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA) | 5 |
| Khaled Anbarji – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA) | 6 |
| Dalya Altoubaji – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA) | 7 |
| Jacqueline Bilodeau – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA) | 8 |
| Mona Broad – Bath Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)..... | 9 |
| Jessica Cote – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA) | 10 |
| Julia Ann Devoll – St. Mary’s Community Adult Learning Program (CVALA) | 12 |
| Courtne Dixon – Oromocto Adult Learning Program (CVALA)..... | 13 |
| Cheryl Dunford – Woodstock Adult Learning Center (WVALA) | 14 |
| B. D. – NB Women’s Correction Centre | 15 |
| Reba Fortin – Miramichi Adult Learning..... | 16 |
| Andrea Francis – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA) | 17 |
| Destinee Frey – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA) | 18 |
| Harold Gabriel – St. Mary’s Community Adult Learning Program (CVALA)..... | 19 |
| C. G. – NB Women’s Correction Centre | 20 |
| Angela Goodine – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA) | 21 |
| Saeed Osman Ibrahim – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA) | 22 |
| Macy Johnson – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)..... | 23 |
| Donald Kearns – Vestiaire St. Joseph Learning Centre GED Program..... | 24 |
| Tina Labonte – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA) | 25 |
| C. L. – NB Women’s Correction Centre | 26 |
| Apoline Martin – Miramichi Adult Learning | 27 |
| Travis Martin – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)..... | 28 |
| Cheryl Michaud – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre..... | 29 |
| Tami Michaud – Miramichi Adult Learning..... | 31 |
| Brenda Mitchell – Open Doors GED & Adult Learning | 32 |
| Jayne Nevers – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA) | 33 |
| Shakira Niyonizeye – Fredericton Day Adult Learning Program (CVALA) | 34 |

Christopher O’Keefe – Bath Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)35

Jessica Paul - Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)37

Samantha Paul – St. Mary’s Community Adult Learning Program (CVALA)38

George Pearce – Oromocto Adult Learning Program (CVALA)39

Teisha Perley – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)40

N. P. – NB Women’s Correction Centre41

Jennifer Provenzano - Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)42

Safaa Raslan – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)44

Jess Robichaud - Miramichi Adult Learning45

Nour Saffaf - GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)47

Trent A. Scott – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)48

Salena Theimann – Somerset Adult Learning Program.....49

Toni-Shania Thorne – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)50

Marina Thornton – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)51

Tina Thornton – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA).....52

Tania Tomah – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA).....53

Dallen Vail – Saint John Learning Exchange, CALP Class54

Morgan Vienneau – Alpha Bathurst Community Adult Learning Centre55

Melissa Wilson – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)56

My Learning Journey

Kaltom Aborojha – Fredericton Day Adult Learning Program (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Alexa Washburn

I returned to learning because I found out that it is very important and a base element in everyone's lives. Getting educated will help me find a better job with a better wage and pension. Having more knowledge will make me feel successful and accomplished; keeping me in track with everything happening in the world.

I was planning to go back to school at NBCC to study early childhood development, but I find out one of the requirements was a high school diploma. I gained mine from back home in Libya almost twenty years ago. However, it was specialized only on physical education, so I didn't study math, science or English language. I couldn't procure my diploma transcript because of the unstable situation in Libya and poor district management. This made me make the decision to go forward to take the GED test to refresh my information and my mind.

I started taking GED classes about a month ago and my teacher advised me to start with math because it is the most time consuming. Now that I am almost halfway through the math curriculum, I am so eager to learn more and apply for my test.

The other subjects I have been most interested in is social studies. I have been watching a documentary called "Canada: story of us" which talks about the first nation and how the French and English people came to Canada. I am thoroughly enjoying it so far!

Learning and education will change my life for the better because it will allow me to procure a stable position in my workplace and will open many doors and opportunities for me. I feel like education empowers us as a society, especially women because we won't have to rely on anyone, and we can be independent.

In the future, some of my goals include: Obtaining my GED certificate, going back to college to study early childhood education, and getting a better job and salary. Even after I have completed these goals, I want to work on continually educating myself as I believe education is not something you can do temporarily but is an ongoing process for the rest of your life.

In conclusion, I am very thankful that I got the opportunity to go back to school and take these GED classes. I cannot wait to continue learning and progressing and I am very thankful to have a great adviser like Alexa. I am looking forward to achieving all my goals in the future.

Learning Changes Lives

Prince Acheaw – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

Learning is something human beings cannot escape. “It is like a person kicking a ball to a wall, and it bounces back to him”. In our everyday life, we practice learning in school, at home, in the office, etc.

I chose to return to learning because I want to achieve my dreams in life, especially my dream job. I know without learning, you cannot achieve what you want. I grew up in a society where learning is important to most parents.

Sometimes poverty makes people drop out of school or stop learning because he or she thinks there is money-making to be made on the street. Yes, there is money on the street by doing illegal business, drugs, and stealing, but that is only one option.

My move to Canada helped me to understand why learning is important. In Canada, learning is very important because it leads you to the right path. People who are in the same situation as me, or even worse than me, have the second chance to get back learning in Canada through a program called GED, which means General Education Development. Through this program I have learned a lot about things that I was lacking, especially my reading, writing, and computer skills. I have more confidence in my life now, and know what I want to do in college.

My goals for the future are to finish my GED and work for a while to raise funds for college. The course that I would like to take in college is Graphic Design. I chose this course because I worked in Graphic Design and t-shirt screen-printing previously. I found it a creative and interesting job. So my goal is to work hard in college to achieve my diploma, then apply for my dream job.

This is why I returned to learning, to achieve all that I could not achieve in the past.

LEARNING IS IMPORTANT!!!

Learning Changes Lives

Abdulhadi Alawad – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Deb Bradbury & Niki Gulliver

Everybody knows how important education is. So, as an adult I have a chance to attend a GED class. As a new English learner, I see this as an amazing opportunity to improve my language and my education. I have been in Canada for almost two and a half years. When I arrived, I had no idea how difficult the English language is!

I started taking ESL Classes at MCAF (Multicultural Association of Fredericton), but that wasn't enough. After two years, a person from MCAF asked us if we were interested in attending a GED class. If I can be honest, that was the best news I had heard since I came to Canada because that was my hope to complete my education and understand the English language. As a result, I will have a good job in the end. Now I can feel the difference and see how much the level of English has risen for me. So, I try to work hard to have a GED Degree. Even though it is difficult, I will work as hard as I can. If I get the GED Degree, as I hope, I see two roads diverging; either get a job with what I have or keep going to complete my schooling. That will be my purpose.

Everyone knows the significance of education, how much it raises the level of culture, education, employment and status in society. I know that learning is making a difference for me.

Learning Changes Lives

Khaled Anbarji – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Deb Bradbury & Niki Gulliver

The science of light and the darkness of ignorance, is a quote in my culture.

I would like to tell you something about myself. I came to Canada in December 20, 2015 with my family. I have a wife and two children, a son and a daughter.

When I came to Canada, I didn't speak English so I started to learn English at MCAF. I started from foundation until Level Five. Then I decided to take a GED Course to improve my English and Math. In the future, I will be looking for the best job for me. Actually, I have improved my English and Math. I feel much better than before!

Learning Changes Lives

Dalya Altoubaji – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Deb Bradbury & Niki Gulliver

I am happy to return to learning and to study for my GED in Canada. This step is good for my family and me. English is my third language. This step is helping me to improve my English. I will be ready to help my children with their homework and also understand the papers that come from their school.

When I went back to learning, there were big changes in my life. I am learning many new things. I find my English is improving. My day is busy when I go to my GED Class. Hopefully I will finish this GED Course successfully in a short time. After that, I hope to have time to further my education at NBCC. I want to be a nurse in the future.

Adult Learning Changes Lives

Jacqueline Bilodeau – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Maria Donovan

Learning as an adult is opening more doors for me than I could ever dream possible. Not only is this invaluable opportunity allowing my dignity to return, but it is proving to me that I am worthy, and not stupid as was chanted to me repeatedly while growing up. Self worth is something that, if not tangible, we lack the drive to forge on. Adult learning is also allowing me to experience the unfamiliar feeling of self confidence. The doors of opportunity are opening wide for me now with possibilities such as furthering my education into college and beyond, broadening my career options, improving mental health and securing finances.

First of all, through the referral of a friend, I looked into going back to school to better myself and to find my place in this world. In return for my hard efforts, adult learning is giving me my dignity back. Society has taught us that without education, we are nothing. Returning to school and developing my education is allowing my dignity to return, which is a breath of fresh air to me. I want to be proud of my efforts, and going back to school is helping to awaken this for me. I am now starting to believe that I am a somebody and I deserve good things.

Secondly, adult learning is improving my self worth. This is helping me prove to myself and others that I am not stupid - that my family is wrong about me. I am worthy, and I can learn and achieve even higher expectations than I ever thought. Without this opportunity to go back to school, I would still have no self worth, and I would probably never be able to change my life and head in the direction I want to go.

Finally, adult learning is offering me the luxury of self confidence for the first time. I felt that forty-two years of every kind of abuse imaginable has stomped out any spark of hope for confidence to surface, but adult learning is restoring this unfamiliar feeling of confidence. Adult learning – returning to school, is giving me courage, the ability to look for work, to expand my career options and take charge of my own life. I can now live a happier, more successful life. Self confidence is a good asset to have if I am to fight for what I want in this world.

Learning as an adult is opening doors for me and I'm feeling alive with hope. I never dreamed that I would ever feel self confidence, experience self worth and have dignity return to me again. I can now see the sun over the horizon of my life, and I feel its warmth, thanks to the opportunity for adult learning.

Learning Changes Lives

Mona Broad – Bath Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Beverley Haines

If I could pick one regret in my life it would be I didn't finish high school.

Life would have been so much easier if I would have graduated.

I had my boys at a very young age. It was hard trying to go to school and take care of them, so I decided to quit. "Big mistake!"

I couldn't get a good job. No one wants to hire a person that doesn't even have a grade 10. I had to take a lot of seasonal jobs. You don't need to graduate to pick potatoes, cut seed and make Christmas wreaths.

Over the years I thought many times about getting more schooling so I could have a better life.

