



Adult and Continuing Education in Ontario.

Adult Stories: A High School Diploma Leads to Success!



Acknowledgements

We would like to thank the adult and continuing education students that agreed to participate in this project.

In addition, we thank the West Region Adult Education Strategy partnership table members for their help, including financial support to produce this video.

The Adult Education Strategy is an initiative funded by the Ontario Ministry of Education. Its over arching goal is to support adult and continuing education school boards to improve the employment and education/skills development outcomes of adult in Ontario.

For more information on how to complete your high school diploma please visit:

English

<https://getmyhighschooldiploma.ca/>

French

<https://www.terminersestudessecondaires.ca/french/>

CESBA

2019

CESBA also produced a short video with clips from the 8 students in this publication - please see the video online at:

<https://youtu.be/XqxHemja8QE>



Ashraf Al-ibraheem

Halton Catholic District School Board

Ash originally grew up in Baghdad, Iraq and attended university, graduating with a degree in finance and banking. When he and his family arrived in Hamilton, he did not know what life would have in store for him, but he knew he had to study.

Like many newcomers, he started in English as a Second Language, but he certainly did not stop there. Ash went on to take ESL credits and then non-ESL credits in order to get his Grade 12 Diploma – a journey that took several years and one he supplemented by working with a conversation tutor at the public library. On this learning journey, Ash received amazing support from instructors and other staff. He recalls, “They were like my family.” They noticed when he was not having a good day or when he was pre-occupied and would ask him how they could help.

Ash’s ultimate goal was to use his Grade 12 to enter postsecondary. But to take what? He had been told that the skilled trades offer lots of employment opportunities and good pay. Ash made full use of an employment counsellor from Mohawk College who would come to the St. Charles Adult learning Centre for one day a week. Weekly, he made appointments to discuss different trades and eventually decided on Gas and Oil Burner Technician – an eight-month program.

Ash is pleased with his choice. He recently finished his course and is now looking for work. By getting his Grade 12, he was able to move into a short-term postsecondary program and an occupation that is in demand in the labour market.



Barbara Aparicio

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

When she was younger, Barbara decided that her priority was to have a family. So, she left school without graduating and had two children. And it was her children who motivated her to return to school to complete her Grade 12. They reminded her that she should have her sights set not just on a job, but on a career, saying, “You’re smarter than this!” And Barbara took her children’s opinions seriously.

After having her transcript reviewed, Barbara only needed four credits to get her Grade 12. And now that she has it, she’s continuing her education at Mohawk College for a 16-month program in Social Work. And while she waits for her Social Work program to begin, Barbara is not sitting idle. Upon the advice of a career counsellor, she’s volunteering with a community program that assists people who have done time to re-integrate back into the community.

Returning to learning as an adult can be very different than it was in the teenage years. Barbara sums up the differences: “I have a sense of pride that I never had before. I’m focused. It let me know after all these years that I can still go, and I can still achieve, and I’m going to go. I’m going to achieve.”

She was fortunate to have her family supporting her. Rather than Barbara running after her children making sure they had what they needed to go to school, it was her children making sure Barbara had what she needed (like coffee) to be prepared to face school every day.

Barbara’s words of advice? “Do it. Just do it. The reward at the end is so worth it.”



