



Literacy Coalition
of New Brunswick^{Ltd.}

Coalition pour l'alphabétisation
du Nouveau-Brunswick^{Ltée.}

Learning Changes Lives L'apprentissage change des vies

CELEBRATING ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK

APRIL 13TH TO APRIL 19TH, 2025

CÉLÉBRER LA SEMAINE DES APPRENANTS
ADULTES

13 AVRIL AU 19 AVRIL, 2025



Literacy Coalition of New Brunswick

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Learning Changes Lives

Roxanne Abadingo – Maple Leaf Homes Adult Learning Centre (CVALA)

<https://www.cvala.ca/>

Teachers: Tracey Dale & Laura Burris

I may be the last to submit my entry, but I really want to share my story why I return to learning and how learning changes my life and how I change others' lives because of learning.

First of all, I came from a low wage earner family. So even if I want to pursue my dreams and goals for the future, it's not possible. When I graduated in highschool as class valedictorian, what I really wanted was to become a teacher. I got my full scholarship for my college study, but of course you have to maintain certain grades or become one of the dean's list. Graduated from a public school then moving to a private school is challenging. So I have a lot of things to adjust to, especially since we don't have trigonometry in class when I'm in highschool. I study as hard as I can just to understand and learn that subject, but still I didn't make it. So, I lost my scholarship in the first year of school. I asked my parents and begged them that I really want to continue my 2nd year. But because of lack of financial support, I just finished my first year in the university.

I decided to stop my study and start working to earn money and help my family when my father died. When I started earning money, I forgot my study. What sinks in my mind now is to earn money for my family. Because when my father died, I became the breadwinner. I am the eldest in the family that's why I am responsible for the rest of our family. And then, I thought of working out of the country. I worked in Taiwan for almost 8 years before I decided to apply for work here in Canada.

They said Canada is the best country. That's why, I'm dreaming to work here too just like others. I'm still helping my whole family even now even if I have my own family. But for me, it's not easy to live here. You have to work hard for yourself and your family. And now that the government has made a lot of changes for the temporary foreign workers, we are really affected.

I really want to pursue my passion and become a teacher not in the Philippines but here now in Canada. So when they open a night shift class in Maple Leaf Homes, I eagerly registered for their assessment exam. Unfortunately, there are lots of my workers registered, which is why they told me that I will start in the 2nd batch. After almost a year of waiting, the time has finally come. And I can say that I'm prepared for this.

I started my assessment last December 2024 and finished all the subjects this march 19 2025. Three months of study is not easy. I give my heart, my time, and my focus on studying, especially mathematics.

Some of my co-workers tried to take the exam but failed to make it. When this happened, they lost their courage to continue what they started. But me, I just keep my focus and determination to finish it. And through the help of my teachers Mam Laura Burris and Mam Tracey Dale, I made it! I really made it! And I'm grateful for all the help and encouragement they gave me.

Now that I passed the exams, that gives courage and determination to my other classmates in

Maple Leaf Homes that they can also do that. I also told them that they have to stay in focus when they want to achieve a goal.

I just received my diploma and started to apply for my permanent residency. And if ever they will grant me, I will continue to pursue my dream. And that is to become a teacher. Soon! And I'm willing and happy to accept all your suggestions and help for my future goals.

I really don't know how to say a lot of thanks. But, thank you CVALA for all the patience even if it is snowing or raining. I am proof that you two Mam Laura and Mam Tracey are the best teachers.

Learning Changes Lives

Amanda Acker – Miramichi Adult Learning

<https://miramichiadultlearning.com/>

Teachers: John Freeze & Siji George

My name is Amanda, and I am a GED student in Miramichi, NB.

My teachers are John Freeze, and Siji George, both amazing and caring teachers.

After many years of Bullying and rough times in Grade 9 I made the wrong decision of Dropping out. Since then I felt hopeless and just giving up. But my family and great friends pushed me to at least try to get through the Ged program.

When I walked in the Ged program I was greeted with open arms from Kevin Carr, and John Freeze, they both told me from the start that they believed in me, the Siji George came along and he also never gave up on me.

Getting my Ged is something that I will not give up on, no matter the struggles and God knows I have lots. New doors will start opening for me. Learning is a ever day thing.

Ged program has boosted my confidence, and i see myself never giving up, and i know it will open New Doors for me.

My goal is to get my Course PSW. I really enjoy working and being there for the elderly.

I'm very thankful for my teachers and Kevin Carr for always being there for me, and not giving up on me you are all angels on earth.

Learning Changes Lives

Rochel Bague – Miramichi Adult Learning

<https://miramichiadultlearning.com/>

Teacher: Siji George

I'm, Ma. Rochel Bague, I am proud to be a Filipino from the Philippines. I am currently working here in Canada as a Temporary Foreign Worker. I am 36 years old and a single mother, my son is 16 years old and I am the only one who raising him without any financial help from his father. My parents couldn't afford to send me to college, so when I graduated from high school, I immediately looked for a job. I never thought about going back to school because of the extreme poverty.

At the age of 18, I got pregnant, but my ex-boyfriend wouldn't stand up for me. So, while working at a young age, I raised my son alone. When I gave birth, it never crossed my mind to go back to school again because my son needed me more, because there was no one to support him but me. I dreamed of a bright and better future for my son, so even though he was 3 years old, I was forced to go abroad. It was hard for me to leave my son, but I had no choice but to let him go. I spent 10 years in the other country. I endured not being able to be with him for many years. Because that time, that was the right choice that I need to choose.

When I returned to the Philippines, the school system was very different from before. Back then, you could get a good job just by finishing high school. But now, you need to graduate from college just to find a good job and work abroad. But I didn't lose hope. I dreamed of going abroad again even though it was impossible, but with God's help, I was lucky. In return, I have to improved my work. And now it's time for me to fulfill my dream, to finish school and to get a better job for me and for my son. I know it's going to be hard for me to fulfill my dream because I'm weak in English, but I'm going to do my best just for the good it can bring. I'm going to give it my all to the Lord, if God want me to stay here in my dream country, He will give it to me.

Learning Changes Lives

Joe Breau – Saint John Regional Correctional Centre

Teacher: Andrew Rouse

My name is Joseph Emile Breau. I am 28 years young. I am currently housed at the Saint John Regional Correctional Centre. I have been incarcerated over the past five and a half years between here, Dorchester, and Springhill penitentiaries. My journey in Adult Learning started here at the Saint John Regional Correction Centre with Andrew and continued onto Spring Hill with Vanessa and Sarah.

While serving my last two sentences one of 32 months and the other being two years plus a day I have taught myself to read and write. I obtained my GED in Springhill in 2023. I took the test and to my amazement I passed all five tests on my first try.

I have always thought of myself as stupid or dumb. I felt this way because I was never able to learn like others when I was young. However, I found out in 2022 from my greatest teacher ever from Springhill, Sarah, that I was a neurodivergent learner. I have been diagnosed with PTSD, CPTSD, ADD/ADHD aggressive, and FAS. Due to her experience with Neuro Divergent learners, she was able to guide me on my journey to get a GED. Since I obtained my GED, I have upgraded some of my science classes. I was focused on Chemistry when I left Springhill.

While in Springhill I was able to finish my biology 12 and Geology. I almost finished upgrading my Math 11/12 and got part way through my Chemistry. I hope to complete all the upgrades I need to go to university when I am released. My goal is to one day obtain my PhD in Chemistry with a major in pharmaceutical science and Biochemistry. I would also like to have minors in Biology and Physics.