My kids are all grown up now, they have graduated and College under their belts, so I thought this is my time to get my GED. Thanks to Western Valley Adult Learning Association and my teacher Bev Haines I am well under way to getting my GED.

Taking this class has made me realize I am smarter than I thought I was. It has given me more self confidence because, I learn something new every day.

Once I get my GED I will apply at NBCC for Business management, because my husband has a business and I want to help him improve it.

Life's Opportunities

Jessica Cote – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

In writing this piece I intend to share the trials I encountered before returning to the world of education and learning. I hope to share strength and courage with all potential adult learners facing seemingly impossible obstacles. Ultimately, success is possible.

I had reached a point in my life where I was all but completely consumed by disparity. I opened my old rickety cupboards, finding nothing but pasta. Our yellowing fridge held nothing but Grammys old, half-empty contaminate jars, each necessity needing replenished. Life was only showing me a hand full of cruelty while I dreamed of the greener days I'd once known.

In those days, which seem to linger on each ripple of my mind, entrapment was raw, abuse was real and hope seemed deathly silent. Each time I closed my eyes I could see stars, slowly those stars became the eyes of three innocent children, whom begged for a stronger mother.

Each time I witnessed the flicker of longing for normalcy, or for protection or hunger in my children's eyes, I would become overwhelmed with inhuman guilt. At night I'd look to the skies, asking my *Guiding Light* how I'd become a shell of a person, so similar to a comedian's puppet. What had I done to deserve this unbearable fate? I wanted to jump from my window into the ink thick night, soaring to an ever-present happiness that I could spend my eternity basking in.

Instead I promised to become whole again. With each flicker of longing and every passing hope, I became infested with courage; a strong undoubting courage. The courage to leave an abusive partner and a broken home, to one day realize it had never been whole to begin with. The courage to ask for help; knowing I'm not alone. I learned to have hope and to hold onto that hope with every molecule of my being.

Once the grasses became greener, so much like my earlier days had once been, courage's need also subsided. Filling my small family's essence with the gratifying freedoms our beautiful country has to offer; crisp grass under hopping toes, an old school house's playground, sprinkling waters dancing around my children's tan bodies in summer's heat, now overflowing with life and opportunity.

Seeing that opportunity glistening in their youthful eyes was the urge I needed; this kicked my conspiring into full gear. I took a page from their illustrations and applied opportunity to my own life. I still worked, harder than I thought possible, as I believe you get what you've contributed and deserve back.

Therefore, I planned, I schemed and I prepared myself for my biggest decisions yet. Consequently, big decisions come hand in hand with big rewards when it comes to furthering

your education. Everything I've done and continue doing is in preparations to become a shining star in my family and children's eyes as I cross the stage to accept my diploma.

Stepping through the ever swinging doors of NBCC has been every bit as rewarding as I've countlessly pictured in my head. As with most anything you must start at the beginning. For myself, that was attending classes in preparation for completing the five GED exams, soon I'll continue on in becoming a Personal Support Worker, and later aspiring to branch off into Practical Nursing. Thus, leads to my final message for all readers, potential adult learners and future graduates seeking encouragement or conviction; success is always possible.

Learning Changes Lives

Julia Ann Devoll – St. Mary’s Community Adult Learning Program (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne Wilson

Hi! My name is Julia and I am 60 years old. I started school when I was almost 8 years old because my development was slow. Once I started, I always felt like an outcast, and treated differently from other children at the school. I felt like I didn’t belong, even on my first day of school.

My experience as a native girl in the school was hard and scary. In school, the work they gave me was difficult and I was slow. I spent 4 years in grade 1. What took other students a day to learn, took me days to learn. As it was, I saw differences in how students were treated, such as non native students were the only students allowed to stay for lunch or we couldn’t speak our own language, just French or English.

By the time I was 18, I was in grade 9. I felt that if they took the time to help me instead of just picking out what they thought were “special” children, if I could have had more one on one help, things could have been better for me. My grandparents couldn’t help me because they didn’t have much schooling themselves. After grade 4, I was socially moved up, whether I knew the work or not. The school told my grandfather that there would be no sense of me going to high school because I wouldn’t grade.

Generally, I found things in school boring because I couldn’t do the work. It was really hard, especially math. Eventually, I didn’t care if I graded or not. When I left school, I was doing grade 4-6 work in grade 9. I wasn’t getting the work anyways.

I thought about returning to public school, but felt I was too old, or wouldn’t be allowed, so I never thought about it again. However, when I was 32, a friend told me about a GED class starting up. It was for any grade group. The class had only 15 students, so I thought I’d finally get the help I needed. For a variety of reasons out of my control, I kept starting and stopping classes, but I never gave up on my dream even after 28 years of trying.

What the work means to me now compared to then hasn’t changed. The work is still hard, but now I’m getting the help. There are fewer students in the class and I get help as I need it, but I don’t always need it. Most of the time I can do it on my own. It’s kind of fun learning now. I feel satisfied when I catch on to new work, something I never experienced when I was in public school.

Getting the GED at 60 years of age will mean that I will complete my goal and accomplish my dream. It will mean other things for me too. Once I get my GED, I will be a role model to others of my age and encourage anyone, at any age, that it is never too late to reach for your dream.

Learning Changes Lives and It Has Changed Mine!

Courtnie Dixon – Oromocto Adult Learning Program (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Sarah McLean

My name is Courtnie Dixon. I am a thirty year old mother of five. I am currently enrolled in the Adult Learning Program to obtain my GED. This is my learning story.

Being young and foolish, I dropped out of high school in grade 10, and then became a teen mom. At the time, I didn't realize how much this decision would change my future. It took me years, literally, to decide I wanted to go back to school. It was becoming bothersome and embarrassing that as my children were getting older, I was finding it more and more difficult to help them with their homework. Since returning to class, I am able to confidently set with my older children and help them understand their assignments and work on their homework together. Going back to school is the best decision I have made, not just for me but also for my children. It has given me the confidence that I was missing for so long in my life. I now have a sense of accomplishment and I am finally proud of myself! My children are my why!

Learning has changed my life in so many ways and will continue to bring many positive changes to my life. I am able to understand things that I didn't before, and have found new strategies to help me along the way. I was constantly doubting myself, and now I can finally say, "I know this!" With the help and patience of an amazing woman, my teacher, Sarah McLean, I have almost reached my goal! I have successfully written and passed four out of the five tests and only have Language Arts Writing left! Once I complete my writing, I will be able to move on to the next chapter of my journey.

Deciding what career you want to choose at any age I believe is intimidating, however, when you have a family to support this decision is even more frightening. Before returning to class, I had no idea what I wanted to do with my life or what I wanted to become. I knew that whatever I chose to do, I wanted to be someone that helps others. After researching, talking about my interests and discussing careers that would suit me, I finally was able to decide. I have chosen to apply to NBCC to become an Early Childhood Educator. I truly feel that it would be an incredibly rewarding experience, and fits my life perfectly. I am so very excited to continue my journey. I can't wait to see where my education can and will take me. I hope to continue to be an inspiration to my family, friends and peers. If I can do it, anyone can! Learning changed my life and it can change yours too!

Learning Changes Lives

Cheryl Dunford – Woodstock Adult Learning Center (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

There are many reasons why I choose to go back to school. My reasons for returning to school are getting a better education and learning more is very important to me.

I want to show my children that there is never a time that you can't go back to school to better yourself. I really want them to know that anyone can go to school to get in education no matter how old.

One of the most important benefits of education is how it can improve our lives and our future. It gives us a way to have positive thinking and to help us deal with everyday life.

I've have decided to go back to school to better myself and my children future. It was a hard decision at first to be much older and going back to having to sit in a class room. It was a decision that took a bit to decide.

I sat there one day and made a list of my pros and cons on going back to school. My pros were a lot brighter than the cons. It has been a struggle and tough days at times were I think maybe it's not for me I get back up the next day and tell myself I got this and continue on with my education.

Also it helps when u have a nice environment and a very understanding teacher and support class mates.

That is my take on how school has been a good positive decision that I've made for myself and my girl's future.

Learning Changes Lives

B. D. – NB Women’s Correction Centre

Learning has changed lives all across the world, in thousands of different ways but today I’m going to talk about how adult learning has not only changed my life, but also my views on my life.

I have returned to learning for many reasons, success being one of them. I am 23 and a mother to a beautiful 6 year old girl, Noelle, who I want to show, more than anything, the values of an education; because of the fact I can envision the success, and I know it’s right beyond my reach, it makes me strive to do better. The author of “The One Minutes Millionaire” says “everything you want is just outside of your comfort zone” and I totally believe this is why I strive to do better, not only for myself, but for my family and others who I will eventually help.

Learning has changed my life in many ways; by helping me be more social and recognizing other views, but most importantly, having an education has given me the confidence to continue the road to success to help others.

My goals for the future are huge. After getting released, I plan to attend university where I will start classes for psychology and criminology. With these courses I’d like to help children and youth who have troubles.

When I was 15 years old, I was addicted to a drug called “speed”. It comes in a pill form and is one of the cheapest. I sought help and got an addiction counsellor named Margaret and she honestly changed my life. Without her, I’m not sure I’d be here to this day. She not only helped me get away from pill, but helped me through my teenage crisis, day by day. When I was 16 I moved away from the town to get a fresh start, but from that day on, I’ve wanted to help youth that are in the position I was once in.

That being said, without education, I will never be able to achieve these goals and help these trouble youth.

Last but not least, my goal is to show my girl, Noelle, that no matter what, you need to work hard.

“Create your future from you future and not your past” is another quotation I’ve recently learned from Werner Erhard, and to me, this means it does not matter what your past was. You can move on, just focus on your future, and your goal and for me, that would be to get a further education, to help others.

Learning Changes Lives

Reba Fortin – Miramichi Adult Learning

<https://miramichiadultlearning.com>

Teachers: Beth Losier & Kevin Keoughan

I graduated from Bathurst High School in 2012. when I graduated I went on to study as an aesthetician for a year at Majestany Institute and completed the program.

I returned to a GED class in order to improve my high school marks to get into NBCC Miramichi. I wanted to return to school to build a better life for myself, my son, and boyfriend.