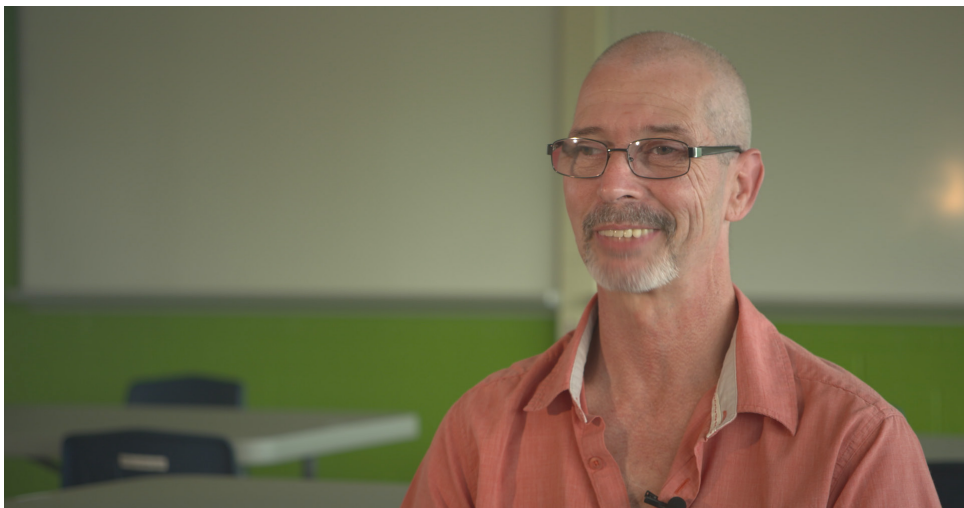
Bailey Barker

Upper Grand District School Board

When she first went to high school, Bailey completed just her first year, achieving eight credits. When she decided to go back to school, she chose to get her remaining credits at an Adult Learning Centre because the Centre was close to where she lived. Bailey spent some of her time in class and some time working from home via computer because she also had a job. She enjoyed working at her own pace. On using computers to learn, Bailey shared, “At the start, it was really weird...but after a couple of lessons, I actually enjoyed the computer because there is Spell Check and it helps you out a lot.” In fact, Bailey now prefers to learn using computers and thinks her practice in working on a computer will help her in her eventual desire to find a career.

It wasn’t always easy though. “There were a lot of times when I thought it was too much and I wasn’t going to be able to do it, but I did,” revealed Bailey. She is glad for the support she received from her teacher. “She motivated me,” said Bailey. Her teacher also provided support in choosing electives. Bailey plans to move on to postsecondary education and her teacher provided advice on which courses Bailey might want to take to prepare her for postsecondary studies.

When asked if she had any advice to share with other people who might be thinking about returning to school to get their Grade 12, Bailey said, “Do it. It’s worth it. You’ll feel awesome.”



Jim Bell

Hamilton-Wentworth District School Board

When Jim was young, he didn't see the point of being in high school. He felt he could get a good job without a Grade 12 and he did. But when his company restructured, he found that getting a new job wasn't so easy.

Jim signed on with a temp agency and was placed at a large manufacturing company. A good worker, Jim caught the attention of the plant manager, who invited Jim to apply for a full-time position with the company. Jim was thrilled. The work was full-time, the pay was good, and the benefits were great. But the company policy was to only hire applicants with a Grade 12 and Jim did not have one.

Jim admits "I got really scared," because he could feel the job slipping away. Fortunately, the company said they would hold the full-time permanent job open for Jim while he worked to get his Grade 12.

Since he was still working as a temp for the manufacturing company – 12-hour continental shifts – Jim decided to take his credits online so he could work at his own pace. While it made for some long days, adding study time to the end of each workday, Jim says, "I was very motivated. The end game was my family." And he received a lot of support from his instructors.

Jim earned his Grade 12 in just under four months. He's grateful for the support and advice he was given. He suggests that anyone who doesn't know how to go back to school, "just go to any school board...They will find the answer for you." He hopes young people will hear his story – so they will learn from his experience and stay in school.



Steven Brown

Waterloo Catholic District School Board

Steven originally graduated from high school with the goal of taking postsecondary courses in the United States. Upon his return though to Ontario, Steven found that his studies were not recognized.

So, Steven worked a succession of jobs, eventually getting laid off. He decided to take some time to think about what type of career he wanted. His family noted he had always been caring and intelligent and suggested he pursue nursing. Steven made up his mind to enroll in a joint program at McMaster University and Conestoga College that, when completed, would give him a Bachelor of Science with a major in Nursing.

There was only one problem. When Steven first got his Grade 12, he had steered away from sciences and math courses – two subjects he definitely needed to get into the nursing program he had chosen. And Nursing is a competitive program. Steven needed a higher grade point average in order to be accepted into the program.