My reason for wanting this Degree with these subject areas of focus is unique. When I was young, we had everything. I had wheelers, bikes, videogames, and a good home. We were always well fed and never wanted for anything. Then my mother met my younger brother's father Jody. He was great at first very caring and loving. Then one day he changed. He started hitting me and my mother. This started shortly after my mother gave birth to my youngest brother, who was born as result of Jody sexually assaulting my mother. I was only three years old at this point. It was like he just snapped one day and broke my mother nose, ribs, and arm. He made both me and my baby brother watch as he did it. I can still remember the crunching noises from each time one of her bones was broken. Eventually someone called the cops, but they did not arrive until after he had also beat me so bad that I was unable to walk or sit without feeling a great deal of pain. The cops removed my mother, brothers and I, from the house. They arrested Jody for the sexual assault of my mother and aggravated assault of a minor times two for the beating of me and one of my brothers. In the end he received a sentence of eight years in prison, and we thankfully did not see him again for many years.

What happened between this incident and now is the true reason I have the plan I do. After meeting with CPS, we moved back to Woodstock New Brunswick. While there it was just my brothers, myself and mom for the first three years. I also got to meet my adopted father

during this time and began having visits with him. I started school in Woodstock and right from Kindergarten I was a slow learner compared to my peers. No one knew I was a neurodivergent learner back then. I was constantly falling behind my class in school. Once I started in school my mother met a new man named John. John was great he loved us boys and had two daughters of his own Kate and Amanda. Kate and Amanda were excellent siblings.

One day I got out of hand at the house and broke the brand-new washer and dryer. My adopted father was called, and I told I was going to live with him and my stepmother and two older stepbrothers Tyler and Scott. Scott was an awesome stepbrother and was always good to me, however, Tyler had other plans. Tyler began sexually assaulting me almost immediately when I was seven years old and continued until I was eleven. I had to go to the hospital multiple times to receive stitches because of this.

During the time I was with my adopted father my mother had become addicted to opioids. This addiction ruined my mother's life and had a negative impact on my brothers and me. My brothers were placed in care I was allowed to stay as I was older. I still remember the first time I had to help my mother intravenously inject her pills. I remember seeing her blood go into the needle as I pulled back the plunger and her starting to cry and she told me, "This is the only time Joseph I promise". There were obviously more times. A mother is a boy's first true love that's why we are called mama's boys. But opioids affected this relation between my mother and my brothers and me.

My brother Tyler and I have spent massive amounts of our adult lives incarcerated because of how this relationship with our mother affected us. My other brother Zachary is currently homeless with our mother as well. My mother is still heavily addicted to opioids. My mother has started the fentanyl harm reduction program offered at the River Stone Recovery Centre.

This story is the reason I want to pursue what I do in education. Once I get my PhD I will be able to focus on opioid addiction and help people suffering from the disease of opioid addiction like my mother. Completing these degrees at university will allow me to change the world for people suffering like my mother has for most of my life. My thesis will be based on finding a way to change the molecular structure of opioids, so a person won't get sick or have other negative side effects from withdrawals while trying to quit.

In closing I can only hope that the people reading this story are rooting for an underdog like me, who didn't get his GED until he was 27 years old. I am currently almost thirty years old and still have a long way to go. However, it is my hope that one day you will read about a man named Joseph Emile Breau and the great things he did to fight addiction, and you will remember this story.

Learning Changes Lives

David Bryan – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Calvin Brymer

I am David Bryan, a 50-year-old adult learner who has decided to change my life by going back to school. Upon leaving All Age School I went to secondary school where I completed the first 3 months. I visited a job site over Christmas break where I was earning money for the first time in my life and I realized the love I had for this job, therefore I decided to end my secondary education. Nevertheless, I was able to obtain a masonry skill in just six months. I gained a new skill, but I had a gut feeling that something was missing. Even though I knew what it was, I believed it was too late to turn back. Everything changed, however, when I became a parent, and I soon discovered that I could not relate to my kids academically. Despite feeling unfulfilled, I continued working in masonry since I lacked the courage to return to school because I now had a financial obligation to support my family. It wasn't until I came to Canada from my home country and felt the need to migrate that I understood that I could not do it without a secondary education. I made the decision that the time had come to return to my studies. I wanted to achieve something to bring great pride to my family.

When I chose to go back, I had no idea where to begin. With so much time away from school, I was at the bottom. I asked around to see where I could start. I was introduced to the Adult Learning Centre, where I met Maria. When I expressed my interest in furthering my education, she informed me that the distant learning program was overseen by Calvin, who was now on vacation. However, she offered to assist me until Calvin returned. On that day, she stated something that transformed my life instantly: "We are going to help you get an education." I felt energised! So I was registered, and she assigned me some tasks, and I had no idea what to do. She explained a few things to me, and I went home and phoned my daughter, who also explained a few things to me, and thus my journey began. Calvin contacted me in August 2024, and we met at the library where he detailed the next steps, which marked the beginning of my educational adventure. Calvin has been an inspiration, a hard-working and kind teacher to me thus far. With his guidance, I feel I will be able to attain my objectives. So far, I've been able to accomplish things I've never done in my life. I am better able to solve problems, I am more confident, I can connect with and converse with intelligent and educated people without feeling inferior. The knowledge I have acquired has also equipped me with essential life skills, including improved time management and the ability to bounce back from challenges.

My future aspirations are to attain a better paid job so that I can better support my family. Also, I'd like to be able to share the knowledge I've gained so that my family and community may be proud of my successes, as well as encourage other potential adult learners that it's never too late! In addition, I aspire to be able to guide others to success. I am excited to continue till the end because, while juggling work and studies is difficult, I am dedicated to the task at hand.

Learning Changes Lives

Shae-Lynn Douthwright – South East Adult Education

<https://education-se.ca/>

Teacher: Annie Leonard

When I first began attending school again I was living in a homeless shelter and battling a heavy addiction. As a child, I was taken from my mother and, eventually placed in what they call a group home. Have you ever wondered what a group home looks like from the child's point of view? There were three other residence when I first arrived and, we each had our own room. The workers were there during the day, then a new worker for the overnight shift. The first day I went there, I can remember the entire forty-five-minute drive. I sat there in silence terrified of where I was going and devastated that I wouldn't be living with my two sisters anymore. I felt that because I had self harmed, that I was a bad child. That I wasn't good enough for a family. I struggled badly with the rules in the group home. Now that I'm older I understand that had I listened it could have bettered my future. but as a child I could not understand that. I ran away as do many other youth. I was taken in by an old man and taken advantage of for four years before he passed away. I went from his apartment to the Miramichi youth correctional center, and then back to a group home. Sometimes I would be court ordered to rehab instead of Miramichi. So many nights I cried myself to sleep wishing I could go home to my mother. Since then I've battled away a deadly addiction as well as homelessness. Although I dreamt of a better life not only for myself but for my children. Since starting my GED, I've gone to rehab and rented a room and I have been sober for thirty three days, at first I missed a lot of days, one excuse after another. despite my absence my teacher remained patient, accepting, and encouraging. After a short while I was ready to take my first exam. As the questions flew by with ease my belief in myself growing with every passing question. When I hit the final screen and my score popped up saying I had passed it brought with it the idea that maybe I actually could do this! Ive been working away at it a bit more serious now a days. I'm waiting on my reading exam while studying for math. I need to accomplish this, I want to be the first in my family to go to collage or university for political science. My hope is to make much needed changed to child protective services. There have already been studies done that explain that a child placed in care, most often, will experience more trauma than if they had been left in the neglectful or abusive home. I have constantly searched for a family that loves me and a place to call home. By completing my schooling, I will finally be able to have exactly that. Most of all I need to do this because I want to make my children proud. My life is turning around for the better and for that I am grateful.

Learning Changes Lives

Katrina Evans – South East Adult Education

<https://education-se.ca/>

Teacher: Indumathi Arasu

Hello, my name is Katrina! Yes, like the hurricane. No I was not named after it, I came before! I am a twenty four year old from Southern Ontario now living in Moncton, New Brunswick! I am writing this to share why I have returned to learning.