Returning to school was very difficult in the beginning as my son wasn't even two years old when I decided to start school again. Since my marks were modified it was a struggle to balance my home and school life.

Learning changed my life in so many ways. I can now properly write paragraphs, use proper grammar, punctuation, and have significantly improved with my reading comprehension. My life has changed by returning to school and relearning the basics.

My goal after completing the GED is to take Child and Youth Care at NBCC. I want to help underprivileged children and young adults who are struggling with making friends, who need a listening ear or someone they can count on to provide a helping hand when needed.

All lives matter, no matter where you come from, who your family is and what mistakes we all make growing up. I believe I continue to grow each day and would love to help others do the same.

Learning Changes Lives

Andrea Francis – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Susan Howard

The main reason I would like to get my GED is to get a good job, to improve my credit and to make more money. I like to make more money so that I can buy my family clothes, food, shelter and a car.

Having my GED would help me to find a good job. I need a job that will pay for my needs and some of my wants. I like to splurge on stuff for the kids, like toys and new clothes.

I would like to establish my credit, too. I can raise my credit score if I have a credit card that I can pay for. Once my credit is established, I hope to get a new car without a co-signer.

Getting a good education, would allow me to get into a good career. I would like to someday study law. Studying law would be a good career allowing me to make some good money to pay for the things I'd like to have for me and my family.

Learning Changes Lives

Destinee Frey – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Susan Howard

This year has definitely been my big year of change. I have decided to make a commitment to further my education. In doing so, it would increase my chances of employment. Getting a good job would provide more financial security for my family by earning my GED.

For me, being a young mother, I want to set an example for my children to let them know that once you start something, you have to finish it no matter how long it takes. We all started school when we were younger. I just never finished. I made it to freshman year of high school and ended up dropping out due to severe anxiety. Now, about ten years later, after figuring out how to deal with anxiety, I am back and ready to finish what I started.

By finishing up my schooling, I'd have a higher chance of getting a good job. It's easy enough to get a minimum wage labour job around here, but I'd love to be able to work in health care. Growing up, I watched my mother become a LPN, and was able to join her from time to time with the patients she cared for. So, I guess you could say that seeing her was inspiring to me. She helped me realize what my educational goals were and how to achieve them.

One of the reasons why I chose the health care field was because I know it's a good paying job. I want to be able to make enough money to put some into savings, to go on family trips, and to feel financially stable. A big change for me would be to move. Currently, my four person family shares two bedrooms. Moving into a house to fit us all comfortably would feel like a huge achievement for me.

So this year, being full of educational changes, is just a way to set up my family for success. I want my children to learn to always finish what they started, no matter how long it takes. It makes me even more determined to succeed knowing my children are watching me grow and strive to achieve my educational and career goals.

Learning Changes Lives

Harold Gabriel – St. Mary's Community Adult Learning Program (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne Wilson

I returned to learning (school) as a result of being injured which prevented me from being able to do physical work anymore. I guess I have never really stopped learning because I have always read books, mostly non-fiction. But reading is only one part of learning as I have realized. I have always struggled with math. But I have found that this time around with the setting I am in, there is no pressure and I am learning at my own speed.

My introduction to learning was not a positive experience. My early experience was that I was fearful of school and teachers in general (they always seemed to be in a bad mood), but, then again, the mid-1960's was a changing confrontational world. I believe that many of the older generation really didn't like what was happening. At least, looking back, that is what I felt.

Some people believe the world is worse, but although it will never be perfect, I think it is getting better from what I have witnessed in my lifetime. Which brings us from yesterday, today, and now the future. My goals for the future are: to always be informed of what is going on, such as what is in the newspaper or on the internet (a technology which I am just learning), and to do what little I can to voice my opinion. I have had a few letters to the editor of the Gleaner published. But most importantly, listening to others' opinions as I have learned that if you think you know everything, nobody can teach you anything. In my struggle to understand math, I have a new-found respect for people who work every day with numbers. I have family members who are electricians and never realized that numbers are dealt with daily for them.

As I make a breakthrough with math, it feels good at times. I almost feel like I'm learning a new language and I guess in a lot of ways, this is true.

Returning to learning (school) because of an injury has turned my anger over the injury and taking my livelihood away, has opened my mind to a different reality and appreciation of the world. For example, writing this essay and putting my thoughts and feelings on this paper gave me the realization that these are some of the changes that have happened to me in this classroom.

I am enrolled in the St. Mary's Community Adult Learning Program which is located on the St. Mary's Reservation on Cliff Street in Fredericton. I am grateful that it is here. If it had not been, I probably would not have enrolled. After attending here, I wouldn't hesitate to go to any of the classrooms anywhere in town.

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to share my thoughts and feelings on this great program.

Learning Changes Lives

C. G. – NB Women’s Correction Centre

A major event occurred in my life, that opened the door for me to return to school. At the age of 56, I was arrested for a serious crime. This is the first time in my life I have been before the Criminal Justice System. Awaiting trial while on remand is a long and slow process.

One would think, at my age, there is no point in furthering my education. I’ve retired...I don’t need to go back to school. As a survivor of domestic violence, I was told too many times, “You’re stupid, you’re worthless and nobody cares about you.” I, however, refused to believe this.

Joining the Adult G.E.D. program at New Brunswick Women’s Correctional Centre has awakened my excitement of a formal learning program. My love of learning started as a young child and has stayed with me. Re-learning some basic skills has given me the confidence to experience the joy of mastering a concept that previously eluded me. Going back to school has show me I can do anything I set my mind to. With the encouragement of my teachers, I am slowly accomplishing my goals. In fact, their dedication has allowed me to expand my dreams. I have also discovered that insight and a positive outlook have an enormous impact on others. This ability is a talent I would like to cultivate further.

During High School, my guidance counsellor asked me what I wanted to take at university. It was simple – I wanted to be a doctor. I still remember what she told me; “You can’t be a doctor.” She saw my hearing disability as a significant barrier that, in her opinion, could never be overcome. I was crushed! In that moment, she had shattered my dream. All I ever wanted was to be a doctor. Maybe I gave up too easily. The idea that she could be wrong, didn’t even occur to me. In my naivete I thought, “What is the point in going to university if I can’t be a doctor?” So I didn’t pursue a higher education.

The happiest people I’ve met in life all have one thing in common. It is their constant desire to continue learning. They are not content to say, “I know everything there is to know.” The more I learn, the more I want to learn. When I stop learning, I stop living.

I see now that my world is filled with opportunities I didn’t see before. My studies in G.E.D. have helped broaden my horizons. My desire is to pursue a formal degree or diploma program in a field that encourages my interests and skills. They lie in medical, legal, business, financial, and even the arts or trades. I will not let anyone tell me, “You cannot do that,” because I know I can!

I have been presented with a special opportunity. Hitting rock bottom can be a great foundation to re-build my life. The awakening of my dreams has shown me, it’s not too late. I intend to make my time count. My gratitude to the teachers has shown me that, “Someone cares; I am smart and I am valuable.”

Learning Changes Lives

Angela Goodine – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

Why did I return to learning? I returned to learning because I love to learn. Learning new things gives me more and more confidence each and every day I'm in class.

When I was growing up, I dealt with a lot of mental abuse and never had confidence in myself. I actually thought I was stupid because that's what I was told as a kid, so I started to believe it. I guess I tried all my life to show the ones I loved, the ones that put me down daily that I was something and I would be somebody, someday.

Coming back to school has changed my life in many ways. I knew early on I had problems with remembering details and small things like that. This year I was diagnosed with ADD, and they also said short term memory loss which has something to do with my frontal lobe. Being diagnosed has been a relief to me because now I know why I have a harder time than other people around me. It doesn't discourage me from my goals. It just gives me more motivation to conquer my goals.

Growing up, I never had a lot of support. Now I have lots of support and positivity in my life from my partner, Peter, and from my children. They make me want to better my life every day, and for that I'm forever grateful. My teacher has helped me a lot by giving me necessary work for me to stay on track. I will also get accommodations on my tests so that I can finally get my GED and then move on to my future goals.

My goal for the future after I get my GED is to take the PSW course and work with the elderly. I have experience with this because I cared for my aging grandparents who raised me. When I have time, I also visit elderly people in our local nursing home. Working with the elderly gives me so much joy, and it requires patience and understanding.

Returning to school also shows my children that despite a disability, you can conquer anything. If you have enough willpower and determination, anything is possible.

Learning Changes Lives

Saeed Osman Ibrahim – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teachers: Deb Bradbury & Niki Gulliver

Learning is a light to guide my way. I am Saeed Ibrahim from Sudan. I am a newcomer in Canada living in New Brunswick.

I returned to school for many reasons. First to develop my English skills so I am able to speak with citizens. Second, to get more knowledge of the future. Thirdly, to find strong job opportunities.

Personally, I believe by education I can plan for my future to be a more successful person. The significance of education is that it lets me look around the world and see others moving ahead and learning. The scientific revolution resonated with me. It helps me to return to my education.

Education rises the nation and my thoughts build a positive reality.

Learning Changes Lives

Macy Johnson – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

When I was sixteen, I dropped out of school. Doing this has caused me a lot of regret. I've never had a good job and I've always been left feeling discouraged. At twenty-eight, I made the decision to leave the bad jobs behind and further my education.

I decided to get my GED for a few different reasons. First, I wanted to teach my children that it's never too late to fix a mistake. Secondly, I wanted to get a great career that I enjoy instead of working as a cashier or a fast food worker. Lastly, I wanted to boost my self-esteem. Having the title of a high school drop out hanging over my head for so long was starting to make me feel like a failure.

As a mom of two girls, I wanted to be a positive influence on them. I wanted them to know that yes, we all make mistakes, however it is our responsibility to correct those mistakes. One day, I hope my daughters look at me and see how hard I pushed myself. I hope that someday they can push themselves just as hard.

After I enrolled in the GED program, I noticed my ambitions started to come back. I started to plan for my future and I was actually excited about it. Doing the GED program has added some more positivity in my life just by knowing I'm doing something productive with my life.

My future goals are to attend NBCC so I can get a higher education. I would like to get a job as an Educational Assistant and work in the school system. My end goal is to help and guide children so that they too may reach their goals.

