

Learning Changes Lives

Lindsay Herrera – Restigouche Adult Learning Inc. (CALP)

<http://aaral.ca>

Teacher: Debbie Blake

School had always been grappling for me. I had an immense desire to learn but due to a rather unfortunate home life and extreme difficulties in mathematics, I had left school in the ninth grade. My name is Lindsay Herrera. In this essay, I will briefly explain the difficulties that led to me to my early departure from school; what led me to pursue my diploma years later; and how learning has positively impacted my life.

I didn't have an ideal upbringing. I am the daughter of a Latino immigrant who had never attended any kind of educational training and a Canadian mother who despite being one credit shy of her high school diploma decided not to complete it. My parents separated, which left my mother to raise three young girls on her own. It was very difficult for her to balance everything. So, despite my love to learn new things, I was very much on my own at home when it came to learning. This made advancing through school very difficult.

I always had been a below average student in math, but something was evidently wrong. Despite this, it went unacknowledged by my parents and school faculty. With average marks in almost every subject, I managed to skim by in school for years and advanced to ninth grade. My struggles in math felt as though they were being swept under the rug by my teachers for many years. Ninth grade was no different. Feeling as though my teachers did not care, along with the combination of personal struggles I was facing, I lost my desire to learn. As a result, I left school and failed to return for many years.

Everything changed for me in 2019. I was 22 years old and had a beautiful two-year-old son. Not long into the year my son was diagnosed with Autism Spectrum Disorder. Getting that diagnosis was scary as I knew nothing about Autism. The diagnosis drove me to spend months researching the disorder. Throughout the months, I regained my desire to learn and absorb information. I also knew that in order to provide the best possible life for myself and my son, I needed to complete my education. I was a little reluctant to take this step as I doubted my capability, but I forced myself to reach out anyway. When I enquired about pursuing my grade twelve equivalency, I had to do some testing. One of those tests was to see if I had a learning disability. I was not at all surprised to learn that I had Dyscalculia, and the rush of emotions from validation was intense. I finally knew it wasn't my fault. The amount of confidence I had gained from knowing I have a learning disability has changed my whole outlook on myself, my skills, and capability to receive my grade twelve equivalency.

Attending the program gave me even more confidence. I have a teacher who has never made me doubt myself and puts in so much effort to ensure I'm successful. School has become enjoyable for me. Today I have successfully completed four out of five of the subjects required to receive my grade twelve equivalency and took the exam for my last subject on February 28, 2023. Although I'm not finished my last GED test to date, the choice to go back to school gave me confidence to get a job in 2020. Through this job I was offered a training program to

become a Support Worker. I completed this training with all my final grades in the nineties. In the future, I hope to continue advancing my education and work with special needs children.

If not for my desire to learn, I would not be this far today. I would not know that I have a learning disability, and I would not know just how capable I am. My life has truly changed for the better since I went back to school. Learning changes lives! I like to believe I'm an example of that statement.