I grew up being homeschooled by my amazing parents. Primarily my mum taught me, however, my dad helped with math. I had attended pre-k at a school but the teachers observed that I was not learning well in that environment. One of my teachers suggested homeschooling and my parents decided that would be the best solution for me.

I did much better learning at home! I was always done before school let out and because of this, I was able to spend more time playing outside or honing my creativity in the form of singing, dancing, drawing and eventually, writing. I also loved reading and would often stay up late with my head in a book. Don't tell my parents!

I ran into trouble with my schooling around the age of fifteen. I had been going to counselling for a little while and my counsellor started to suspect I had something called Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. That was something my parents had wondered about as well. They found an amazing trauma therapist who worked with me for a few years.

I remembered a lot of traumatic events that had happened when I was a child that made it very hard for me to focus on anything. My life felt like it had been flipped upside down. I couldn't sleep well. I developed severe anxiety. My schooling fell onto the back burner as I just couldn't cope with life.

My parents were amazing. They helped me every step of the way. They let me take the time I needed to heal from the memories. But unfortunately I got caught in a cycle of depression and struggled with motivation. This made it very hard for me to do my schoolwork.

At the age of nineteen I was given a diagnosis of Lupus. This autoimmune disease makes my body sore everyday. It also causes my brain to degenerate which causes me to have a hard time remembering things. This made things even harder for me and I pushed my education even further on to the previously mentioned back burner.

Due to my anxiety, Lupus and PTSD, I had put off earning my GED, or CAEC as it is now called, until last year. With the help and encouragement of my parents, I finally reached out and got a teacher assigned to me.

My teacher has been a kind and wonderful support to me as we have worked together to achieve my goal of getting my CAEC certification. She has watched me become more confident in my skills. I have always struggled greatly with math and yet I find myself having an easier time doing it in my day to day life.

I have since passed my English reading/writing tests and my social studies test with flying colours! I am studying for my science test next along with continually working on math.

It has been a long road full of ups and downs. But I have learned a lot from it and am incredibly grateful for the support of my family and my teacher, Indu.

Earning my CAEC will open up many job opportunities for me, including my dream job of becoming a 911 dispatcher. I have always loved helping others and could see myself thriving in this job.

Thank you for reading my story!

What Education Means to Me

Hannah Hughes – South East Adult Education

<https://education-se.ca/>

Teacher: Indumathi Arasu

The older I have gotten, the more I have realized that all learners, both prior and present have each their own story. Today I would like to take the opportunity to share my own.

Throughout grade school I did very well. Kindergarten through grade eight my alphabetical grades did not fall any lower than a "B". I very much enjoyed school, I excelled in E.L.A, and found a lot of happiness in Art class, along with Sciences.

I attended my middle school graduation in June of 2018 and went on to high school.

In my freshman year of high school, I was faced with an unimaginable situation for my then fifteen year old self. I was given the news that I was unknowingly thirty-seven weeks pregnant, with a sweet little girl who at that time was due any day, and therefore during that time my newborn daughter would now take priority over my education. I took about a year away from school, until not more than a year later I was faced again with more life changing news, however this one was a devastation. My great-grandmother and primary caregiver since the young age of three, passed away unexpectedly on May 29th, 2021 with Cancer.

Within what should have been my grieving period yet again I was faced with numerous other challenges, including but not limited to drug addiction in a very serious degree, I suffered homelessness, along with constant domestic violence. I endured these circumstances for almost 6 months, although it felt like a lifetime. Faced with these heartaches and fright or flight responses for long enough, I moved in with my beautiful guardian angel on earth, my great aunt Brenda Lee.

After my first meal in days and eighteen hours of consecutive sleep I came off all illicit substances on my own, and have not looked back since August 21st 2021, now soon to be four years of well earned sobriety.

In September 2021 I enrolled at Moncton High School, did very well and attended for almost a full year. This is when I was faced with my second move of that year due to unfortunate circumstances and I relocated to a domestic violence shelter. Due to the distance and no transportation available I discontinued my education for then the second time.

The following year and a half, I twiddled my thumbs, unemployed and feeling as though I had little to no hope that things would turn out any better for me. This is the first time I attempted to take my GED. I wrote practice test, after practice test. I had exam level knowledge but unfortunately could not put it to use during that time because I was only eighteen. . Frustration had overcome me, and at that point I felt unworthy of any form of success. Now at twenty-one years old here I am, for what feels like the hundredth time, I am seeking the end of my fighting

journey, and on the road, hand in hand with determination to achieve my degree and continue onto post secondary school to take my "Child and Youth" course, to help changes the lives of children and youth who have experienced similar to what I have.

My education is important to me because of the fight I had to endure and continue to do so in order to accomplish it. Something I was told, at a very young age is that nothing worth it comes easily, and that we fight tooth and nail for the things we know we deserve.

Thank you.

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Anton Ivanov – Miramichi Adult Learning

<https://miramichiadultlearning.com/>

Teacher: Siji George

I decided to return to to learn to generally get more knowledge and because I want to get government job and for that I need GED or CAEC that I be able to submit my application to union that work for good that highly qualified people to be part of government of Canada team and have stable future when reach my 55 - 60 years I could retire better or in general have better opportunity and job

Learn give me so many new stuff that I know now that will help me in the future, I'm now 26 years and I want to take my Life more seriously then just be in low pay job for all my life and have very simple life

I Love helping people and that what I want to do in my live as part of government of Canada employee

The job in not important if you do it good and you help the job and give time to people, they will easy start to trust you and be willing to Business with you

It very important to know that more stuff you know more job you could and more people you could help in many different industry you just need to do only what you like because it will motivate you and you will do the job better then usually many time people quit or get fired from job because they don't fill it something they like to do for live and they don't have motivation to do it with passion and energy

My goal is to be working for government of Canada or technical support for product trouble shooting or becoming experienced travel agent with sell Commission

And I try hard to achieve achieved

And still have simple live without any restrictions or thinking about pay check to pay check

L'apprentissage change des vies

Denebe Josiane – Éducation des Adultes du Nord-ouest

<https://www.facebook.com/educationadultes>

Enseignante : Sylvie Albert

Depuis que je suis enfant, l'école à toujours occupé une place spéciale dans mon cœur. Pour moi, apprendre n'a jamais été une obligation, mais un véritable plaisir, une porte ouvertes vers un avenir meilleur. Aujourd'hui, je souhaite partage mon parcours, marqué par des défis, des sacrifices et une profonde détermination, parce que je crois sincèrement que l'apprentissage change des vies.

Tout a commence dans mon pays d'origine. Dès mon plus jeune âge, j'étais fascinée par les livres, les cahiers et le savoir. Je me souviens encore de me premiers jours d'école. L'excitation de découvrir un nouveau monde, le bruit des pages qu'on tourne, l'odeur de la craie sur le tableau noir. Pourtant, aller à l'école n'était pas aussi simple qu'il y paraît. Chaque matin, je me réveillais très tôt, souvent avant lever du soleil, pour mes préparer. La route pour arrive à l'école était longue et fatigante, mais jamais je ne me suis plainte. Chaque pas que je faisais me rapprochait de mon rêve : apprendre, réussir, et devenir quelqu'un de meilleur.

Lorsque j'étais à l'école, une épreuve majeure s'est présent; une grossesse imprévue qui a bouleversée mon quotidien. Bien que cet événement fût porteur de doute et de remise en question, j'ai refusé de laisse cette situation définir mon destin jusqu'à mon accouchement, j'ai tenu à pour suivre mes cours, convaincue que le savoir et la persévérance pouvaient m'aide à transforme ma réalité. La naissance de mon fils marqua le début d'un nouveau chapitre, empreint d'amour mais aussi des responsabilités immenses.