Sixteen year old me thought dropping out of school wasn't a big deal but I learned very quickly that I'd grow to regret it. By obtaining my GED, I hope to achieve a higher education, get a well meaningful career that I enjoy, and set a good example for my children. I'm truly blessed to have a wonderful opportunity such as this to make all of these things happen.

Learning Changes Lives

Donald Kearns – Vestiaire St. Joseph Learning Centre GED Program

<https://vestiairstjoseph.com/vestiaire-learning-center>

Teacher: Jill Durepos

When we grow up we realize life is just one big learning opportunity in which we all learn life's lessons. Either through repeating mistakes or life's missed opportunities do we gain the will power an individual will need to obtain a G.E.D or Diploma; either will provide us with the tools and learning skills needed to become a perfect employee for big businesses or governments.

Every individual must make money to adapt and conquer this life we have been given. I know personally, learning and studying to pass my G.E.D has opened more doors for me than ever before. I was a big procrastinator for a long time. I quit school in about grade 10 and I regret every minute of wasted opportunities lost where I could have been making money or leading a normal life. Instead I stayed home and wallowed in my own misery, thinking life had nothing to offer a poor unintelligent young person like myself. I am glad I was able to overcome my fears and social anxiety. Learning has brought a sense of peace to my self-image where I felt I could not, now I feel confident and alive for the first time in about ten years.

It's now 2020 and I will pass my G.E.D as well as gain a college degree but one step at a time as the old saying goes. I believe in myself more than ever before. My ego has hit an all-time high which is bad and good at the same time, only through pure determination have I received the knowledge and power needed to achieve my goals. I can't wait to learn and grow as one can only do upon listening and living life's experiences. Learning has altered my life in so many ways. I was 240 pounds and down on life but because of a certain someone special in my life, I call a good friend, I now I weigh 140 pounds because I decided to revamp my entire life for the better.

I managed to transform everything wrong in my life simply because of pure determination. I want to continue to evolve and if there's one thing worth changing, it's one's self. I did it! and I know others out there might want to give up but my advice to them is to not make the same mistakes I did in my past. Stay in school and be more than just another person trying to pass a grade. Be better to yourself, never give up; learn from my mistakes and make as many friends as you can. Times may seem tough, but remember tomorrow brings a better day, learn to love yourself like I have, and remember that struggle only makes us stronger.

Learning Changes Lives

Tina Labonte – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Maria Donovan

I left school early because I was not given the opportunity to be a child. I was forced to grow up too fast. I left neglect and abuse at home and started having babies. I was still one myself! I have found myself in many abusive situations. I returned to school as an adult after a near death experience. I was in a really bad car accident in which I broke my back. I knew I would not be able to do laborer jobs anymore, and all the good jobs I wanted, I wasn't qualified for because they asked for at least grade 12.

Returning to school to study for my high school equivalency has been a challenge mixed with joy. I have met new friends and keep meeting more. It has given me more skills to study and I have passed one exam so far. The adult Education program in Nackawic, helped improve my self-confidence. I plan to achieve my goals one step at a time. Passing my GED is the first step, and it will open up doors and more opportunities for me, and give me the chance to pursue my dream of future education. My goals are to have a secure job that I can enjoy without breaking my back. I know that I can accomplish anything I put my mind to. My dream is to accomplish my GED, so I can do something good with my life. I am a person who likes to help people. When I help people, it makes me feel good.

My goal for my future is to keep working toward getting my GED. When I successfully earn my GED, it will give me even more opportunities. I want to go to NBCC and take the Administrative Assistant course and learn more computer and typing skills. Upon completing this course, it is my goal to find employment in an office setting like, Service NB, Day and Ross, or any other office in my local area, and to use my bilingualism working with the public.

Learning Changes Lives

C. L. – NB Women’s Correction Centre

When I was a little girl I loved to read and write. When I wasn’t in school you’d fine me on my father’s computer writing short fiction stories. I always loved to learn too. I failed grade two so I had to repeat the grade.

My bullies were 2 years younger than me. I’ve been bullied since kindergarten. Simply because of where I lived. I lived in a lane. In a trailer. One day in grade 8, another girl started punching me in gym. I kicked her and I got suspended, so I quit. I was 13 years old and I had no desire to go back because I feared the other students. I had my first child at 19 years old. Social workers would ask me when I would be going back to school. I told them I wanted to wait until after Aidan turned 1 years old. Sadly, I never did go back to school, I met Aidan’s father when I was 17...he was 34, he started abusing me after I had our son, he was very controlling, I felt him a couple of months after our son Noah was born.

Unfortunately I got with another man, and he was alright at first, he was very loving and acted like he was my sons father, they started calling him daddy on their own. However after my daughter Aira was born he started to change, he would pay less attention on Aidan and Noah, but then I had Gabriel and things started to get bad. He would make fun of me and put me down. Then we moved to Campbellton and things got even worse. CPS were involved for a while and they ended up taking all 4 of my children away from me. I finally left him in April of 2019. I planned on going back to school but my mental health was not so good.

I ended up hanging out with dangerous s people, which eventually ended with me in another relationship. He made me feel something I haven’t felt before. He eventually moved in with me, sadly he was an addict...and he turned me into one too.

Then one night last August he started beating me. This was almost midnight. It ended at 4:30am. I finally found the strength to fight back...only I went too far and hurt him very badly. Since then I’ve always felt this guilt, the strong need to apologize. But why? I’ve been abused all my life physically and sexually and I finally snapped. For the longest time I’ve lost myself, couldn’t put myself back together and I’m still struggling, I’m learning to love myself all over again.

Which brings us today. I’m trying to make a difference, I find that its not too late to save myself and I can be okay again, that’s what I want other than my GED, I’m in adult school, I go every day of the week. My goal?...to become an author of course. And I hope to make my children proud one day.

Learning Changes Lives.**Apoline Martin** – Miramichi Adult Learning<https://miramichiadultlearning.com>

Teacher: Howard Lane

In everyday life, I get asked these questions all the time from family and friends: “Apoline, why did you go back to school?”, “How is it changing your life?”, “What are your future plans once you are done with your journey?” Today, I am going to share with you why I chose the life path I am on today.

As a young child, I struggled to learn because I have Asperger’s Syndrome a mild form of Autism causing me to have poor ‘social cues’, facial expressions and can cause learning problems as well. My brain is wired differently compared to a person who does not have this mental disability. The teachers did not have the patience to teach me and gave me the same material over and over again, passed me because they did not want to teach me. I had to teach myself how to read and write in English because the teachers did not know how to teach me. For example, when I was in 4th grade, the teacher wrote on my report card that I was “getting placed” in 5th grade. That was when I realized the school system was failing me.

When I left high school, I decided to go back to take my upgrading and my GED, because I wanted to go to University and take my Bachelor’s Degree in Music. But, six months after I left high school, I got pregnant with my daughter Aliyah. After I gave birth to her, I thought it was very important for me to upgrade and get my GED.

When my daughter started school, I started as well. It’s been two years since I began my upgrading for my GED. I have come a long way. I know more Math now than I did and my English has improved. This year, I am writing my GED English test in June. I never would of thought six years down the road that I would get this far. But with good teachers it makes a great difference!

My future plans after I complete my GED, I will be going for my Office Administration course at NBCC. After Aliyah graduates high school, I am moving to Fredrickton to take my Medical Administration course and get off of Social Assistance, move out of my subsidized housing and get my own house, to give my daughter a better life than I had. My mom decided to be a stay at home mom and with Social Assistance, we have struggled over the years financially.

In conclusion, going back to school changed my life for the better. I now help my daughter with her homework while I am working towards achieving my goals for the future. I can’t wait to see what the future has in store, but I know I am on the right path.

Learning Changes Lives

Travis Martin – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

I returned to school to brighten my future. And since then, I've gained confidence in math, which I didn't even think was possible. High school was awful for me. Not knowing how to do math was embarrassing more than frustrating. However, the frustration was real; school was a daily struggle. Having a math teacher that belittled you was the worst. But today is a different day. Karen Garnett, my teacher, made me see that math isn't something to worry about, but something that can be accomplished.

Now I'm always looking forward to the future! My plans are to make my son proud of me and show him that being a good dad and man is how you should be. I raised my boy all by myself, so for the longest time it was just us. All my strength and power goes into making his childhood as perfect as I can. So now I go to school full time and work part time.

My daddy was in the military, and he was a perfect father. He always showed me how to be a good father with love, support, caring and endless generosity. The example my father showed us was key. He had several degrees and diplomas. My dad's determination to be better, not only in his life but in ours as well, paved the path in which I walk today.

I'm looking forward to being a conservation officer and doing what I love for a career. So going back for my GED is step one. This class has given me the confidence to go further with my education. My girlfriend, Mariah, always supports me with my schooling. Karen, our teacher, has plenty of patience and persistence. I have found out that I have severe math anxiety. I never even knew it was a thing. Now I'm doing math that I've been avoiding most of my life. So a big thank you and much gratefulness goes to Karen Garnett.

I know without a doubt that I can make it in whatever field I enter. I made a call to the conservation office, and I'm going for a ride along to see what it will be all about. So my hopes and dreams are coming true. That's what returning to school has done for me. It has given me confidence, strength and a positive outlook to the future.

Learning Changes Lives

Cheryl Michaud – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

Choosing to continue my education and obtain my GED has been a life long challenge. Education has changed a lot in forty-two years. Returning to learning will allow me to accomplish a goal, gain knowledge and skills, and create new opportunities.

First, it is important to get my GED because school is a structure of learning and obtaining skills needed for life, which I was deprived of. Also, I want to be as proud of myself as I was of my children's education. I did not have encouragement, only disappointment. I had no self esteem. Education is so important, so I put a plan in motion to encourage my children. I paid for them to stay in school and gave them extra money when they graded. I also wanted to overcome the struggles of my past. I was absent from learning in my early years due to family issues. I was mistreated, moved frequently, was not properly cared for, and I was finally removed from living with my parents. At the age of eighteen, I became a teenage mother. Additionally, it is important to complete my GED in order to gain knowledge and skills as well as commit to a goal and see it through. I told my children, "Get your grade twelve and you can get jobs easier than I did."