However, returning to high school was very affordable. Steven took six credits in one year through correspondence – all senior credits. “I found it challenging,” he admits. However, the support he received was “nothing short of amazing.” Steven accessed tutoring support that was offered twice a week, and he notes he had more focus and more discipline because he was working towards a specific goal.

Steven urges others to consider returning to learning. After his hard work, Steven is now working full-time at Guelph General Hospital in the Intensive Care Unit in a fast-paced, demanding and satisfying career.



Erin Crockatt

Waterloo Catholic District School Board

Erin left high school originally to take care of her daughter, but it stuck with her than she hadn't finished high school, and she returned with the goal of graduating alongside her daughter.

Erin had worked in customer service and enjoyed interacting with the older patrons. It was because of this experience that she knew she wanted to become a Personal Support Worker.

Because of her experience as a parent and in the workplace, Erin only needed four more credits to get her Grade 12. And when she enrolled at the St. Louis Adult Learning and Continuing Education Program, Erin learned that taking the Personal Support Worker (PSW) program would count as her final credit.

Erin did two placements as part of the PSW program at St. Louis and is now working full-time at the same long-term care facility where she did her placements. Erin found the placements to be invaluable, sharing "there's only so much you can learn until you go out there with real people in real situations."

It wasn't easy returning to school, but the support of the teachers, the principal and the guidance counsellors at St. Louis helped Erin to overcome her fears.

When asked about managing school and life in general, Erin revealed, "It gave me some confidence in myself. I didn't realize that I would be as smart as I was!" Erin's advice to others who might be thinking about going back to school is "even if you go back to school just for your own sake, that's enough." In other words, you're worth it.



Belinda Talarico

Waterloo Catholic
District School Board

For many adults, returning to high school as an adult can be daunting. Belinda Talarico, however, has done it twice. She first returned to school to become a Personal Support Worker – a career she has enjoyed for the past 18 years.

However, being a PSW is very physical work and Belinda wanted to develop other career interests. She had “always had a love for hair and looking good.” In fact, as a PSW Belinda often helped her patients with their hair, so they could look their best.

She returned to St. Louis Adult Learning Centre to inquire about the hairstyling program and learned she needed to get her Grade 12.

Getting those credits though wasn’t easy. Belinda recalls, “there is always that fear of the unknown.” But returning to school has had some unexpected benefits. Belinda believes that taking those remaining credits brought her and her daughter closer together. In fact, Belinda now proofreads her daughter’s university essays!

While she completes her required apprenticeship hours, Belinda is continuing to work both as a PSW and as a hairstylist. She has set up her own salon in her basement and volunteers her hairstyling skills at a local hospice care centre. And her learning might not be over yet. Belinda says she might continue to take courses with the goal of possibly teaching in the health care sector.

Belinda sums up her scholastic achievements by saying, “I really feel a sense of accomplishment. You’re never too old to go back to school.”



Yaser Yarghal

London District Catholic School Board

Fifteen months ago, Yaser arrived in London ON to start a new life. Yaser had graduated in Afghanistan with an engineering diploma, but quickly learned he would have to start over again in Canada.

Yaser wanted a Grade 12 diploma to increase his chances with employers. He was granted all but the last four credits he needed to get an Ontario Secondary School Diploma and obtained his remaining credits through a combination of classroom and online learning.

He received excellent support from teachers and staff at the Centre for Lifelong Learning. Yaser shared, “Whenever I was submitting my assignments, they (my teachers) were giving feedback and I would share my feedback with my friends, and they were excited to take online courses too.”

Yaser’s counsellor played a significant role. “He motivated me,” said Yaser. Once he got his Grade 12 Diploma, on the advice of his counsellor, Yaser took a 2-month course in construction. Yaser then applied to Fanshawe College to pursue Construction Project Management. Yaser noted that, “Some people don’t use their counsellors. They’re not using the people who have good experience and good knowledge.”

Meanwhile, Yaser used his network he had formed through running and secured a job with a paving company. Although he has graduated with his Grade 12 diploma, Yaser continues to take high school courses to help him prepare for success in college.

Yaser’s advice for others is, “If you just think about earnings, you will get a job, but you will not enjoy it. Build on what you already know and be patient. Get a career and don’t give up!”



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