Mais grandir dans un environnement difficile signifie aussi apprendre à se battre. Avant d'arriver au Canada, ma vie n'a pas été facile. Il y avait des jours ou je me demandais si j'allais pouvoir continuer mes études. Les obstacles étaient nombreux; le manque de ressources, des conditions de vie précaires et parfois même le découragement. Pourtant, malgré tout, je n'ai jamais perdu cette flamme intérieure. Aller à l'école était ma façon de résister, de croire en un avenir meilleur. Je savais qu'un jour, tout ce travail acharné porterait ses fruits.

Aujourd'hui, mère d'un enfant, je poursuis mes études avec acharnement. Mon ambition ne se limite pas à l'obtention de mon GED ou à une carrière en médecine; je souhaite également contribuer activement à l'amélioration des conditions d'accès à l'éducation pour tous, en particulier pour les femmes et les personnes issues de milieu défavorisés. Je rêve de collaborer avec des associations et des initiatives favorisant l'émancipation par l'éducation.

Lorsque je suis arrivée au Canada, j'ai compris que ce nouveau départ serait un défi, mais aussi une opportunité incroyable. Reprendre mes études ici, dans un environnement complètement différent, avec une nouvelle langue et une nouvelle culture, était intimidant. Mais j'étais déterminée. Chaque matin, en franchissant les portes de l'école, je sentais que je construisais quelque chose d'important; un avenir, une meilleure version de moi-même. J'ai appris nom seulement des matières scolaires, mais aussi la persévérance, le courage et la résilience.

Aujourd'hui, réalise à quel point l'apprentissage a changé ma vie. Ce n'est pas seulement une question de connaissances, mais de confiance, de persévérance et de rêves réalisés. L'éducation m'a donné une voix, une identité et une force intérieure que rien ni personne ne pourra jamais m'enlever. Aller à l'école m'a appris que, peu importe d'où l'on vient ou les obstacles rencontrés l'éducation reste la clé qui ouvre toutes les portes.

Je suis fière de mon parcours, fière d'avoir cru en moi malgré les difficultés, et fière de pouvoir inspirer d'autres personnes à ne jamais abandonner leurs rêves. L'apprentissage a changé ma vie, et je sais qu'il continuera de la changer, jour à la fois.

Learning Changes Lives

Jiahuan Liu – South East Adult Education

<https://education-se.ca/>

Teacher: Simranjeet Kaur Khangura

My name is Jiahuan Liu. I come from Tianjin, China. In 2022, filled with hope and excitement for the future, I left my beloved hometown with my family and embarked on a new journey to Canada, eventually settling in the charming city of Moncton, New Brunswick. This peaceful and serene place, with its warm-hearted residents and breathtaking natural beauty, has truly captured my heart. I am fully aware that, regardless of my past career and educational experiences, this marks the beginning of a brand-new chapter in my life.

However, shortly after my arrival, I faced some unexpected challenges. The most significant hurdle was undoubtedly the language barrier. Back home, we were accustomed to speaking Mandarin and writing in Chinese characters. Here, English became the primary language for daily communication, and sometimes even French was required. Although I had studied English in China, it was only when I was fully immersed in an English-speaking environment that I realized my limitations. From seeking medical care and applying for a driver's license to renting a house, job hunting, and shopping, every aspect of life required clear communication in English. At first, I struggled with broken English and found it extremely difficult to read materials. I soon realized that if I wanted to truly integrate into life here, improving my language skills was the first step I needed to take.

Facing these challenges, I chose to tackle them with determination and a positive attitude. I enrolled in adult re-education courses at CAEC, committed to starting with improving my language skills and gradually adapting to my new environment. In the classroom, I met classmates from all over the world. We supported and encouraged each other, making progress together. The teacher, Simran, is incredibly patient, attentive, and dedicated. She not only taught me language skills but also shared valuable practical information to help me better integrate into local society. Through continuous learning, my English proficiency has improved significantly, and I have gained more confidence and fluency in communicating with others.

The improvement in my language skills has opened up a whole new world for me. I began to actively participate in community activities and joined a volunteer team. In the process of helping others, I not only found joy and a sense of fulfillment but also gained a deeper understanding of Canadian culture and society. I realized that this diverse country warmly embraces cultures from around the world and welcomes everyone who is willing to contribute to its growth.

My heartfelt goal is to successfully complete this course and continue my educational journey, with the ultimate aim of earning a diploma from a local university. Although my learning journey is still ongoing, I firmly believe that with perseverance, I will eventually reach the shores of my dreams. I am excited to continue writing my own unique and wonderful story in this beautiful city of Moncton and to discover even more of its incredible beauty. I deeply

understand that continuous learning is the key to personal growth and achieving meaningful success in life. I'm genuinely excited about the future, when I'll be able to reach new heights and appreciate the wonderful opportunities and beautiful moments that life has to offer!

Learning Changes Lives

Jason Mackenzie – Integrated Correctional Program Model

Teacher: Joe O'Donnell

I've learned a lot in my life.

I come from a good home that taught me about values, manners, morals, and all of life's general basics. I moved out young and learned how to live on my own and be independent and the importance of following my dreams and aspirations, and of reaching for my goals.

I am a well-educated individual, who received honours in highschool before earning three diplomas in four years of college, often on the Deans List. Later in life when I realized my passion for cooking, I decided to pursue it. I apprenticed, finished top of my class in the academic portion, and acquired and learned the fundamentals, as well as the necessary skill and knowledge to obtain my Red Seal in Culinary Arts.

I've learned a lot in my life.

Now, at the age of forty-three, I'm sitting in jail, where I have been incarcerated for the past 22 months, serving a sentence for my first offence. This indicates that I have also learned how to hit rock bottom and screw up BAD.

It's amazing that it took me FORGETTING everything I've learned throughout my life and getting arrested for making a very poor decision, subsequently being incarcerated in order for me to learn the one thing all my years of academic studies and life experiences never taught me.

In here I have learned about MYSELF.

With no deadlines, or responsibilities, or daily "doings" with nothing but TIME; I have been able to look deep within myself. Search inside myself. To learn who it is that Jason Mackenzie is, and not only what is important to me in life, what it is that I want my life to mean and what I want to make of it. I never would've thought that I would learn more about myself being incarcerated in jail. I made a couple of horrible choices that lead me here and I regret them exponentially. But at the same time, I am forever grateful that the bad choices I made wound up providing me the opportunity to slow-down, take a breather, and educate myself on the ONE thing all my years of studying, working, and socializing never taught.

ME. MYSELF. I.

I like to think it's not too late, that I'm not learning this most valuable bit of knowledge too late in life. I have a term for it, and how come to think of it as ME-ducation, and it's a class where I am both student and teacher, and what comprises my textbook is a reflection on my life. Everything that was written in between the lines that I was always moving too fast and working too hard to see and learn and UNDERSTAND.

The institution I'm at is called a "correctional centre", and I'm using the knowledge I'm learning about myself, along with the tools and programs offered here, to do just that. CORRECT MYSELF.

Seven other men join me every morning Monday to Friday as we participate in a new program being implemented across provincial jails. I feel privileged and am grateful for each one of them. We all come from different backgrounds, ethnic and otherwise. Yet, despite all our differences, we share one very common similarity; somehow, some way, WE ALL LOST OUR WAY.

WE ALL LOST OURSELVES.

With their help, I am learning more about myself than I ever knew before. For the first REAL time in my life, I'm learning about ME. THE REAL ME. Everything they share I'm able to apply to my inner self studying, and they help me learn more about myself each passing day.

Learning isn't just about textbooks, nor just hands on experience. It isn't just life experiences, coaching or being coached, or all the things we subconsciously "pick up along the way". Learning, TRULY learning about ourselves is actually taking all of these elements together and taking the time to analyze and study them as one complete entity.

In a few months my time will have been served, and I will be returning to society. I'm actually terrified to death of this, because for the first time I will be starting from nothing. With nothing. But I am also elated, excited, thrilled, encouraged, proud, and curious. Because this time, as I re-start the second half of my life, I'm starting with not only a new perspective, not only with EVERYTHING I learned in school and work and life during the first forty-one years. Now I'm starting over with the most valuable piece of knowledge I have ever learned; MYSELF.