Obtaining better life skills for daily living is important. Math skills are needed to understand banking and money management for controlling my finances, including budgeting money for spending on groceries, in restaurants and in department stores. Science skills are useful for making home made items and mixing ingredients which are so essential to our daily lives. Finally, learning to improve reading and writing skills is so important. This was always a challenge for me. Grammar was and is so intimidating. I get nervous and have a fear that I won't succeed at this.

One of the most important reasons for getting my GED is to create new opportunities for myself. I had an amazing job in the environmental services at a hospital. My goal was set, and I was securing my future. I had to leave it all behind and leave Nova Scotia. I had been battered for thirty years in my relationship, and tried as I may, I could not bear it. In addition to moving home to New Brunswick, I tried to get a job at the Fredericton hospital. I did not qualify for a job due the change in the required education level. I was upset, frustrated and homeless. I ended up in a shelter and took lower wage jobs to survive. I ate at the soup kitchen. I was unable to earn enough money after getting an apartment. I have since met an amazing guy who showed me a better life. I moved from Fredericton to Plaster Rock. I continued to work in odd jobs, not securing my future as of yet. Most importantly, I need to secure my future for

retirement. I want to be able to contribute to a pension and have money to survive in my later years.

Getting my GED will, no doubt, be one of my biggest accomplishments in life, other than being a survivor and raising my children. It will allow me to reach a life long goal, build my knowledge and skills in my daily life, and potentially create new opportunities for a better future. Although I was once deprived of my education, I've taken control of my learning and will be extremely proud of seeing it through.

Learning Changes Lives

Tami Michaud – Miramichi Adult Learning

<https://miramichiadultlearning.com>

Teachers: Tammy Hamilton & John Freeze

When I was young I had a hard time in school. My family did not come from money, we survived but barely. Going to school for me was very hard I always felt out of place, made fun of and just never fit in. I quit school in my 11th year.

After quitting school I worked as a waitress until I got married and had my daughter. When she got older I started back into the work force but all I could find is jobs in retail and restaurant establishments because I did not have an education. This was very depressing for me but still I did not change the situation.

Fast forward to 2017 and its what should of been my 30th High School Reunion and I got a call from a former classmate asking me to attend because my name came up on their class list . So after thinking about it i went. I seen a of people who were kind to me in school and that I had missed during the years. Some former classmates came up to me and asked it I had graduated with them and I told them I did not, feeling a bit embarrassed I left.

The reunion stuck with me for a long time and got me thinking What if I could go back to school now ? So I looked into the GED programs around town and I made an appointment with Mr Greg Daigle at the Petal Program. He encouraged me to try the program, go get tested, which I did. My instructor told me that I was very smart and would not have a hard time doing the work. It took a lot of getting used to and walking through that door on the first day I was so nervous but made to feel at home and was encouraged to stick to the program.

So at 50 years old I am in class full time, I am now in my fifth month and have passed four of my five exams so far. I am going to school with younger and older adults and am enjoying school later in life,I am also very proud of what I have accomplished here in this short amount of time.

My confidence, self esteem and my plans for my future are only getting higher and higher. I let my friends and family know that they all can change their lives with the GED program. I will graduate this coming May 2020 and who knows College may be next, I am not going to wait another thirty years to achieve my goals!

Why I Returned to Learning

Brenda Mitchell – Open Doors GED & Adult Learning

<https://opendoorsged.ca/>

Teacher: Kelly Nikirk

The reason I returned to learning is because I wanted to better myself. I was the youngest of eleven children, and times were hard back then, so I left school at the age of sixteen to get a job. I told myself that I would go back to school as soon as I could, but then years went by and I had a family of my own. By the time my kids grew older and started school, I was a single mother. I looked at them and said to myself, “Who is going to help them with their homework?” I wanted my children to have a better education and future than what I had. As a single mother, I was working and trying my best for them by making sure their homework was done.

One day I was talking to someone and told them about my concerns. The person mentioned a program that Service Canada was offering. It was a three-year where you work in the summer and go to school in the winter. I was thinking at the time that I was too old to learn, but I put my worries aside and started the program. After the three years was over, I wrote my tests. I passed reading but failed the other four. I was discouraged because I did not realize how close I came to passing the others, so I went back to work.

Many years passed. I was talking to a friend and she was telling me about Open Doors Adult Learning Centres. I gave them a call and started back to school in January 2019. I am glad to have an opportunity for a second chance at my education. I am currently still working on it, but I am not giving up this time. I only have my math left to receive my GED.

How would my life change once I receive my GED? It will give me the confidence and determination to reach my next goal. I never thought in my lifetime that I would be writing poetry or essays for contests, but by doing this, it helps me to get out of my comfort zone. As I work on my poems and essays, I can see how much my writing has improved. My next goal is to go to NBCC in September of 2020 to take the Educational Assistant Program. The reason I want to take this program is to help children to learn and to show them how important education is. For me personally, I know how far I have come with my education and I want to keep learning, because you are never too old to learn.

Learning Changes Lives

Jayne Nevers – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Maria Donovan

When I was going to school, I struggled with poor health, allergies and asthma. I also struggled with difficulty in learning and was bullied by my teacher, peers and at home. In high school I struggled and gave up in grade ten at the age of nineteen. I tried taking a G.E.D. course in McAdam with the help of my husband, but unfortunately, I only passed two out of five exams. Again I felt disappointed. Life went on, and now I am married with three children but when my youngest was a year and six months of age, she was diagnosed with Angelman Syndrome. The day I became a mom with special needs was a day of fear and tears and the uncertainty of what lay ahead for her and the family.

My husband and I were fortunate to go to a conference in Ottawa where we learned more about Angelman Syndrome. We took the information and put it in a booklet that would help others. I wanted to share the information about Angelman syndrome with other families so I joined the board of Early Intervention. I also was blessed to go to another conference where I was asked to speak on the experience of raising a child of special needs. I was honored to be asked to speak and share my knowledge about special needs children at this major conference. When my daughter was young I knew I had to work on what I can do for her, and one of the things I worked on was taking different courses that would help her to communicate. When I took the courses I realized I have the ability to learn. I have tried 3 times to earn my GED but each time have been pulled away because I have always put my family needs first and put my needs on hold. I am very grateful to be here learning from a teacher who wants to make a difference by helping me succeed in my education and to have a chance to work on my goals.

Returning to school as an adult is not easy. I have to juggle home and school and staff for my disabled daughter. With so many who need me, it can get complicated. It has been stressful so far but I know in the end, once I receive my diploma and earn my long snot after GED certification it will have been worth it.

One of my future goals, after earning my GED, is to continue my studies at college. My goal of owning my own business is a big dream and I know I will need that extra education in business management. The business I want to set up is to have small homes and a community for special needs adults. I hope that, in time, and through a lot of hard work, I can achieve my goals and make a difference for my family as well as for others.

Learning Changes Lives

Shakira Niyonizeye – Fredericton Day Adult Learning Program (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Alexa Washburn

As the first child in the family, I always wished to be a role model to my young sisters and brother, but also to my son. I believed that going to school and getting a better job would be one good example to them. But because I was raised in the refugee camp I could not get to finish high school and do what I wanted to do.

I was born in Burundi. My parents escaped the war and moved to Tanzania in 1993. I started school in Tanzania, but when I was in grade 6, all schools in the refugee camp were stopped and demolished because the government wanted us to go back to Burundi. My parents did not feel safe to go back to Burundi, and they decided to apply for another safe country. After years of struggling in the refugee camp, we were finally given a chance to be among people who were chosen to come to Canada. We were so happy and we could not wait to be in Canada to go back to school and live our life in a safe way.

In 2015 my son and I were the first to come to New Brunswick. It was a long trip full of experiences and memories. I remember when I got to the Airport In Toronto, everyone was busy and I did not know where to go. I was standing trying to figure out which way I could take. I was standing in front of the elevator, but I did not know because It was my first time to see an elevator. I saw the door opening and everyone went in. Because I did not know where to go and I could not ask because I did not speak English, I followed them and the door was closed. I could not believe what I just saw and my heart was going fast thinking in my mind what was going on and where I was going. That was my scariest memory ever.

AS a newcomer who could not speak English I decided to go to learn English at MCAF so that I could go back to school. I learned so many things including what we could do if we finished learning English. Some of my classmates went to work, but I decided to come to take a GED so that I can accomplish my goal of attending NBCC to become an LPN. Studying has been good. I have learned so many things and I have met new people, which is good.

Learning Changes Lives

Christopher O’Keefe – Bath Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Beverley Haines

My name is Christopher Thomas O’Keefe, and this is my short story about why I decided to mosey on back to the path of education. You see, traditional public education was never a huge interest of mine considering the technological boom that happened during the earlier part of my life; I’m twenty-two if you’re curious. However, when I was coming out of middle school things like phones, laptops, The Internet and other things of that nature were officially the norm for everybody. Considering you use to have to buy thousand dollars encyclopedias, the internet made it very handy to find something out when you needed to find it out.

The reason I left high school had nothing to do with the internet though, funny enough I left school because I was bullied a lot by kids and teachers for being different. I don’t need to get into too much detail about it but when I was home, I didn’t have depression or anxiety from being in a place I didn’t feel was right for me. Kids at school do so much messed up stuff and they still don’t realise how bad it is and I was so passionate and inspired and most people were miserable and strange to me. So, when I was at home my curiosity led me to study the things I was interested in, via the Internet; I learned about philosophy, the heavens (astronomy), sacred plant medicines, and stuff like that.

I started to realise more about our world than school was able to teach me. Our education system is cold and sterile and uninspiring, at the time when I was most curious. I wanted to study what I was interested in and so I did. After awhile however, having been in group homes and dealing with teenager stuff, I realized, you can’t get a job with just the teaching of Plato and Sir Diogenes, although I wish you could. On top of that I was dating a girl that was basically looking after me and I broke up with her because it didn’t feel right; I ended up at my mother’s house for a long time just sitting around being depressed.

Then one day I remember what one of the group home workers said the first time I tried going back to PETL, “idol hands do the devils work and its not as bad as you think.” And so, I came back to get my G.E.D with what little inspiration I had.

