

between friends

big sisters of bc lower mainland newsletter



Meet Study Buddies Erika & Melika

Length of match to-date: 1 year, 5 months

Photo by Brandon C. Elliot
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Giving back is precisely what Erika had in mind when she first became a Study Buddy tutor to Little Sister Melika. Mentored by her grandmother, Erika never forgot the impact it had on her schoolwork and her attitude.

"I realized as I got older how important it is to have someone to look up to," says Erika. "I wanted to be a person who takes time to be there for someone and help them navigate their schoolwork."

Thanks to Erika's tutoring, Melika's English mark jumped from a C to an A, and she achieved 99% in her Planning Awards class. She also made the honour roll last year for the first time, reflecting the overall improvement to her schoolwork. Melika states that her confidence has grown, and acknowledges that a lot of the positive results are due to Erika's encouragement.

"Erika has taught me not to rush through something just to get it finished," says Melika. "I've learned that I have to be patient and think about what I'm doing so I really understand it."

Erika also puts a lot of emphasis on making Melika's homework fun.

"Melika is really smart and she knows the answer, but if she's having fun and knows I'm there to help, she has more confidence in giving the answer."

The pair meet once a week at the Lonsdale library and work on Melika's homework or prepare for an upcoming exam. But Erika's encouragement isn't confined to simply completing assignments - despite Melika's strong typing abilities, Erika encourages her to write longhand.

"The computer will automatically correct her spelling, so I try to get her to write the words out and learn the spelling on her own," says Erika.

Sessions aren't always confined to the library, either. Both share a favourite memory of going outside to take photographs for Melika's photography class. The outing resulted in a breathtaking collection of Melika's colourful images, which Erika put together in a book and gave to Melika as a birthday present.

Both agree that, over the past 17 months, their relationship has evolved and they are now far more outgoing with each other.

Melika cheerfully admits that catching up on each other's news often means going past the allotted study time, saying "I absolutely see her as my sister and don't want the relationship to end."

Adds Erica, "I love her lots, and when we're old she can come over and read books to me!"

Written by Kristen Olsen

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