This time, I know MYSELF. More so than ever before.

I have learned who I am, and I am so excited to get back into the world. To give myself back to the world. Educate it on the real Jason Mackenzie and apply everything I am to making it a better place. A brighter place.

Now that I've learned and discovered this most important piece of teaching and knowledge, I'll forever be, and forever keep LEARNING ABOUT MYSELF.

Learning Changes Lives

Jason Marr – Saint John Learning Exchange, GOALS Program

<https://sjle.org/>

Teacher: Hannah Duguay

My name is Jason Marr and I graduated from the GOALS program at the Saint John Learning Exchange and it has changed and saved my life in every way possible.

Before I started GOALS I was what I considered a high school drop out. I used to hate everything about learning.

I stopped putting any effort into my school work long before I left high school in grade 11.

I was a very depressed burnt-out kid. As each school day went by, I became more and more stressed. I was already trying to stay afloat of my mental struggles and high school was the final push underwater. Many of my days began with bullying on the school bus and tears down my face. I was scared to even leave the house and get on that bus, let alone entering the school doors ever. Anxiety was all that I could feel. I didn't know what it felt like to have a normal school day.

Deep down, I wanted to be better than who I was. I wanted to be smarter.

I wanted to be healthy.

I wanted to be anything that wouldn't make me a victim to bullying. But every time I tried, it felt impossible to find the answers I was looking for. My suicidal thoughts became stronger as my depression got worse. I felt my life was a tricking clock, and I was running out of time. I just couldn't carry on feeling the way I felt and falling so behind in school.

I made countless visits to the guidance council at my high school. I tried to make it clear that if I don't drop out, I won't be able to handle school and life anymore. I'm not sure if she knew exactly what I meant, but it was the closest I could get to saying how I felt. One day during another one of my visits to the guidance council, the Saint John Learning Exchange was mentioned. A place that offers a program called GOALS for younger people to complete their credits to get their adult diploma at their own pace.

Despite my depression, self-doubt, and my trauma, I wanted to give one last chance at learning.

The guidance council made a phone call to the Learning Exchange, and soon enough she got me an interview.

I left high school, had a few months break, and after taking the interview I found out I could get in the following semester at the Learning Exchange to start my first class. The moment that changed my life before I even knew it.

When I started my first class at the SJLE I noticed right away how different it was from any other school I've been in. There were pride flags, posters about upcoming events, and signs that made you feel welcome everywhere in the building. Every teacher and staff member made you

feel like you were home before they even knew your name. I felt safe for the first time in a learning environment.

I was actually able to complete my work because I wasn't stressed with an overwhelming amount of work to do, plus there was never any homework. All your work you did at the SJLE stayed at the SJLE.

No one tolerated bullying or mean comments, which caused me to lose the anxiety I would have right before school.

I finally was beginning to have self-worth and happiness, something I haven't felt this much in years.

I changed like night to day. My outlook on life and learning used to be so negative, until GOALS, then I became much more positive and actually liked learning new things.

With this newfound love for knowledge, I began to develop ideas and goals for the future and exploring my passions when I used to be so afraid of even thinking about next week, yet alone my long-term future, but now I was excited for what was to come.

Each thing I did during and after graduating the GOALS program has brought me one step closer to my future goals. Before starting my first class, I used to have no goals, no hope, and didn't want a future at all. Now, I want to be a motivational speaker, a poet, a photographer, I want to help people, spread love, learn as much as I can, take every opportunity that comes my way, and try as many new things as I can.

If I had given up and never walked through those SJLE doors when I did, I wouldn't be here writing this speech today. I'm grateful I went back to learning. I'm grateful to be alive.

If you feel like you're at the end of your road and education isn't your thing, maybe the problem isn't learning itself, but it's where and what you're learning. I strongly believe there is a passion for everyone out there. Don't be afraid to get up and find yours. Don't be afraid to change your life because you never know, it might be the very thing that saves you.

Learning Changes Lives

Wilson Misagal – Hartland Adult Distance Learning Program (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Calvin Brymer

First of all, I have to thank everyone who creates the essay contest. I am Wilson Misagal and a Truck Driver, currently who works at Jolly Farmer Transport. I was happy at the of 52 I was given a second chance to go back to learning again. Ever since, the it has been my dream to finish school and find a good job, for my future and for my family.

I believe education is the key to success.

I am a lovely husband and have four childrens, who dreams of prosperous and quiet life for the family. I was born in a small town near in the sea side. I was only three years old when my dad passed away because of illness. I am the eldest of our siblings, and I have the only youngest sister. Since we were orphaned early, it was our mother who was living for our family. She was attending a housemate all over the place. As she went to the city of Manila, and found a second family. Ever since, my mother have a family my sister and I have grew up in different families. My younger sister leave to my auntie, and I was left with my grand parents. They are the ones who grown up for second parents. They were the ones who studied with me. I only came to grade 8 because when I was in high school my grandparents were often illness. So, I learned to find a life early. I was 14 years old when I was in a fishing job. This is the main living life in our area. And because of the early days of finding life, this is the reason for me to stop my studies.

I couldn't do anything to help at least buy my grand father's medicine and food for our every need. I go to Manila where my mother lived, and she was surprised the she could help me get out of school because of poverty she could nothing. So, I went to work and became a full time Truck Driver. I got married and I poured them all my time. Because of my dream of giving them a good life, I was abroad. In 13 years of works in the Middle East Country, it is fortunate to apply here in Canada.

At first, I just dreamed of working here in Canada. I also dreamed that I would bring my family here and live well here. It is not easy to process PR, especially to someone like me who lacks education. So, it is important for me to come back and study again, to fulfill my dream and my family to be PR here in Canada.

I believe, that education is a way for success and dreams in life. So, its a big thing for me to get into this institution. I'm happy when I finish this Adult Learning Program, knowing how to have a way for my dreams and more information for me, because of my lack of education. It is also good for me and for my family to share with the, the importance of this kind of program. So, I am really geatfull that I came here.

My purpose in life is simple, I can only give my family in a good future which is something that my parents didn't give me. They want to finish their studies. All I want for them is that they can finish their education and find a good job someday. So, that they would not be like me in the hardship I had passed away. So, my dream for my self was to offer them. Another one, I also

want to prepare for my retirement when the day comes. Knowing that I can do all this with just prayer, hard work, and perseverance. I also pray that I survive and finish this program to fulfill everything.

The knowledge of each of us is the only way for success. One step to lift up is to finish the study. Associate with prayer, perseverance, and hard work you will surely succeed.

Whatever I rich in life, I'm happy to be part of your program. I am also happy and I meeting people who very helpful. From my teacher Mr. Calvin Brymer, with him being kind and helpful. And so, is my company that has been the way for me to find this program.

Only God knows that it will return to you for your good.

Thank you very much!

Why I Have Returned To Learning

Sharon Montgomery – Bath Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Bev Haines

WHY I HAVE RETURNED TO LEARNING

It has been my desired to continue with my education and now I have a reason. I received a booklet concerning receiving my high school diploma from the Multicultural society in my home town of Florenceville-Bristol. After a welcoming phone call, with the teacher from Bath Adult Learning center, I made the next step in meeting my teacher.

After my assessment, I knew this was the opportunity I needed. First, as a permanent resident I do believe that the earning the quality and culture of my new country is a perfect means of moving forward. Second, I am in needed of this knowledgeable action which will give me the result and capability to be successful.

HOW LEARNING IS CHANGING MY LIFE

How learning is changing my life, after the first few weeks I became so appreciative of the increased knowledge I was gaining. As a home décor, fashion designer, and painter, I am very talented but I also need to have the knowledge of correct English language. As a result, my teacher started me on all the tools needed for me to understand my subjects, to bring forth this change.