I’m going to finish by saying honestly since I have been back, doing schoolwork and re-learning what I missed in high school has been therapeutic to say the least, it also feels good to just do something productive for a change. I even found new inspiration when the recruitment advisor from NBCC stopped by to talk about further education; she gave me hope for future that I haven’t thought about enough to talk about, although its nice to know there is more I can do now.

In the words of a wise man “It’s better to lay bricks in NBCC than it is to sell blankets from your TeePee.”

Learning Changes Lives

Jessica Paul - Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Susan Howard

There are three reasons why I returned to learning after twenty years. The reasons are: my wallet, my future, and my children.

I was raised by a single mother of meager means. Money, the lack of it, was always an issue. The struggle to survive was all I knew. Now, twenty years later, I know that surviving isn't the same as living. So, by returning to learning, my opportunities will increase immeasurably; allowing me to finally start living instead of just surviving.

The second reason I returned to learning is the future. I have always wanted to own my own business. I would start with a small store and learn the ropes of operating a business. Then I plan to expand with other business ideas and maybe even get involved with real estate. The future is wide open and the opportunities are endless! By returning to learning, I can make all this happen!

The third reason I returned to learning is because of my children. I have adolescent children that are struggling themselves to finish school. I tell them every school day at 7 a.m., "OK, let's get up! It's time for school! If Mom can do this, so can you!" I hope to be the positive role model they need to continue their learning journey to success, just like me.

In closing, I am so thankful that I decided to return to learning even after all this time. I am looking forward to the future more than ever and I can't wait to see what great things I will accomplish once I earn my GED diploma.

Learning Changes Lives

Samantha Paul – St. Mary’s Community Adult Learning Program (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne Wilson

As a young child growing up in a trailer park I’ve always been bullied. I felt like I was the only girl in my class who felt different because I wore glasses and boy clothes. I grew up as a tomboy always wanting to play sports or run around in the dirt. I wasn’t like most girls in my class who wore dresses and had their hair up in pigtails. I didn’t have many friends that went to the same school as I did, so I was left to play alone all by myself. Making friends was never easy for me, as I was a very shy girl who wore glasses and stood out from the rest.

I’ve always been surrounded by people bullying me, or teasing me. As a native girl being surrounded by family members who love to tease and make jokes. I felt very hurt and out of place because I wasn’t like my mother or my sisters and my mother hated that. I look and think and act just like my father, who is such a gentle and kind person.

When I started my first year of high school, I moved in with my mother which was on the Kingsclear Reserve. Being the new girl on the reservation it became easier to make new friends because we all lived close to each other so I was thrilled to have friends, but the bullying continued once high school started. High school was rough for me, as I hung around with the wrong crowd and got into a lot of trouble. I went from getting good grades to barely passing, and eventually I left school.

At the age of 29, I returned to learning and attended a GED program that’s was held at the St Mary’s Band Office on the third floor. I came to knowing about the GED program by contacting one of the counsellors of the St Mary’s Band. Upon coming to the GED class, I was nervous but also excited that I took the first step to bettering my future. While in the GED course starting out, I was surprised to learn how much I remembered about certain subjects like Language Arts. I love to write and reminisce about the past, as my past experiences has made me the woman I am today. Attending the GED program with other adults I learned to love school again. Learning has changed my outlook on the future as I thought before that I had no future as I had been dealing with depression for awhile.

From a year ago to now I’ve changed in so many ways, and have grown into becoming a more confident person. I am strong enough now to know that my future is in my hands and that nobody can change that. My goals for the future after I graduate from the GED program is to attend NBCC, as I know that they have a prestigious course as a Personal Support Worker.

My Learning Journey

George Pearce – Oromocto Adult Learning Program (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Sarah McLean

My name is George Pearce. I am 66 years old and I proudly attend the GED class in Oromocto through Central Valley Adult Learning Association.

In 1969 I was in grade 9. I had no choice but to drop out of school to care for my brothers and sisters as they were very ill with German measles. Even though going to school was always very important to my family, I knew that I needed to make a choice and care look after my family. At the time I wasn't sure how or when I would return to school, but it was always something that was always on my mind.

Shortly after leaving school I joined the Canadian Armed Forces to further provide for my family and make a life for myself. Through my time in the military I was able to see a lot of the world, visiting countries I would never in a million years otherwise be able to explore, however I still did not have my high school diploma. Upon my retirement from the military in 2011 I decided it was finally my time to return to class after forty one years of being out of school.

Returning to school was an adjustment to say the least, but it was exactly what I knew I needed. I can remember holding my head high as I walked in the classroom that first day to meet my teacher and to complete some assessments. I met my classmates and got settled in to my seat. Here I was, back in school. I may have been the oldest in the class, but that didn't bother me a bit. I was finally back doing what I had stopped all those years ago. I was learning!

Going back to school has changed my life in many positive ways. Many of the ways that it has bettered my life and my personal mental health. I am now more confident in my day to day conversations with family and friends. I am able to confidently work part time at a job that allows for me to attend class in the afternoons and most importantly I am a much happier person. I am proud of myself.

Besides passing my final test, at this point in my life I would say my goals for the future would be to walk across the stage at graduation day, receive my certificate and have my picture taken with a graduation gown. This is something that I have longed for for years now. I cannot wait for this to happen and to share that picture with my friends and family.

I realize that everything in life happens for a reason. To both the younger and older people I come in contact with, I always encourage them to return to learning and to never give up. I hope that I will always be a true testament of what a "lifelong learner" is. No matter your age, learning matters!

Learning Changes Lives**Teisha Perley** – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Susan Howard

I returned to learning to earn a GED for various reasons. The first reason being, I want to show my four children that it is never too late to learn and get educated. They have seen me work many dead end jobs just to pay bills on time and keep food on the table. I decided that they deserve a more educated mother to look up to, someone to help with homework and who could care for them better financially. I want to spend more time with them rather than working all hours of the day and night. Being a mother is my biggest achievement thus far. To improve my education is one of my major life goals.

Since I was really young, my grandparents always stressed the importance of having an education. I knew going back to school would open many door to better my future. I want to feel accomplished and finish what I started. Making this positive decision to return to learning, is one of the best things I could do for my family and myself.

I am an Aboriginal woman, born and raised in a community where there are high rates of alcoholism and addictions. As a little girl, my grandmother would have me read the newspaper to her because she could not read well. She would always tell me stories about how she wished she would have finished her schooling. She had to stop going to school because she had to help raise her brothers and sisters while her father was away at work. They wanted what every parent or grandparent wants for their descendants and that's to do better than they have. She wanted me to get an education to become something that I could be proud of and so that I could get a good job.

Upon returning to learning, I've brushed up on my skills which allow me to feel more confident in so many ways. Now I am able to help my children with their homework. I am able to comprehend complex language at community meetings and use my reading comprehension skills daily. Going to class every day helps me feel productive and energized.

I believe returning to learning has changed my life in so many ways from building my confidence, to being a better role model to my children. It makes me feel proud that I am doing something my grandparents wanted me to do and it also gives me the skills I need to pursue my future goals.

Learning Changes Lives

N. P. – NB Women's Correction Centre

Thinking back to when I was young, life was hard as well as unkind to me.

Sometimes I used to wonder if my parents cared more about me and my siblings or their addiction to alcohol. When they were drunk and fighting as they always did, they would come into my bedroom fighting in front of me, hitting me as well as each other. When I was young my parents sold drugs as well as I. When they went out to support their addiction to alcohol, so much that there were times that I wasn't sure I was even going to have food to eat. So they left me at someone's house. She was the reserved drunk, for hours and sometimes overnight.

Through all this there were wonderful times, I can remember like getting my first black riding horse. Also around the age of 13, I met a charming man named (Patrick) and later he was going to be my future husband and father of two beautiful, amazing girls (Jordan and Kirsten). All of these things happened are exactly the reason I decided to return to school.

I was very determined not to be like my parents, wishing to grow up and be the best.

I would be the best mom, grandmother, and wife.

Even with all the events that happened and things that occurred I still was determined to get myself cleaned up from drugs. I also started to take care of two of my grandchildren. I owe it not only to myself but to them as well to have a bigger and brighter future. Once I complete my GED, it won't stop there. I would like to continue my education and study environmental technology.

Once I am done with that degree, I can give my family the life I never had growing up.

I am finally looking forward to the life I am creating for myself and for them. I am very blessed to have this opportunity and to be heading in the right direction. I believe that I am growing as a person and realizing that things happen to us in our lives so we can learn from them.

I believe now that this experience will bring me closer to knowing myself as a person, my relationship with my family and even with friends. I will not let this educational opportunity that I was given all these years later, go to waste. I feel comfortable that I can be a better role model to my children and grandchildren, showing them that it's never too late to continue my education. They can do and be anything they would like to be.

All it takes is a lot of determination and grit. I can continue to learn as well as make changes to my life such as getting better paying jobs.

Learning Changes Lives

Jennifer Provenzano - Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Maria Donovan

Learning is about growing into a person you become.

Taking the knowledge of past life experiences, the good, bad and ugly and making it something more.

Education in my life will lead me to the right direction to have a better future with many doors opened of opportunities.

Starting in the present, I've been working extremely hard on achieving my GED.

I have a few ideas of what I want to become, but still undecided.

I've been blessed with this opportunity to create achievements for my future.

I have written a poem of my life, the hardships of my past and my determination of creating a better future for myself.

Inner light

My journey into this world was never easy.

Blue and lifeless from my mother's womb.

Angels gave me breathe, a purpose.

Standing strong by my side, keeping me safe.

Why did they take my wings?

I can no longer fly,

falling from the sky,

I lost my way.

Splashing into the depths of the oceans, lost at sea.

They hold my head under water.

Need to breathe, please let me breathe.

Grip is strong, can't break free.

Dragging me deep down,

beneath the earth's core.

Lights off, sitting in darkness.

