

**Ministry of Children,  
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October 5, 2023

**MEMORANDUM TO:** Children's Aid Society Executive Directors/Chief Executive Officers, Board Chairs

**FROM:** Hon. Michael Parsa  
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education

**RE:** **Strengthening Educational Supports for Youth in Care**

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On April 1, 2023, our government launched the Ready, Set, Go (RSG) program, which connects youth transitioning out of care with the life skills and supports they need to succeed as adults. These supports, include early transition planning and collaborative decision-making to provide improved access to services that support youth to succeed in school and to pursue post-secondary education, including apprenticeship training and employment opportunities.

Our commitment to helping the next generation succeed is clearly outlined in our 2023 Budget, which commits \$170 million over three years to help youth prepare for and succeed in adulthood, with a focus on life skills development and pathways to education and employment.

As the Ministers of Children, Community and Social Services (MCCSS) and Education (EDU), we are taking a collaborative approach by making it easier for youth in and leaving care to access pathways that will improve their lives and prepare them for the future. This includes our ministries also working in partnership with the Honourable Jill Dunlop, Minister of Colleges and Universities (MCU) and the Honourable David Piccini, Minister of Labour, Immigration, Training and Skills Development (MLITSD) to ensure an all-of- government approach that supports the RSG program.

It is with this shared goal that we are highlighting the following supports available to children and youth in care that will help prepare them for successful transition to adulthood. As part of early transition planning starting at the age of thirteen, we want your organizations to help children and youth understand and have access to the available supports they need. See list below:

- [Education Liaisons](#) work within societies to identify, navigate, access and strengthen educational services and supports that meet the individualized needs of children and youth in care. Societies and educators are strongly encouraged to involve their local Education Liaisons in their discussions and planning for children and youth.
  - Education Liaisons can also assist with the implementation of the Transportation and Stability Supports Program that provides funding to school boards to ensure children and youth in care have positive and stable connections to school and educational supports such as tutoring services, technology, cultural resources and professional assessments, during times of instability and transition.
- [Student Success Teams](#) are available at each secondary school and consist of a principal, student success teacher, guidance counsellor and special education teacher. They provide extra attention and support for individual students who are facing barriers to success, to help them graduate.
- Joint Protocols for Student Achievement (JPSA) are local agreements between school boards and societies to support the development of protocols that promote the academic success and well-being of students in care or students receiving services from societies. In May 2023, EDU and MCCSS provided school boards and societies with a revised JPSA template to support their ongoing collaboration.

Financial Supports can help children and youth in care tailor their educational experience to their individual needs, including:

- The [Ontario Child Benefit Equivalent](#) supports a child or youth in care's participation in activities that maximize their learning potential and promote educational success, resilience and successful transitions to adulthood. Examples include but are not limited to: one-to-one tutoring, mentorship, courses not offered through a board of education, school trips, registration fees for extra-curricular activities, and tools or supplies necessary for vocational training.
- The [Stay Home for School Program](#) allows students ages 18-21 who need some additional time to complete high school to remain living with their caregivers (e.g., foster parents) while they complete their secondary education.
- The Skilled Trades Bursary Program supports Grade 11 and 12 students who have financial and other barriers to stay in and complete secondary school, and to increase knowledge of and exposure to post-secondary skilled trades pathways.
- The Learn and Work Bursary Program supports Grade 11 and 12 students who have financial and other barriers to stay in and complete secondary school, and to graduate with an increased awareness of post-secondary education pathways.

While in secondary school, youth can access support programs that allow them to customize their education to succeed in their chosen post-secondary education and employment pathway, including:

- [Dual Credit programs](#) allow secondary students to take college courses or apprenticeship Level 1 in-class training. These Dual Credits count toward both their Ontario Secondary School Diploma (OSSD) and a post-secondary certificate, diploma, degree, or a Certificate of Apprenticeship.
- [Specialist High Skills Major](#) programs allow secondary students in Grades 11 and 12 to explore future careers in all post-secondary pathways by focusing their learning in one of 19 economic sectors while meeting the requirements of the OSSD.
- [Big Steps to Success](#) mentorship program connects children and youth in care aged 7-14 with positive adult mentors to help them benefit from having a caring and consistent relationship with a trusted adult and to improve their educational outcomes at the primary and secondary school levels, supporting higher rates of high school graduation.
- [Supervised Alternative Learning programs](#) re-engage students aged 14-17 years old who are not attending school and provide individual support to help them earn credits toward their OSSD.
- Entrepreneurship Education Pilot Projects provide funding for three years to (2022-23 to 2024-25) to school boards to promote entrepreneurship education for Grade 7 to 12 students and funding is provided to support students' entrepreneurial projects/ideas. Students are also supported by partnerships between district school boards and local third-party organizations that have expertise in entrepreneurship.
- Recognition of Experiential Learning for Credit pilots provide funding for three years (2022-23 to 2024-25) to select school boards to allow students to earn a credit towards their OSSD for valuable learning that takes place outside of the school day with community partners or organizations.
- All schools are required to provide opportunities and supports for all students to plan their individual pathways through school and make successful transitions to their initial postsecondary destination, as outlined in the *Creating Pathways to Success: An Education and Career/Life Planning Program for Ontario Schools* policy.
- The Experiential Learning Funding Allocation in the Grants for Student Needs (GSN) supports students to participate in experiential learning connected to a community or economic sector, reflect on those experiences to derive meaning, and then apply their learning in various aspects of their lives, including education and career/life planning.
- The Continuing Education and Other Programs Grant in the GSN supports students to access learning opportunities primarily outside the regular day-school program, including summer school, adult education, international and Indigenous language programs, and other programs to support student achievement and address learning gaps.

Supporting children and youth to reach their academic goals requires cross-sector collaboration to help identify and match them with the appropriate programs and services that are responsive to their diverse needs:

- The Indigenous Graduation Coach Program provides funding to targeted district school boards for the recruitment of Indigenous Graduation Coaches to support Indigenous students in obtaining an OSSD and successfully transition from First Nation/federally operated schools into the provincially funded education system and/or into post-secondary education, training, or labour market opportunities.
- The Graduation Coach Program for Black Students provides intensive, culturally-responsive support to Black students by hiring graduation coaches with lived experience and connections to Black communities to provide direct support and mentorship to Black students.
- Coaches also provide advice to school boards and school leadership to inform system change and create inclusive spaces that are helping to dismantle systemic barriers, eliminate disparities, and close the achievement gap for Black students.
- The Alternative Secondary School Program is administered by the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendship Centres and delivered through local Indigenous Friendship Centres in partnership with local school boards. The program connects students to culturally-relevant education programming and learning supports, including Indigenous approaches and ways of knowing, land-based learning, connection to community and access to traditional knowledge keepers and Elders.
- The Focus on Youth program supports participating school boards to create high quality employment experiences for in-risk high school students and, increase access to free/low-cost recreational, numeracy and or literacy programs for children and youth (kindergarten to grade 12) in high needs areas where such opportunities may be limited.
- The Cooperative Education Supports for Students with Disabilities Pilot provides funding for three years (2023-24 to 2025-26) to select school boards to offer targeted supports to students with disabilities to pursue cooperative education credits within a variety of placement opportunities, including those related to technological education and the skilled trades, allowing students with disabilities to develop valuable skills for success.
- Summer Learning for Students with Special Education Needs Program supports the transition of students with special education needs as they start the 2023-24 school year. Funds are also available for additional staffing resources (e.g., special education resource teachers, etc.) to support students with special education needs to participate in summer program offerings in both credit and non-credit granting programs.

Education is one of the most important factors that support future employment and other long-term positive outcomes for youth as they transition into adulthood. We hope you will take the opportunity to help the youth you serve access an educational pathway that fits with their individual goals and empowers them to succeed and thrive.

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Thank you for your ongoing support and collaboration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Michael Parsa". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "M" and a long, sweeping underline.

Hon. Michael Parsa  
Minister of Children, Community and Social Services

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Stephen Lecce". The signature is cursive and somewhat compact, with a prominent initial "S".

Hon. Stephen Lecce  
Minister of Education