First teaching me to speak properly and ensuring I am getting the correct way of speaking and writing.

Second my MATHEATICS was inadequate, but now with great appreciation to my teacher, Beverly Haines, I am doing better with working in the basic concepts of math. Learning to understand the proper ways in measuring and the cost of items for cooking, and shopping. Mathematics is now an opportunity for me, to learn more in my home, workplace and wherever I need these skills.

As a result, I am more confident. I am and will become a more productive worker and coworker. I am developing the ability, the knowledge, the wisdom and understanding to accomplish what I need to be successful.

Also, every day being inside my classroom motivates me to accomplish passing my exams. Because after many years outside of a classroom, this change is fundamental.

MY GOALS FOR THE FUTURE.

My goals for the future are to accomplish my educational credential in a reasonable time; this goal will mean so much to me towards my future. Taking care of my family, myself, and my community is the reason I am motivated.

I am looking towards a brighter future and being in class has given me so many ideas. One of my accomplishments is to work in our health sector and my willingness to learn will give me the courage to achieve this goal. As a result, I am now able to make a positive approach in my decision of further knowledgeable and with accountability.

Learning Changes Lives

Jessica Nicholas – Tobique Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Jesse Michaud

Hi, my name is Jessica Nicholas, and this is my story on my returning to learning, as well as the journey that I have taken to get to where I am today.

I have been fighting my whole life to get my education. I've had to realize on my own how important that was. Along my difficult journey I have had to deal with many struggles, from my parents splitting up when I was very young to where I currently am today, a single mother who will soon be getting her CAEC! I will now tell you about my own personal journey.

By the time I was born, all my older siblings, except my brother Carl who is a year and a half older than me, were living with other family members. When I was 4 years old my parents split up. They both tried their best to take care of us. Unfortunately, they had struggles of their own to deal with, which in turn hindered us from getting our education.

Most of my younger years were spent living with my mom. She moved around a lot during these years, which made it very difficult for me, having to learn from so many different teachers along with trying to make new friends. This eventually led to me dropping out of high school.

As I became a young adult, I realized that I needed to finish my education, so I decided to start working on my GED. However, I did not have my status, so my spot had to be given to someone who had their status. While fighting for my status to remain in Canada, my father became sick, so I had to move to Maine where my father was living, in order to take care of him. While there, I decided to start my HISET, which is an actual High School diploma.

After awhile my father got better, but I also found out that I was pregnant. Therefore, my boyfriend and I decided to move back to New Brunswick. There were more job opportunities there, and I would also be able to fight for my status.

We moved in with my mother, and I started to once again fight for my status so that I could continue with my GED. As I was getting closer to my due date, my mother suffered a serious injury which would eventually lead to her losing her leg. She eventually was sent to Dr. Everett Chalmers Hospital in Fredericton. While she was there, I was also there where my beautiful baby daughter, Jaylin, was born. Since we were fortunate enough to be in the same hospital together, this allowed my mother to be able to meet her beautiful granddaughter. I also got my status, which would allow me to continue working on my GED.

When my mother returned home, she still required a lot of care. On top of that I was raising my newborn, who also required much care. All along I had been planning to continue with my GED, but due to all these struggles I was having to cope with, I had to put my educational goals aside a bit longer.

I am now proud to say that, despite all the struggles I've had to overcome, I have completed three of my GED/CAEC tests: Science, Reading, and Writing. Now I only have two more subjects to pass: Math and Social Studies. I only have two more workbooks in Math to complete and pass the assessment on. After that is done, and I feel confident that I will pass, I write the CAEC test and then only have Social Studies left to write.

Upon my completion of my CAEC, I intend to do one of two things. One possibility is starting my own business as a hairdresser. The other one is going to Community College to become a carpenter. I cannot wait for this next chapter of my life to start!

Learning Changes Lives

Caleb Pollock – Saint John Learning Exchange

<https://sjle.org/>

Teacher: Grace Roach

Throughout my life I resented learning. Not because I didn't want to learn or because I struggled to do so. It was because of the way the school system tries to make you learn. Falling in line was never my strong suit, which makes regular school pretty difficult. When I finally had a more independent way of learning, it opened my eyes to how beneficial it is, and made me realize I wanted to continue my education. To start, learning makes you more intriguing. You'll be able to have more educated, and in-depth conversations about the topics you learned. Furthermore, it also helps with problem solving in your day-to-day life, helping you to make educated decisions. Finally, it's addictive! When you begin learning about things you're actually interested in, it strikes your curiosity, and you begin to want to learn more.

The more you learn, the more interesting you are. Have you ever tried to have a deep conversation with someone and find that you, or the other person are struggling to find more to add to it? If the answer is yes, then you can relate to most people on earth. When this happens, it can be frustrating and can make it difficult to understand their thoughts on the subject. This is just one example where learning can help. When you make learning a priority in your life, not only will you have more to talk about, but you'll be able to express what you're trying to say much easier and go more in-depth. Showing people that you're educated about the topic, and interested in their thoughts on it. This can help to get to know people and build healthy relationships in your family, with your friends, at school, and within the workforce.

Learning can help with everyday problems and decisions. The average person makes about 35000 decisions a day. Many of these decisions happen without even thinking, which is what we call subconscious decisions. They are often decisions that come along with habits. These can be things like greeting or responding to someone, or choosing which route you take to work in the morning. However, we also make a lot of conscious decisions; these are the decisions that we put thought into, like what time you set your alarm for, what we should bring for lunch, whether you should make coffee before or after your shower, etc. I once read that most bad things that happen in your life can be traced back to a bad decision, and after looking back at my life, I realized how true that is. So if making good decisions leads to an easier and better life, we should all try our hardest to make good decisions. How do we do this? That's right, learning! If we focus on learning from our past decisions, we can avoid doing things that had negative outcomes, which leads to making better decisions in the future. Though learning from our mistakes is a great way to guide our future decisions, we can also catch ourselves before we even make those mistakes by learning from people around us who may have been in similar situations before.

Learning is addictive! The school system today often discourages people from learning, not on purpose, but it does. We get thrown into it at a young age and are made to sit in rows with very little interaction with our classmates, and oftentimes are made to learn things we will never

use. Until I left high school, I didn't like learning because of these things. I always thought there were more important things I could spend my time doing. The only time I truly enjoyed high school was in my grade 10 Career and Life Management/Religion course. All due to the teacher and the nature of the course. Mr. Nelson was aware of why a lot of people struggle in school and wanted to change it. He encouraged open discussions and was always there to answer questions. Whether it was on purpose or not, he made school fun. After leaving high school I began learning on my own about topics that interested me. For me it was psychology, anything to do with almost every trade, history, and so much more. It gave me a whole new view on learning, and I became addicted. I started asking more questions and being more open to the answers I was given. Through these answers I am able to better my life and spread my understanding of things to other people, which often would strike a conversation, leading to more curiosity and another point of view about the given subject. In return, you learn more! It's really a never ending cycle of new information that can be utilized in unlimited places throughout your life.

In conclusion, learning changes lives in more ways than you could ever imagine. It makes you a more interesting person that people want to talk to, guides you to make good decisions in your personal and professional life, and encourages you to learn more and ask more questions.

Learning Changes Lives

Beverly Scott – Charlotte County Adult Learning

<http://www.ccalp.ca/>

Teacher: Josee Lefebvre

There are many reasons why I chose to return to school. First I wanted to prove to myself that: I can and will accomplish this goal in my life. After passing two tests within the first two months of study, I am extremely proud of myself. I also made the decision to study, to teach my children that it is never too late to make changes in their lives. Learning and getting a good education has no time limit, and no age restrictions. The decision to come back to school was made because most companies require a grade 12 or equivalency diploma. I myself would like peace of mind knowing I could have many, many more employment opportunities.