Screaming, no one hears me.
Broken mind,
Broken body,
darkness takes me.
Seconds,
Minutes,
hours,
days,
months,
years,
Anyone hear me, through my silent screams?
The silent whispers.
Opened your eyes, make your light.
Pushing my dead body, through knife cutting glass,
Getting closer, a pit of fire.
Falling in the infernal flames.
The smell of my Burning flesh.
My inner voice screams,
I am the light.
Flaming wings combust out of my body.
Walking through fire, one step at a time.
They can't drag me under, losing grips.
Monsters are burning.
Pushing myself through the darkness
Surrounded by fire, I can see my way.
Reaching for the surface, no longer drowning.
Take a breath, I can breathe.
I can fly, but not that high.
Just don't look back, keep reaching.
Time to go home, and take what's mine.
The door, turn the knob.
no more fear.
A light, kissing my skin.
Focus, clear mind.
Determination, a future.
One step forward, my direction.
Good morning class
I'm coming for everything they said I couldn't have

Learning Changes Lives

Safaa Raslan – GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Deb Bradbury & Niki Gulliver

Learning changes lives is perfect.

I returned to school as an adult. At first, I felt a little funny. It was really hard to learn. After a long time, I quit school but sometimes the state of affairs motivates the person to do what he didn't think he could do. This time, the state of affairs pushed me to go back to school. I really love school and my dream is to learn and finish the degree and be a teacher. Now I am back to school in Canada.

It is very important to study because we are living in a country with a different language. Study is needed to improve my language and my skills. Now I can help my kids if they have homework, and I can read my mail or any letters. I strive to get the GED, then I will go study at NBCC to get degree for my early childhood education.

Learning is like being on top of the mountains jutting into the sky. Learning is light coming out of darkness and gloom.

Learning Changes Lives

Jess Robichaud - Miramichi Adult Learning

<https://miramichiadultlearning.com>

Teachers: Beth Losier & Kevin Keoughan

Albert Einstein once said, "Anyone who has never made a mistake has never tried anything new." I don't think there is any statement that could be more true. I have always strived to be consciously learning every day of my life, and I am not sure that learning is given the importance it deserves. I believe Albert Einstein had the correct idea when it came to learning. He would sit and ponder a problem until he found a solution, and that might seem dull to a lot of people. The fact is that the brain craves activity, and you have so many subconscious connections to everything you do on a daily basis.

When it comes to learning and trying to constantly be actively learning that is for most of us easier said than done. The majority of us are not able to actively pursue the form of learning we wish to truly change our lives, and we end up settling which is truly tragic. The spark of creativity and knowledge should never go out. We have a obligation to ourselves to actively chase after positive change. I know seeking it is slowly transforming my life, and I feel happier as each day goes by.

The biggest motivator for me to seek learning and to change my life was the pain of loss. I finally realized that no one thing lasts forever, but that is the point of why we are here to do something that gives our lives meaning. The loss of my grandfather even now leaves me feeling empty, and I hope that he would be proud of me trying to change my life. He always believed in me and I was grateful of all the years of love and kindness from both him and my grandmother. I believe sometimes we have to experience the loss of something or someone that makes up our foundation, or else we may not reach the conclusion we require for the motivation we need.

I believe that mental health played a huge role in me wanting to change my life. I have always been anxious even as a child. I just never fully comprehended what it was growing up. I believe there comes a point where despite your mental state you have to take a deep breath, before you tell yourself it's time to get moving. You only change your life for yourself which you have to place a value on. I came to a point where my mental health was getting worse without doing something about it. The learning gives your brain something else to do other than be in a constant state of worry and frustration. I have been in a much better place mentally since returning to school, and for that I am eternally grateful to everyone involved.

Albert Einstein also said, "It is the supreme art of the teacher to awaken joy in creative

expression and knowledge." I began to watch Lectures from M.I.T (Massachusetts Institute of Technology) by a professor named Walter Lewin. He is such an amazing Professor he made me fall in love with physics. I believe this is how we change our lives through learning. We need to pursue what interests us no matter the cost. I believe we need to cut the negativity from our lives to succeed in this. You need to always move forward towards your goals, and learning is one of the first steps to doing just that.

Learning Changes Lives

Nour Saffaf - GED-WES Pilot (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca>

Teacher: Deb Bradbury & Niki Gulliver

Learning is light and ignorance is darkness. This is a wisdom that I heard since I was a child. When I was a child, my parents advised me and my siblings to learn. They would explain to us how education is beneficial in our lives, and how it will help us improve and develop in life.

My siblings and I went to school where we were studying hard and we also had high marks in exams. I studied in school until Grade 11. Every grade I passed, I was over the moon. I was anxious to study in a higher grade. But unfortunately, I had to quit school and get married. Even though I got married, I didn't give up. I continued to study in Syria in Grade 12. I was so happy when I was preparing for my exams. However, my husband and I decided to move to Jordan because of the war in Syria. By that time, I was so upset as I couldn't attend my exams.

When we were in Jordan, I didn't even think about learning as I had three young children. They needed my care. After we lived in Jordan for four years, we moved to Canada. I like this country, I like to learn English and think about my children. I want them to learn and speak English very well. And they really do! I studied ESL at MCAF. After I finished Level 5, I began to study for my GED. I am excited to get a diploma.

I like to study for my GED because I get to improve my Math and English. I am also learning many new words. After I finish my GED, I will look for a job. However, I don't really know what kind of job I will look for yet. When I went back to study in Canada, it affected me a lot because I was doing something I liked. Also, everyday I think about my children and I won't stop advising them how education is good for their lives.

In the end, as a human I like to learn something new everyday in my life. I inspire this wisdom in my life as education is lifelong from the cradle to the grave.

Returning to Learning

Trent A. Scott – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

I returned to learning so I could better myself and get my GED. My goal is to go to community college and get the trade I want. Also, I want to make my family and my kids proud of me.

I find that I have learned a lot more each year. My learning has made me proud of myself. I hope that I can get my GED, get my trade and get on with my life. I am willing to work hard to get a good education. I find I have been on the right track now to learn with the help of my teacher.

My aim is to go to college, get my trade in bricklaying, and some day have my own business. But I know if I get the trade I want, I will have to work for some company to get my apprenticeship, and then I can go out on my own.

I find I have learned a lot more out of the computer course I am taking, and I enjoy taking the course. The more I learn, the more I enjoy about the course.

I am quite excited to see about getting into community college this September. I have been trying very hard to better myself.

I really like my teacher. She is a very good teacher. She is very kind and helpful, and she never gives up on me. She is always thinking of her students and wants them to do well in their lives. She is also very considerate of people trying to get their lives back on track. I also feel that my teacher should receive a medal for all the hard work she does for her students.

I enjoy going to school because I find I am learning a lot more and improving my math. When I get my GED, I know that I am going to need my math and English. So I am going to try very hard to get my diploma. I feel like I've been doing very well this term.

I know I will also need my skills with the course. I'm going to get my bricklaying course. Then I know everyone who has supported me will be proud of me for going back to school and that I finally got my GED.

Learning Changes Lives

Salena Theimann – Somerset Adult Learning Program

<http://sjkingsadultlearning.ca>

Teacher: Jennifer Moland

My name is Salena Thiemann and I have recently returned to learning. Prior to this opportunity I found myself working at just about every job you can imagine and still wasn't happy. In doing this I felt purposeless.

During my search for purpose I realized two very important things. Firstly, that you need an education to have any type of meaningful career. And secondly, that as people we aren't all given an equal opportunity to have an education. As a person that is blessed to be granted the chance to have an education, I think it would be selfish to not take advantage of it. Those are my reasons for returning to learning.

If you ask me, education is one of the most powerful things on earth. It has the power to change people's lives drastically. In fact, returning to learning has changed me in ways I would have never imagined. Before taking this class I would have always called myself a confident person. However, it wasn't until taking this opportunity that I realized just how confident I could be. Previously I let little things hold me back from achieving the things that I not only wanted but deserved. Now that have this new found confidence I feel like an unstoppable force ready to take on the world and I will never allow anything to hold me back from reaching my goals again.

My goals moving forward are to attend the Business Administrative Executive course at NBCC and then to have a successful career in my field. As a young mom myself I also aspire to inspire any girls in that situation to go out and achieve great things because it's truly not the hand that you are dealt but how you're playing your cards.

Learning Changes Lives

Toni-Shania Thorne – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

Learning; A step to take, and a step well worth taking! When you hear the phrase “Adult Learning” or “Going back to learning” after being away from this environment for so long and probably for more reasons than one, it can be scary, and even discouraging. Although it is a tough decision, and step to obtain it will forever be your favorite one if you strive and succeed.

There are great benefits to attending and achieving your Adult Learning Certificate, at any age or stage in your life. It gives you education, better career options, it prompts you in a better direction to be the role model you desire to be, not only all of these benefits will occur but you will also get a boost in your self-esteem, for have accomplished such a what seemed daunting task. This is the beginning of a new chapter, rather than the end of your story.

I came back to the Woodstock Adult Learning program, to gain my GED for exactly all of the above reasons, and even though I don’t know what I would like to do yet, I know I want to pursue a career in helping people on a grand scale. Without a diploma, I could kiss that dream goodbye, but thanks to the Adult Learning Program I am able to obtain a diploma outside of high school and continue to better myself, and my future.

Due to several reasons I wasn’t able to finish high school, and this leap gave me what I needed to succeed. The Education isn’t even the best part about that certificate, it is the sense of pride and accomplishment you feel in yourself for having set a goal you thought you would never meet, and achieved it, it is that much needed self-esteem boost you were seeking, also it is the warming sense of becoming a better person and role model for the little ones watching your moves.

I came back to learning to further and better myself, and hopefully find a career in helping people on a grand scale, also to encourage my younger siblings and peers to succeed and strive for greater things. Never think for a moment that you cannot achieve your goals, or that you’ve been away from learning too long, because you can do anything you set your mind to. Learning, A step to take and a step worth taking.

Learning Changes Lives

Marina Thornton – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Maria Donovan

I lost my mom four years ago to heart disease and cancer. My mom has always been my hero. If I could have received a degree in life's lessons, I'm sure she would have been my professor! They say "hindsight is 2020", well, I truly do believe this. Looking back, my mother was my inspiration for returning to school. You see, shortly before her taking ill, she asked me to hang a graduation picture on her wall beside my sister and brothers graduation pictures. I chuckled and said, "but I did not graduate!" Her response has never left me, it was the greatest compliment I have ever received from my mother. She replied "Marina, you have graduated from the school of hard knocks, you are a survivor, and I am proud of you."

