

To the Editor

Regarding “Troubled kids put on path to straight A’s”

Thank you, Susan Clairmont, for drawing attention to the importance of education for students who are being looked after by the Children’s Aid Societies. Research in England has found that children in care are six times less likely to go on to Higher Education, five times more likely to change school at crucial educational points, eight times more likely to have been expelled from school, three times more likely to be unemployed on leaving school, and ten times more likely to be in need of special education than other children. There are similar statistics for children in care in the United States, and, if they were available here, this would probably be the picture in Ontario.

Only education will in the end help lift these students from poverty. Why then are these students likely to have poor educational attainment? It is not that the care the children received was inadequate, but that there are too many school changes, low educational expectations, and lack of consistent advocacy for education.

The announcement of the Provincial plan for investment in Registered Educational Savings Plans for post-secondary education by Societies, on behalf of these students, is welcome. But there needs to be more provision made so that these children, who often attend school already below the attainments of their peers, are adequately prepared to benefit from post-secondary education. Municipalities need to ensure that all children in care have access to high-quality early-years education. School Boards need to make arrangements that provide stability and continuity of education. Plans for the child’s care made by Children’s Aid societies must not disrupt schooling. Each child in care needs to have a personal education plan, checked every six months by an assigned teacher, to monitor progress so their educational needs do not fall through the cracks. All this requires a much closer working relationship between schools and the Children’s Aid Societies. And that can be done, as has been demonstrated in England. The Government there outlines its expectations and commitment in “Every Child Matters: Time for Change, 2004”.

Surely it is time that the Ontario government mandated the same requirements for children in care so that they too can be successful .

Yours sincerely
Judith Bishop

905 528 7740