Coming back to school has already had a positive impact in my life. I now have a better understanding of tasks and daily living. I better understand politics as I have been reading a lot about in social studies. I am getting a lot better at daily mathematical problems, such as percentages, and adding items up in the store when I am on a tight budget. I can better assist my children with their school studies. This is making me feel wonderful about myself. In saying that coming back to school has also had a positive impact on my mental health. I no longer feel so negative about things, this including myself. I also have a great feeling of excitement in knowing I will finally be able to attend college and study for my dream career.

My future plans are to receive my High School equivalency Diploma, apply straight away to N.B.C.C. I plan to attend school there and study to become a licensed practical nurse. I will attend NBCC with the best positive attitude, and follow this life long dream. If I was to ever decide that the career of a (LPN) licensed practical nurse is not for me, I will have so many other career opportunities available at my fingertips. There is never a set time in life to achieve my goals. In the end it will make me come to realization that I did the best I could. I will be happy knowing I made my family proud. Goals and dreams are endless, chase them!

I highly encourage others to come back to school. I have learned there are only so many excuses not to, but here I am. I ran out of those excuses. Do yourself a favor and join, make this life the best that you can. Chase your dreams, remember it is never too late! If no one else I would be proud of you!

Learning Changes Lives

Jonna Semillano – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

MY JOURNEY

My name is Jonna V. Semillano, many of my friends, family and colleagues call my nickname Janna and I am currently enrolled in the CAEC program at Woodstock Adult Learning Center. I was born and raised in the Philippines. Where I graduated High school. But when I came to Canada, I discovered that my education wasn't recognized as equivalent here. I felt overwhelmed having to start over. But I never give up. My motto is I can do it.

Before coming to Canada, I worked for many years in different countries Hongkong and Taiwan I worked hard to support my family especially my twins' boys, I'm a single mum and they are my biggest inspiration. Now they are turning 21yrs old this June and I'm so proud to share that they will graduate from college next year knowing that there about to reach their dreams give me more motivation to continue chasing mine. I want them to see their mother has always fought for a better life future not only for them for herself too.

Now, I'm 46 years old, I live in Woodstock, New Brunswick, and I work in the dietary department of the nursing home. But I know for doors to open for me in here in Canada. I needed to return to learning. Going back to school after so many years was not easy. I worried I had forgotten too much, and balancing work, life and study has been challenging. There were times when I felt exhausted, overwhelmed and felt depressed but each achievement passing my English reading and science exams, reminded me that I'm capable of more than I thought. Learning has brought me confidence and hope. Right now, I am preparing for my social studies, math and English writing. With the goal finishing my CAEC by June 2025 in Gods will.

My dreams in the future are to continue my education possibly in healthcare and apply residency here in Canada. I want to have a stronger career and keep going as a person but more than anything. I want my children to look at me and feel proud, knowing there that their mother never gave up. And that education can change lives at any age and even where you come from.

I am forever grateful and thankful to my teacher, Joanne McIsaac, who encourages me and reminds me to believe in myself. Her support has been a blessing on this journey.

This journey has taught me that it is never too late to learn. I have faced challenges across different countries and overcome many struggles, but learning has given me strength, hope and pride. And I'm excited about what future holds, and I hope my story can inspire others to never stop learning no matter what their age or circumstances. IF I CAN DO IT! YOU CAN DO IT TOO!!

Learning Changes Lives

Trissan Shaw-Plummer – Woodstock Adult Learning Centre (WVALA)

<https://www.wvala.ca/>

Teacher: Joanne McIsaac

Life is a journey filled with unexpected twists and turns, and my path has led me to a place where I have come to truly understand the transformative power of education. I dropped out of high school in Jamaica, feeling lost and unsure of my future. However, my life took a significant turn when I was given the opportunity to migrate to Canada. This new beginning inspired me to return to learning and pursue my dreams, leading me to enroll in a Canadian Adult Education Credential program in Woodstock, New Brunswick.

Returning to education was not an easy decision. I had to confront my fears and insecurities about my abilities after leaving school. However, I realized that the challenges I faced in Jamaica were not the end of my story; they were simply the beginning of a new chapter. I wanted to create a better life for myself and to seize the opportunities that Canada had to offer. I knew that education was the key to unlocking my potential and achieving my goals.

Since enrolling in the Canadian Adult Education Credential program, I have experienced profound changes in my life. The learning environment is supportive and encouraging, allowing me to thrive academically and personally. I have gained not only knowledge but also confidence in my abilities. I have discovered a passion for learning that I never thought I would have. The subjects I study are not just courses to me; they are stepping stones toward my aspirations. I am learning essential skills that will help me succeed in the workforce, and I am excited about the future that education is opening up for me.

One of the most impactful aspects of my experience has been the connections I have made with fellow students and my instructor (Ms. Joanne). I have met individuals from diverse backgrounds who share similar stories of resilience and determination. These relationships have enriched my learning experience, providing me with a sense of community and belonging. We support each other in our academic journeys, and this camaraderie has reinforced my belief that learning is not just an individual endeavor; it is a collective experience that can change lives.

As I look toward the future, my goals have become clearer. I aspire to complete my program and pursue a career that allows me to contribute positively to my community. I want to be a role model for others who may feel discouraged about their educational journeys. I believe that everyone has the potential to change their lives through learning, and I want to inspire others to believe in themselves and their abilities. My experiences have taught me that education is a powerful tool for personal and professional growth, and I am committed to making the most of it.

In conclusion, my journey from dropping out of high school in Jamaica to enrolling in a Canadian Adult Education program has been transformative. Learning has changed my life in ways I never imagined possible. It has given me the confidence to pursue my dreams, the skills to succeed, and the connections to build a supportive community. I am excited about the future and the opportunities that education will continue to provide. My story is a testament to the idea that learning truly changes lives, and I am grateful for the chance to be a part of this journey.

Learning Changes Lives

Abigail Smith – Miramichi Adult Learning

<https://miramichiadultlearning.com/>

Teacher: Beth Losier

While growing up, learning at school was one of my favourite ways to spend my time. My family was situated in one of the rural communities outside of Miramichi so public outings were sparse and going to school was one of the only opportunities I had to learn of the outside world.

All throughout school, I had a special passion for Science. I would spend months prior to the annual science fairs planning and perfecting my presentations in hopes one day I would advance. In grade 7, I was fortunate enough to be awarded 2nd place regionally and 3rd place provincially for my efforts. The pride and confidence I felt during this time in my life was unlike anything I had ever experienced before.

Unfortunately, after beginning my first year of high school I began to face incessant bullying and fell into addiction as a method of coping. I was expelled from school for poor attendance, and consequently was kicked out of both my parents' homes. After years of hardship, I got myself sober and began working customer service jobs at any company who would hire me in order to provide for myself.

I learned relatively quickly that dealing with the public in low level customer service jobs was and is extremely mentally taxing. Each passing day brought nothing but a mediocre pay cheque and low self-esteem; I was losing hair, losing weight, and losing sight of any hope for a better life. I went through jobs at an alarming rate, none of them brought me happiness or fulfillment.

In July of 2024 I was wrongly terminated from yet another customer service job I had been giving my all to. I was devastated and angry, but I finally understood that if I wanted my life to change, I had to be the one to change it. It was shortly after this I got into contact with Kevin, the Executive Director of Miramichi Adult Learning Inc and scheduled a time to be pre-tested for the Canadian Adult Educational Credential.

Within the first month of returning to classes, I had accomplished more than I ever dreamed was possible. My self-confidence sky-rocketed, I aced all of my unit tests, and most importantly I went home each day genuinely proud of myself.

Since then, I have passed three out of five final exams with flying colours, registered myself for Early Childhood Education in Fall of 2025, applied for several summertime student positions with the government, and am on track to be a 2025 graduate. When I complete my studies, I hope to open a daycare facility that provides childcare to low income families who would otherwise be unable to afford it. Returning to learning has not only provided me with a purpose, but also with the self-love I had been so desperately searching for in all the wrong places.