So, one year ago, I decided it was time to begin this back to school journey. I was going to turn 50 so it was in my eyes, now or never. This decision has forever changed my life. In writing this essay, my "hindsight of 2020" is this: Like my mother, I devoted my life to raising my children. Like my mother, I survived an abusive relationship in my early adult life, but, also like my mother, I broke that cycle of abuse and eventually found my soulmate! I am amazed when I look back and see the support I have received from my husband and from my children. This last year has been the best and worst year of my life - juggling school, work and parenting. Despite all that, my mothers' words echo back, "I am proud of you." I now look at my children and am filled with awe. My third of four will graduate this year and my youngest will graduate next year. This mother could never be more proud. I want them to know, and hope that I have shown them this last year, that anything is possible. Never give up on your dreams!

As for my future goals, well, thanks to returning to school, I now have my foot in the door at my dream job. It has higher pay, benefits, and yes even a small pension to retire with. But for today, like my mom, I can now live my life with my head held high knowing my children are ok, and that they are loved - more than life itself. My only regret is not having that picture on her wall and having her here with me today to celebrate. This is for you, Mom. "Thank You."

How Learning Changes Lives

Tina Thornton – Nackawic Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Maria Donovan

Coming back to school at the age of thirty-five was not as easy as I anticipated it to be. I had a few bumps in the road along this journey that others might not have had, but I had a fire burning inside me longing for a better future for my family. I had hopes and dreams of furthering my education as I had a desire to work in the education system with special needs children, but also work with adults in a home like atmosphere of my own. My son Caleb, who was diagnosed with autism at the age of three, is what brought on this passion. There is a demand in this province for my skills and I can help make a difference, but I need my education.

After Several months in the GED program, I was diagnosed with a learning disability. After the initial shock, I experienced relief as I started getting the support and accommodation that I didn't know I needed. I began to excel and hit many goals such as; passing my first exam, gaining self confidence, and learning skills to further my learning.

Initially, these goals seemed impossible because I wasn't confident in myself. The support and the feedback I received from my teacher, PETL, my classmates and the Neil Squires program was amazing. I can finally say I am proud of myself and I have gained the confidence that I will reach my future goals.

Secondly, writing and passing my first exam was a huge game changer for me. It gave me the confidence I needed to continue to succeed. All the fears I had of that unknown exam vanished after that day I wrote. It's given me the determination I need to get my diploma.

Lastly, the skills I have learned have really changed my way of life. I have developed a routine of coming to school daily, have developed ways to focus so that I can learn and have used audio and visual aids to help me process information. After being exposed to these tools I have a brighter vision for my future as I now understand what I'm reading.

In conclusion, this journey has been so much more than just acquiring my GED. I can say that I have finally found myself and will continue to better my learning and way of life because of the skills I've been taught and the confidence I've gained from passing my exams. This is just the beginning of my journey. My dreams are starting to look like a reality. After I successfully complete my GED I will be going to NBCC and taking Human Services. I have plans started for my current home to be turned into a home for special needs adults. I also will be working part time at the school working with children with special needs. I'm thankful I was given the opportunity to complete my education and live out my dreams.

Learning Changes Lives

Tania Tomah – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Susan Howard

The reason I returned to learning has a lot to do with the structure that comes along with it. My children deserve someone to look up to, so this is the first step to becoming a better role model. The battle of having to wake up early and come to class has become easier. I have more motivation as the days go by, knowing I am closer to a better future.

Returning to learning has created a steady routine for my children and me. I think my children and I needed this structure in our lives because we are happier now. We're in bed at a decent hour, so we all get enough sleep. My children's attendance at school has improved tremendously from previous years. So, not only is this changing my life, but my children's too.

I like to think that I could eventually be someone that not only my children look up to, but many other youth as well. For example, my little brother is in the tenth grade and hates going to school. I want to show him that if I can do this, he can too.

Since I've returned to learning, I find that my vision of my future has become clearer. I have a better idea of what I want to do once I get my GED. I would like to further my education and perhaps study early childhood education. Being confident in my future is something that I always struggled with. I always felt stuck in one spot and couldn't see past tomorrow. Now, I am very confident in my future because of the choice I made to return to learning.

In conclusion, returning to learning has changed my life in multiple ways. I have a better routine. I am a better role model to my children, and my hope for a better future is restored.

Learning Changes Lives

Dallen Vail – Saint John Learning Exchange, CALP Class

<https://www.sjle.org/>

Teacher: Dale Kilpatrick

Acceptance, being cared for, and being loved are so powerful they're crucial to the development of a young mind. I grew up in a low-income home raised by a single parent. Overweight and asthmatic, I was a mixed-race kid in a predominantly white school. I felt alone. Teachers were the bad guys. Learning was the enemy. By the time I made it to high school I had thrown in the towel on education. Good Grades? Not me. I was more concerned with drugs, girls and showing the world how much I didn't care. Music was the most uplifting thing in my life. I idolized the rappers. I'd be just like them and I'd get by how all thugs got by, by being tough. For my efforts I was expelled from school.

At 18 life took a turn for the worse. I dove head first into a world of drugs, toxic friendships, death, and addiction. In my late teens, my mother left the country. I felt more inadequate than ever. I spent the next 10 years battling an intense addiction to prescription medications. I was a sad young man. More than sad I was angry. I was angry at a system that had forgotten me, angry at a world that didn't seem to want me, more importantly I was angry at myself. In my late twenties, after five trips to two different rehabs. I was sober and committed to my recovery. I turned to YouTube and started creating music of my own. Slowly I was developing a passion for film, but YouTube didn't pay the bills. I was reminded of that one day when a friend told me blatantly, "You're a loser." It hurt but he was right. I had quit drugs but now what?

After a long mental debate I decided I would try to earn my GED. I had tried once previously but quit before my first exam. Fear of failure was still with me when I entered Dale Kilpatrick's class. In my first month I wrote and passed four of my exams. That voice in my head that told me I was a failure. Soon was replaced with a new voice that said, "You might not be dumb. In fact you may just be smart." That's when learning began to change my life. My dreams were no longer a joke. When I spoke to Mr. Kilpatrick about my dreams of being a writer, a lawyer or even a filmmaker, he never laughed; instead he provided contact information for people who could help me along my path. My dreams were becoming possibilities. I was beginning to learn not just about science, history, literature, and mathematics but about life second chances and redemption. I am currently studying for my fifth and final exam. When I pass a plan to go to university. Some of the things I'd like to study are: law, English literature, psychology and film. My name is Dallen Vail and learning changed my life.

Learning is Life-Changing

Morgan Vienneau – Alpha Bathurst Community Adult Learning Centre

Teacher: Eunelyn Rosario

Everyone around me told me that it's never too late to go back to school. It seemed intimidating to take that first step, especially since so much time had passed since I called myself a student. However, nothing, not even time, could quiet the voice in the back of my mind. The voice kept reminding me that I have a desire to learn and to grow. I ignored that voice for a long time, and I am glad I finally decided to listen.

It took me 10 years of growing up; over-coming a traumatic loss, becoming a mother, and doing a whole lot of soul searching to summon up the courage to go back to school. I always imagined how incredible it would be to finally graduate, but I would always be overwhelmed at the amount of work and dedication that it takes to get there. Feeling hopeless, I would tell myself I'm not smart enough, or I would make excuses as to why I couldn't return to finish school.

Now that I'm going back for my GED diploma, I am learning to love the process of gaining new skills and brushing up on forgotten ones. Every day I wake up eager to learn more. I feel a sense of pride knowing that I am taking my future into my own hands and setting a good example for my daughter. I am showing her that she should never give up on herself, and that an education is essential to prosper in today's world. This process has taught me that I am capable of achieving any goal my mind can conceive. I can finally say that I enjoy math, which is a subject that used to terrify me. I have rediscovered my love for reading and writing as well, which used to be a great passion of mine.

My journey to becoming the person I was destined to be has only just begun. I am looking forward to taking the next steps and furthering my education. I will be taking extra courses after I graduate so that I can be accepted into the Practical Nursing program at NBCC. A career I once thought was out of my reach is now something I am striving for.

Something I wished I would have realized back in high school is that the path to achieving your goals and the steps required to get there are just as important as reaching the destination. Learning is a challenging, yet rewarding process. It is a privilege that I once failed to appreciate. It is the gateway to unlocking my highest potential and living the life I have always dreamed of.

Learning Changes Lives

Melissa Wilson – Perth-Andover Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca>

Teacher: Karen Garnett

There are lots of reasons why having high school completed can change your life. After struggling in school, I've recently made the decision to return. Having a diploma will help me in the future to find a successful job. So far, it has been a great experience.

All throughout high school I had a tough time. I moved to a few different cities in Ontario, making things difficult for me. I completed grade nine after attending two different schools. After finishing half of grade ten, I decided to switch to home-schooling. It was hard to keep myself motivated. A few months later, I joined an adult school centre. I struggled there too, and then I went two years without really doing anything. I had a part time job with a family friend. Just over a year ago, I moved from Ontario to New Brunswick. Ever since I moved here, I've accomplished a lot. I'm very proud of myself for getting my license, my first vehicle and my first steady job. My current goal is to complete my GED.

Ever since I signed up for school, I can feel my life changing in positive ways. When I wake up in the morning, I feel motivated and excited for the day. After years of being out of school, I didn't know if I would ever complete it. Having my GED completed will be a big step in the right direction. I know that once I have this goal accomplished, I will have the confidence and motivation to keep going.

My entire life, I never put much thought into my future. In elementary school, teachers would ask what we wanted to be when we grew up. I never had the perfect idea of what I wanted to do. However, recently I have been putting lots of thought in to it. One thing the GED course has taught me so far is that there are tons of career options. We watched a presentation from NBCC about different jobs and people in the past succeeding with their career choices. Learning about different career paths was interesting. One that stood out for me was "Graphics and Animations". The course is provided at NBCC Miramichi, which means some traveling. There are definitely lots of different options for my future. I'm proud of myself for taking this GED course, and I know it will make a huge impact on my future.

In conclusion, returning to school has changed my life in positive ways and will help me a lot in the future. I know that once I accomplish this huge goal, not only will I feel better about myself, but also it will keep me moving forward.