



Providing Stability

Transportation funding helps students in care remain in home schools

(Windsor, Ontario, Wednesday April 4, 2018) – Funding that will provide transportation alternatives for students in care so that they can remain in their home schools if they need to switch foster homes is a big step towards improving learning outcomes for at-risk students, according to representatives from two local school boards.

The Windsor-Essex Catholic District School Board and the Greater Essex County District School Board have received more than \$303,000 in funding from the Ministry of Education so they can collaborate with the Windsor-Essex Children's Aid Society to provide transportation options for students in care if they have to change their residence during the school year.

"Having to switch schools can place a tremendous amount of stress on students, especially those who are in foster homes and possibly dealing with troubling domestic issues," said WECDSB Superintendent of Education Joe Ibrahim, whose board received \$92,400 from the ministry. "That kind of disruption can have a dramatic impact on their education, so this will be an important way for us to provide a measure of stability in their lives."

"Schools are safe and comfortable places for students and it is especially important during times of great personal upheaval," said GECDSB Superintendent of Education for Student Well-being Sharon Pyke, whose board received \$211,200 from the ministry. "This collaborative approach with Windsor Essex Children's Aid Society allows our students, who are in care and having to change schools, the opportunity to continue their school experience at their familiar school. Programming services and the students' network of teachers and peers remain the same until a natural break in the school year."

The funding will provide school boards with the flexibility to accommodate students who would prefer to remain in their home school when there is a change in residence. Options may include adding a bus stop to an existing bus route, or rerouting a bus if feasible; reimbursing foster parents, relatives, or other adults who can provide transportation for students; public transportation passes, depending on the age of the student; private transportation companies.

A condition of the funding is for school boards to collaborate with children's aid societies to determine what transportation arrangement would be in the best interest of the student, when there has been a placement change, until a more natural transition can occur. The consent and voice of the student must be a key consideration when considering their best interests.

“The Windsor-Essex Children’s Aid Society has always made it a priority to maintain children in their original schools whenever feasible and has worked hard to achieve this as much as possible,” said Terry Johnson, the CAS Interim Executive Director. “This grant will assure that this will be the case for the children in our care, eliminating one of the obstacles for obtaining success in school.”

As outlined in the Ministry of Education’s *Achieving Excellence: A Renewed Vision for Education in Ontario*, it is particularly important to provide the best possible learning opportunities and supports for students who may be at a higher risk for not succeeding, and there is a commitment to close the achievement gap and improve graduation rates for underrepresented groups of students, including children and youth in care.

Graduation rates for children in care in Ontario are at about 46 per cent, compared to the Ontario average of about 85 per cent.

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