Learning Changes Lives

Nancy Tanyi Jounda – South East Adult Education

<https://education-se.ca/>

Teacher: Tom Hart

Dear students

For many years, I believed that education had passed me by. Life's responsibilities—work, family, and personal struggles—always seemed to come first, leaving little time for learning. I left school at a young age, thinking I could manage without it. But as time went on, I realized that not having an education was holding me back. Simple tasks, like filling out forms or helping my children with their homework, became difficult. I felt trapped and limited in my opportunities. That's when I made the decision to return to learning, and it has been the best choice I have ever made.

The journey wasn't easy at first. Walking into a classroom again after so many years was intimidating. I worried that I was too old, that I wouldn't be able to keep up, or that people would judge me. But I quickly realized that I wasn't alone. There were others like me—people who had different reasons for returning to school but shared the same goal: to better themselves. My teachers were supportive, patient, and encouraging, which gave me the confidence to keep going, even when it felt tough.

Learning has changed my life in ways I never expected. First, it has given me confidence. Before, I often felt embarrassed when I had to ask for help with reading or writing. Now, I feel empowered. I can read books to my grandchildren, write emails without fear, and even help others who struggle with literacy. I no longer feel ashamed; instead, I feel proud of how far I've come.

Second, education has opened doors for me. With improved reading and writing skills, I now have the opportunity to apply for better jobs. In the past, I was stuck in low-paying work because I lacked the qualifications to move up. Now, I see a future where I can find a job that I enjoy and that provides financial stability for my family. Learning has also taught me that I am capable of much more than I once believed.

Finally, returning to school has shown me the value of perseverance. There were days when I felt like giving up, but I reminded myself why I started. I wanted to prove to myself and my family that it's never too late to learn. My children have watched me study, and I hope my journey inspires them to always strive for knowledge, no matter their age.

As I continue my education, my goal is to complete my high school diploma and perhaps even take college courses. I want to show others that learning is a lifelong journey, and no matter where you start, progress is always possible. One day, I hope to help other adult learners find the courage to take that first step, just as I did.

Education has truly changed my life. It has given me confidence, opened doors, and shown me the power of perseverance. I now see the world differently—not as a place full of obstacles, but as a place full of possibilities.

Learning Changes Lives

Jason Tucker – Miramichi Literacy Council (READ NB)

<https://lnb.ca/Miramichi.HTML>

Teacher: Pat Hegan

My essay is about how I returned to learning, not only to improve my reading and writing skills, but also to change my life emotionally and mentally.

What had inspired me to enter this learning program is because I was having difficulty reading and understanding what was contained inside car and cell phone contracts. It will start with the salespeople presenting the contracts and they told me it had minor details that should not concern me. As a result of this, I ended up signing these contracts because the offers sounded good to me.

But now, I realized I did not fully understand what I was signing. As a result of this I found myself under a lot of financial and emotional stress. All I can say is the next time I will bring someone with me who has a lot of knowledge on how to deal with this type of situation.

One day, I was on Google and noticed an advertisement for the Miramichi Literacy Council. What they were offering is programs for people who need help upgrading their reading and writing skills. After reading about this, I had decided to click on their e-mail. In response, they gave me a phone number to contact them. They set up a schedule for me to make it easy to take this course.

I have to be honest, when I attended my first sessions, I was very nervous because I did not know what to expect from these classes. But thanks to my teachers (Pat and Nadine), not only did I feel comfortable, but also started enjoying what I had learned in class.

During my sessions, I have learned about several different topics. Such subjects that I learned about are the invention of automobiles, the Civil Rights March in Washington, D.C., and the differences between birds and bats. But the subject that I enjoyed the most is learning about the history of Miramichi during the Depression. It was very educational and inspiring because despite going through hard times, never gave up and kept your faith. You will end up with better times.

As a result of these classes, not only my reading and writing skills have improved, but also I have self-confidence to deal with any type of financial situation that will be put in front of me in a positive manner.

When this course comes to an end, my new goal will be attending college so I can get the tools to start a new career. My two career choices are either a motivational speaker or financial counsellor. My reasoning for these two choices is because I feel a responsibility to help others avoid any type of negative situation they will face. However, if they end up in trouble, I can offer advice on how to help themselves with improving their understanding and comprehension of the challenges of financial and long term commitments. By doing this they will end up successful in their situation.

In conclusion, I would like to say thank you to the Miramichi Literacy Council, especially my two teachers Nadine and Pat. Not only did they help me with improving my reading and writing skills, but also did it with kindness and respect. If it wasn't for them, I would end up in the dark financially as well as emotionally. But now, my self-confidence has returned. Also, I can handle any type of situation in a positive manner.

If there is one piece of advice that can be offered. That is, if you ever find yourself in any type of situation that makes you feel like you cannot get out of, do not be afraid to ask for help and try something new. If you do, you will end up being successful.

Learning Changes Lives

Jiajia Zheng – Adult Learning Program – United for Literacy

<https://www.unitedforliteracy.ca/>

Teacher: Shelley Poitras

As an immigrant who came here in her middle age, after arriving in Canada and settling in Fredericton, I faced the challenge of career reorientation and reflected on how to lead my life with true value and purpose. The journey of finding my motivation to continue learning in a new environment is also the journey of reflecting on the long-buried memories that linger in my heart.

She came to me again. Through the window of the classroom where I was studying in high school, she asked my classmates with eager anticipation, “Is Jiajia here or not?”, “Do you know where she is?”, “Do you have any idea when she will be back?”

Hiding behind the back door, I listened and observed the whole conversation. After getting the answers I had told my classmates previously, she left disappointed and sad, and I had a sigh of relief. That was the last time I saw her. Before that, I avoided her many times.

When the memories returned, the loneliness and sadness of her departure waved in my head. Her facial expression, which had left no trace on me at the time, kept hammering at my mind fifteen years later.

She was my classmate in Grades 7 and 8. She was a kind girl and always quiet at that time. Though her academic performance was not outstanding, I knew she studied hard with diligence. Although we didn't talk much, I had a good impression of her. Everything seemed so “normal”, nothing to be concerned about.

But how could a perfectly healthy person fall apart in such a short time? In just 3 or 4 years? We encountered each other downtown and talked for about 4 hours, and she updated me a lot about her life and family, through which I knew life was quite difficult for her. What I didn't know was that from that day on, every day she would spend hours talking about the same thing to me.

Years after that moment, I have helped hundreds of people in need through different programs I initiated, such as a 10-year-long digital literacy program and a 3-year-long legal assistance program. But every time I think about her, I pray that I was not the last straw she could have grabbed at that moment. I was too young and immature to recognize how much she needed help. I was not the right person at that time and only felt overwhelmed, fleeing- perhaps just like others around her- from the consequences.

I care about her, though this care comes too late. I grew up in a rural, underprivileged area in China, where everyone, to a greater or lesser extent, faced financial, physical, parental, and

mental difficulties and struggles across generations. I care about all of them, and at the same time, I knew I needed to break out of this circle. For a long time, I was driven by this responsibility to keep learning and excel in school so that I could have the opportunity to receive an education at a university, which ultimately gave me the capacity to help them—villagers in my hometown, systematically at a very early age.

But when I settled in Canada and continued to think about her—the first person who ever came to me for help, and whom I let down—everything suddenly became clear to me. I realized that I had found my calling and my purpose: I want to help people, ease their pain, and enhance their well-being. Ultimately, I want to make this my career and life's mission.

Now, I am focusing on my goal of pursuing a social work career in the future, starting with applying to a social work program at university and learning the necessary knowledge, skills, methods and theories.

And, of course, the English language. I have been learning English with Teacher Shelley from United for Literacy, she has helped me a lot and witnessed my progress. I will give her all the praise and applause, she is one of the best teachers I have ever had. I will continue learning and helping people in my own way here in Canada, just like she did.